The EU Strategy for Gender Equality

2019/2169(INI) - 21/01/2021 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 464 votes to 119, with 93 abstentions, a resolution on the EU strategy for gender equality.

Members welcomed the adoption of the Commission communication ‘A Union of equality: Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025’, but regretted that the strategy remains vague on the issue of timelines for several, highly welcomed, measures and that it sets neither concrete gender equality targets to be achieved by 2025 nor clear monitoring tools.

The Commission was called on to:

- establish a concrete roadmap with timeframes, targets, an annual review and monitoring mechanism, clear and measurable indicators of success and additional targeted actions;

- present guidelines on how to effectively implement gender mainstreaming in EU policies, including in budget preparation;

- systematically incorporate a gender perspective into all stages of the response to the COVID-19 crisis, and to promote women's participation at all levels of decision-making.

Members called on Member States to: (i) implement the Anti-Discrimination Directive and guarantee 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.

Eliminating violence against women and gender-based violence

Parliament 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. 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 also called for:

- concrete measures to be taken at EU level to tackle the problem of moral and sexual harassment and to introduce binding measures to define and prohibit violence and harassment in the world of work, as well as to combat cyber-violence, which disproportionately affects women;

- the presentation, as soon as possible, of the strategic framework on equality of LGBTIQ+ persons.

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 invited the Commission to present a proposal for binding measures on pay transparency and called for an ambitious new action plan on the gender pay gap.

Stressing that 70% of health and social services workers worldwide are women, often receiving only the minimum wage and working in precarious conditions, Members called for the levelling up of wages and working conditions in sectors with a high female predominance, such as childcare, health and retail, and for the eradication of the gender pay and pension gap and labour market segregation.

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 resolution 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.

Countering setbacks in gender equality

Parliament expressed its deep concern about the setbacks in women's rights and gender equality in some Member States and, in particular, the attempts to further criminalise abortion and to hinder young people's access to comprehensive sex education in Poland, and the reform adopted in Hungary, which undermines the rights of transgender and intersex people.

It called for continuous monitoring of the situation with regard to women's rights and gender equality, including misinformation and regressive initiatives in all Member States, and the establishment of an alarm system to highlight regressions.

The Commission was invited 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.