Women’s poverty in Europe

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The European Parliament adopted by 535 votes to 18, with 79 abstentions, a resolution on women's poverty in Europe.

According to estimates for 2019 in the EU-27, women are particularly affected by the risk of poverty, with a poverty rate of 17.1% after social transfers. In 2020, the risk of poverty and social exclusion was higher for women (22.9%) than for men (20.9%). According to **Eurostat, 64.6 million women and 57.6 million men currently live in poverty** in the EU Member States.

Ambitious EU anti-poverty strategy

Parliament called on the Commission to develop an ambitious EU anti-poverty strategy for 2030, with **concrete targets for poverty reduction** and a focus on ending women’s poverty and breaking the intergenerational cycle of poverty risks.

The Commission and Member States are called upon to effectively address the inequalities faced by women, by removing their main components, namely barriers in the labour market, as well as to access affordable and quality services such as childcare and long-term care, and to promote access to public pension schemes for the self-employed, those not in the labour force, the unemployed or those in ‘atypical’ employment.

Eradicating precarious work

Parliament called on the Commission and Member States to promote policies to eradicate precarious work and involuntary part-time work in order to improve the situation of women in the labour market. It stressed the central role of women working in the social sector, care, cleaning, education, health and retail, as the COVID-19 crisis has demonstrated. The vast majority of retail and cleaning workers are women, who often earn only the minimum wage.

Members called for typically **female-dominated work to be reassessed** and revaluated and for cross-sector gender-neutral job evaluation tools to be developed and applied in order to better assess and more fairly remunerate female-dominated work and ensure equal pay for equal work and work of equal value, while at the same time strengthening women’s entrepreneurship in small and medium-sized enterprises.

The resolution stressed the need to end the segregation of unpaid domestic work and family responsibilities, which are mainly undertaken by women, and to combat stereotypes more effectively in order to strengthen care services and measures to reconcile work and private life.

Members called on Member States to actively disseminate a positive image of working mothers and to implement active policies to prevent and combat harassment in the workplace. They stressed the crucial importance of quality public services in the fight against women's poverty.

Gender mainstreaming

Parliament called on the Commission and the Member States to mainstream gender equality into all policies, programmes and actions and to put in place better work-life balance policies and adequate measures to ensure women's participation in the labour market, including (i) improving maternity leave, (ii) significantly extending paternity leave, (iii) providing paid and non-transferable parental leave, and

(iv) introducing flexible working hours, on-site childcare facilities, childcare services and teleworking policies. Gender equality must also be integrated into all transport-related legislation and actions.

Homelessness

Members called for more effective gender mainstreaming in policies that address homelessness, lack of access to affordable and adequate housing and energy.

The worsening economic and social situation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated all forms of abuse and violence against women. The resolution stressed the need to increase public resources to intervene with groups at risk of poverty and when children or homeless people are in situations of risk.

Gender-based violence

Parliament stressed that a life free from violence is fundamental for women to participate in the labour market and be financially independent. It therefore called for **support and protection measures** to be put in place to help women in such situations, for a comprehensive directive on preventing and combating all forms of gender-based violence, for gender-based violence to be added to the EU's list of criminal offences, and for the EU to ratify the Istanbul Convention.

Female entrepreneurship

The Commission and the Member States are called upon to investigate the obstacles to female entrepreneurship and, in particular, to conduct a comprehensive analysis of women's access to finance, in order to contribute to the eradication of poverty among women in the EU by providing them with the tools to become entrepreneurs and founders of small and medium-sized enterprises. In particular, Members called for better promotion of STEM fields and digital, financial and artificial intelligence education to combat existing stereotypes and ensure that more women enter these sectors.

Tax policies

Parliament called on Member States to avoid gender discrimination in their tax policies and to **abolish VAT on women's sanitary products**, which disproportionately affects the dignity of low-income women, and to ensure that all women have access to these essential products. It called on Member States to integrate the gender dimension into the reform of pension systems and the adjustment of the retirement age, recommending that they take into account the differences between the work patterns of women and men.