Gender aspects of the rising cost of living and the impact of the energy crisis

2023/2115(INI) - 18/01/2024 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 383 votes to 99, with 71 abstentions, a resolution on the gender aspects of the rising cost of living and the impact of the energy crisis.

The COVID-19 pandemic, the rising cost of living crisis and the war against Ukraine have intensified a pre-existing crisis and the precarious working and living conditions faced by many women. The gendered implications of such crises further perpetuate systemic gender inequalities across multiple sectors. This crisis acutely threatens women's livelihoods, health, well-being, economic independence and access to housing, while limiting their purchasing power and their ability to purchase basic necessities such as food, preventing them from enjoying a decent standard of living.

Women tend to be the 'shock absorbers of poverty carrying the main responsibility and mental burden for the planning, purchase and preparation of food for their families and the coordination of various other care and household tasks such as the budget management of poor households and are thus much more impacted by the rising cost of living and energy crisis.

Gender-sensitive solutions to energy poverty and the rising cost of living

Parliament called on the Commission to promote gender equality in all policymaking and stressed that more needs to be done since a gender perspective is lacking in the main climate, energy and environmental initiatives presented.

The resolution also called on the EU to promote an extraordinary package to support people struggling with skyrocketing costs of living, including EUR 100 billion for families, especially single-parent families – the vast majority of which are headed by women – most affected by energy poverty and at least EUR 20 billion to scale up the European Child Guarantee scheme. Recalling that energy poverty affects women disproportionately throughout the EU, Member States should dedicate the necessary support to alleviate energy poverty among women.

Against this background, the Commission should:

- develop an ambitious 2030 European anti-poverty strategy, including time poverty, with concrete targets for reducing poverty and a focus on ending women's poverty and breaking the intergenerational cycle of poverty risks;

- assess and propose, where appropriate, new legislative acts to mitigate the financialisation of housing markets and to stop speculators from making housing unaffordable.

Towards a gender-inclusive green transition

Recalling that a just green transition is necessary to avoid severe future crises and increased poverty, Parliament called on the Commission to appoint an EU gender and climate coordinator with sufficient staff and funding, and to introduce gender impact assessments in all EU policies and legislation, in particular in European Green Deal initiatives.

The resolution deplored the fact that women are significantly under-represented in key policymaking positions on climate change, the energy transition and the environment. It called therefore on the EU and the Member States for positive action measures such as temporary quotas to ensure equal and diverse representation in decision-making positions across the EU institutions, government bodies and public authorities at all governance levels and associated public bodies.

The Commission and the Member States are also called on to reduce the gender gap in the energy sector by tackling the under-representation of women in STEAM careers and to ensure that women have equal access to vocational training courses and awareness-raising courses in STEAM subjects including those on energy efficiency and sufficiency and to create a positive link between acquiring knowledge and developing skills essential for emerging job opportunities in the digital and green transition.