The EU Strategy for Gender Equality

2019/2169(INI) - 25/11/2020 - Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading

The Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality adopted an own-initiative report by Maria NOICHL (S&D, DE) on the EU strategy for gender equality.

Members welcomed the adoption of the Commission communication ‘A Union of equality: Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025’, presented in the first 100 days of the new Commission. However, the Commission is invited to establish a concrete roadmap with timeframes, targets, an annual review and monitoring mechanism, clear and measurable indicators of success and additional targeted actions.

Members called on Member States to: (i) endorse the anti-discrimination directive and ensure that multiple and intersectional forms of discrimination are eradicated in all EU Member States; (ii) regularly exchange best practice and to commit themselves to achieving upward convergence and harmonisation of women's rights in Europe.

The report stressed the need to ensure reliable and adequate collection and analysis of gender-disaggregated data as a basis for decision-making.

Eliminating violence against women and gender-based violence

The report highlighted the need for specific measures to address the existing disparities in laws, policies and services among Member States and the increase in domestic and gender-based violence during the COVID-19 outbreak. The report also highlighted the need for specific measures to address the existing disparities in laws, policies and services among Member States and the increase in domestic and gender-based violence during the COVID-19 pandemic. It welcomed the Commission's intention to propose measures in 2021 to achieve the objectives of the Istanbul Convention if the EU’s accession remains blocked. It called for preparatory actions to be taken now to put in place legally binding measures and an EU framework directive to prevent and combat gender-based violence as soon as possible.

Members called for:

- concrete measures at EU level to tackle the problem of moral and sexual harassment and introduce binding measures to define and prohibit violence and harassment in the world of work;

- new measures, including binding legislation to combat cyber-violence, which disproportionately affects women;

- the presentation, as soon as possible, of: (i) the strategic framework on equality of LGBTIQ+ persons; (ii) a proposal for a review of the Victims' Rights Directive with regard to international standards on violence against women; (iii) the EU strategy on the eradication of trafficking in human beings.

Women and the economy

Members want to ensure equal participation and opportunities in the labour market, including pay transparency, to make equal pay for work of equal value a reality and to achieve gender balance in decision-making positions. They called for the development of an ambitious new Action Plan on the gender pay gap by the end of 2020, which should set clear targets for Member States to reduce the gender pay gap over the next five years and ensure that these targets are taken into account in the country-specific recommendations.

Members also called for:

- the full implementation of the work-life balance directive by introducing measures such as fully paid leave, the promotion of men’s equal role as carers, thereby tackling gender stereotypes in take-up of paternity and/or maternity leave;

- equal participation and equal opportunities for men and women in the labour market and addressing the feminisation of poverty in all its forms, in particular by increasing pensions and social benefits;

- the adoption of concrete measures for gender mainstreaming in the implementation of the Digital Agenda, preventing any negative impact of digitisation on women.

Gender mainstreaming in all EU policy areas

The report stressed that gender mainstreaming and gender budgeting are essential tools to assess and target the effects of different policy actions and budgetary use on men and women and should be used throughout the policymaking process and budgetary actions.

Members reiterated the need to increase resources for EU programmes dedicated to the promotion of gender equality and women's rights in the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF), in particular in the Next Generation EU Recovery Plan, and asked the Commission to include a gender mainstreaming clause in the revised proposal for the next MFF.

Countering backlashes against gender equality

Members called on the Commission to:

- put in place measures and provide additional support to ensure sexual and reproductive health and rights in the implementation of the current gender equality strategy and to include sexual and reproductive health and rights in its next EU health strategy;

- take account of health inequalities in the next EU health strategy, which should focus on access to preventive care at all stages of life and on women's health and safety in the workplace, and pay particular attention to gender equality in the European plan to combat cancer;

- rapidly adopt the new EU Gender Action Plan III to start the implementation of this instrument in 2021 as a key instrument for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in external relations.