The gender dimension in Cohesion Policy

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The Committee on Regional Development adopted an own-initiative report by Monika VANA (Greens /EFA, AT) on the gender dimension in cohesion policy.

This report highlights the need for political commitment to gender equality at European, national and local levels, and for greater recognition by national and local stakeholders of the multi-level benefits of gender equality, which give it an economic and social dimension.

The role of cohesion policy in promoting gender equality

Members stressed the importance of cohesion policy in promoting equality between people and between regions, including gender equality, and in implementing the European strategy for gender equality. They recommended that Member States take gender equality measures into account in the process of designing and validating programmes and identify, for each programming phase, priority areas that contribute to gender equality and sustainable development.

The report stressed the need to adopt a gender equality strategy with clear ambitions and objectives at national and regional level and to develop awareness raising programmes on the benefits of gender equality and equal opportunities for socio-economic growth and sustainable development. It called for increased skills, training and capacity building for managing authorities and implementing partners on the gender dimension of the Structural Funds.

According to Members, programme stakeholders and monitoring committees should be provided with clearer indicators on the effectiveness of programmes when it comes to the implementation of the gender perspective in concrete projects, especially in ERDF interventions, given the potential of the ERDF /Cohesion Fund to bridge the gap that women still face, especially with regard to female entrepreneurship and the digital sector.

Furthermore, part of the Cohesion Policy funds should be dedicated to support women in poverty, women at risk of poverty, single mothers, women with disabilities and women victims of violence.

Impact of the COVID-19 crisis

The COVID-19 crisis has shown the key role played by public services, social infrastructure and the care sector in ensuring social and economic resilience. It has further highlighted the role played by women as primary carers in formal and informal settings and the value this creates for society: 80% of all care in the EU is provided by informal, often unpaid, carers, 75% of whom are women.

Members called on Member States to prioritise the funds available under cohesion policy for care provision to meet the growing demand for care facilities, but also to effectively tackle the gender gap in employment, the resulting pay and pension gaps and labour market segregation.

Cohesion policy should also be used to support equal access to training and employment for women and men, to implement positive action to bridge the gender digital divide and to support the just, green and digital transitions.

Gender equality in post-2020 cohesion policy

Members called for the introduction of clear and concrete targets and requirements on gender equality objectives and for greater opportunities and equality between men and women to be introduced in all post-2020 programmes, with specific and interdisciplinary measures to be translated into all operations. A national strategy for gender equality with clear general and specific objectives could underpin interventions under cohesion policy.