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DRAFT REPORT

on the EU Strategy for Gender Equality
(2019/2169(INI))

Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality

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MOTION FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION

on the EU Strategy for Gender Equality (2019/2169(INI))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to Articles 2 and 3(3) of the Treaty on European Union (TEU), and Articles 6 and 8 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU),
- having regard to Article 23 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union,
- having regard to the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) of 18 December 1979,
- having regard to the EU directives from 1975 onwards on various aspects of equal treatment for women and men (Directive 79/7/EEC¹, Directive 86/613/EEC², Directive 92/85/EEC³, Directive 2004/113/EC⁴, Directive 2006/54/EC⁵, Directive 2010/18/EU⁶ and Directive 2010/41/EU⁷),
- having regard to Directive (EU) 2019/1158 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 June 2019 on work-life balance for parents and carers and repealing Council Directive 2010/18/EU⁸,
- having regard to the Commission proposal of 14 March 2012 for a directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on improving the gender balance among non-executive directors of companies listed on stock exchanges and related measures (Women on Boards directive) (COM(2012)0614),

¹ Council Directive 79/7/EEC of 19 December 1978 on the progressive implementation of the principle of equal treatment for men and women in matters of social security, OJ L 6, 10.1.1979, p. 24.

² Council Directive 86/613/EEC of 11 December 1986 on the application of the principle of equal treatment between men and women engaged in an activity, including agriculture, in a self-employed capacity, and on the protection of self-employed women during pregnancy and motherhood, OJ L 359, 19.12.1986, p. 56.

³ Council Directive 92/85/EEC of 19 October 1992 on the introduction of measures to encourage improvements in the safety and health at work of pregnant workers and workers who have recently given birth or are breastfeeding, OJ L 348, 28.11.1992, p. 1.

⁴ Council Directive 2004/113/EC of 13 December 2004 implementing the principle of equal treatment between men and women in the access to and supply of goods and services, OJ L 373, 21.12.2004, p. 37.

⁵ Directive 2006/54/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 July 2006 on the implementation of the principle of equal opportunities and equal treatment of men and women in matters of employment and occupation, OJ L 204, 26.7.2006, p. 23.

⁶ Council Directive 2010/18/EU of 8 March 2010 implementing the revised Framework Agreement on parental leave concluded by BUSINESSEUROPE, UEAPME, CEEP and ETUC and repealing Directive 96/34/EC, OJ L 68, 18.3.2010, p. 13.

⁷ Directive 2010/41/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 7 July 2010 on the application of the principle of equal treatment between men and women engaged in an activity in a self-employed capacity and repealing Council Directive 86/613/EEC, OJ L 180, 15.7.2010, p. 1.

⁸ OJ L 188, 12.7.2019, p. 79.

- having regard to the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention),
- having regard to the proposal for a Council decision of 4 March 2016 on the conclusion, by the European Union, of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (COM(2016)0109),
- having regard to the Commission Staff Working Document of 6 March 2019 entitled ‘2019 Report on equality between women and men in the EU’ (SWD(2019)0101),
- having regard to its resolution of 28 November 2019 on the EU’s accession to the Istanbul Convention and other measures to combat gender-based violence⁹,
- having regard to the Gender Equality Index 2019 from the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), published on 15 October 2019,
- having regard to its resolution of 13 February 2019 on experiencing a backlash in women’s rights and gender equality in the EU¹⁰,
- having regard to its resolution of 15 January 2019 on gender equality and taxation policies in the EU¹¹,
- having regard to its resolution of 13 March 2018 on gender equality in EU trade agreements¹²,
- having regard to its resolution of 3 October 2017 on women’s economic empowerment in the private and public sectors in the EU¹³,
- having regard to its resolution of 14 June 2017 on the need for an EU strategy to end and prevent the gender pension gap¹⁴,
- having regard to its resolution of 14 March 2017 on equality between women and men in the European Union in 2014-2015¹⁵,
- having regard to its resolution of 14 February 2017 on promoting gender equality in mental health and clinical research¹⁶,
- having regard to its resolution of 16 January 2018 on women, gender equality and climate justice¹⁷,
- having regard to its resolution of 28 April 2016 on gender equality and empowering

⁹ Texts adopted, P9_TA(2019)0080.

¹⁰ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2019)0111.

¹¹ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2019)0014.

¹² OJ C 162, 10.5.2019, p. 9.

¹³ OJ C 346, 27.9.2018, p. 6.

¹⁴ OJ C 331, 18.9.2018, p. 60.

¹⁵ OJ C 263, 25.7.2018, p. 49.

¹⁶ OJ C 252, 18.7.2018, p. 99.

¹⁷ OJ C 458, 19.12.2018, p. 34.

- women in the digital age¹⁸,
- having regard to its resolution of 9 June 2015 on the EU Strategy for equality between women and men post 2015¹⁹,
 - having regard to the Council conclusions of 10 December 2019 on Gender-Equal Economies in the EU: The Way Forward,
 - having regard to the European Pillar of Social Rights and, in particular, its principles 2 and 9,
 - having regard to the EU Gender Action Plan II and to the Joint Staff Working Document entitled ‘Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment: Transforming the Lives of Girls and Women through EU External Relations 2016-2020’ (SWD(2015)0182),
 - having regard to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, as well as the declarations adopted in the framework of the UN Summits Beijing +5, Beijing +10, Beijing +15 and Beijing +20,
 - having regard to the survey by the Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) entitled ‘Violence against women: an EU-wide survey’, published in 2014,
 - having regard to the Commission communication of 5 March 2020 entitled ‘A Union of Equality: Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025’ (COM(2020)0152),
 - having regard to Rule 54 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality and the opinions of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs, the Committee on Culture and Education and the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (A9-0000/2020),
- A. whereas the right to equal treatment is a defining fundamental right recognised in the European Union Treaties and in the Charter of Fundamental Rights;
- B. whereas structures and stereotypes throughout the world perpetuate inequality, and whereas overcoming these structures and stereotypes will advance gender equality; whereas a strong women’s rights movement is needed to uphold democratic values, fundamental rights and women’s rights in particular, and whereas threats to women’s rights also represent threats to democracy;
- C. whereas the EU has adopted important legislation and provided key impulses to achieving gender equality; whereas, however, these efforts have slowed down in recent years, while movements opposing gender equality policies and women’s rights have flourished; whereas these movements are attempting to influence national and European policies;

¹⁸ OJ C 66, 21.2.2018, p. 44.

¹⁹ OJ C 407, 4.11.2016, p. 2.

- D. whereas violence against women in all its forms is a violation of human rights and one of the biggest obstacles to achieving gender equality; whereas a life free from violence is a prerequisite for equality; whereas disinformation campaigns on gender equality also focus on the issue of violence against women, as has been seen in relation to the Istanbul Convention;
- E. whereas traditional gender roles and stereotypes still influence the division of labour at home, in education, at the workplace and in society; whereas unpaid care work, mostly carried out by women, contributes to the gender pay and pension gap; whereas work-life balance measures, such as the Work-life Balance Directive, are important first steps, but need to be complemented by further measures in order to involve more men in unpaid work and to foster the equal earner – equal carer model;
- F. whereas the participation of women in the labour market does not secure their equal participation in decision-making and therefore limits women’s potential to change economic, political, social and cultural structures;
- G. whereas poverty in Europe disproportionately affects women, in particular single mothers, women with disabilities, and elderly, migrant and ethnic minority women;
- H. whereas the impact of climate change is experienced differently by women, as they are more vulnerable and face higher risks and burdens for various reasons; whereas gender equality and the inclusion of women in decision-making is a prerequisite for sustainable development and the efficient management of climate challenges; whereas all climate action must include a gender- and an intersectional perspective;
- I. whereas access to comprehensive and age-appropriate information, and to sex and relationship education, as well as access to sexual and reproductive healthcare, are essential to achieving gender equality;
- J. whereas the Gender Equality Index for 2019 reveals persistent inequalities between men and women in the digital sector; whereas closing the digital gender gap and guaranteeing women’s digital rights is of paramount importance, given the occurrence of discrimination resulting from biased data sets, models and algorithms in artificial intelligence (AI); whereas programmers in AI need to be aware of unconscious biases and stereotypes in order to avoid reproducing and reinforcing them; whereas the transformation and digitalisation of the labour market and the economy can deepen existing economic gaps and labour market segregation;
- K. whereas gender mainstreaming, gender budgeting and gender impact assessments are essential tools for achieving gender equality in all EU policy areas;

General remarks

1. Welcomes the adoption of the Commission communication entitled ‘A Union of Equality: Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025’, delivered on time within the first 100 days of the new Commission, as a strong sign for political engagement with European gender equality policies and as a decisive, clear and ambitious policy framework to counter attacks on women’s rights and gender equality; underlines the importance of the chosen dual approach, consisting of targeted measures and the consistent application of

gender mainstreaming and intersectionality as cross-cutting principles, and welcomes the strong link between the areas of work and the elimination of stereotypes, gender biases and discrimination;

2. Welcomes the announcement of several complementary strategies and calls for a strategic framework to connect them, and for an intersectional approach to be adopted in all of them;
3. Regrets that the strategy remains vague on the issue of timelines for several, highly welcomed, measures; calls, therefore, on the Commission to establish concrete timeframes and additional targeted actions, as well as guidelines on how to implement the intersectional approach effectively;

Eliminating violence against women

4. Supports the Commission's plan to continue pushing for the EU-wide ratification of the Istanbul Convention; underlines, in this context, the need for specific measures to address the existing disparities between Member States; draws attention, however, to the fact that several attempts to convince reluctant Member States have already failed; warmly welcomes, therefore, the Commission's intention to propose measures in 2021 to achieve the objectives of the Istanbul Convention if the EU's accession remains blocked; calls for preparatory actions for the launch of additional legally binding measures to eliminate violence against women; very much welcomes the planned extension of definitions of areas of particularly serious crime under Article 83(1) of the TFEU, but calls for the inclusion of all forms of gender-based violence, in order to take a proactive approach and lay the groundwork for an EU directive on this issue;
5. Welcomes the plan to table an additional recommendation on the prevention of harmful practices, and to launch an EU network on the prevention of both gender-based and domestic violence; requests that the definitions and goals of the Istanbul Convention be applied and that women's rights and civil society organisations be involved on a continuous basis;
6. Stresses the scope and impact of violence and harassment in the workplace; points out that informal carers, domestic workers and farm workers in particular lack protection and therefore calls on the Member States to adopt International Labour Organisation (ILO) Conventions 190 and 189, in order to strengthen the rights of workers, especially women, in the informal economy;
7. Welcomes the proposed specific measures to tackle cyber violence; calls for binding legislative measures to combat these forms of violence and to support Member States in the development of training tools for the police force, the justice system and the information and communication technology sector;
8. Urges the Commission to present the long-awaited EU strategy on the eradication of trafficking in human beings and underlines the need for a clear gender focus, as women and girls are the most affected and are trafficked for purposes of sexual exploitation; insists on the importance of including measures and strategies to reduce demand;
9. Welcomes the announcement of a new EU-wide survey on the prevalence and dynamics

of violence against women;

Women and the economy

10. Supports the revision of the Barcelona targets; calls for financial support for and the sharing of best practices among Member States which have not yet achieved the targets; welcomes, furthermore, the development of guidance for Member States on tackling financial disincentives in relation to social, economic and taxation policies;
11. Welcomes the Commission's commitment to table binding measures on pay transparency by the end of 2020; points out, however, that the issue of equal pay for equal work or work of equal value across different occupational sectors still needs to be addressed; strongly recommends the inclusion of the principle of equal pay for work of equal value between women and men, which could be defined as follows: 'Work shall be deemed of equal value if, based on a comparison of two groups of workers which have not been formed in an arbitrary manner, the work performed is comparable, taking into account factors such as the working conditions, the degree of responsibility conferred on the workers, and the physical or mental requirements of the work'; points out that gender-neutral job evaluation tools and classification criteria need to be developed for this purpose;
12. Urges the Commission to campaign for more women in economic decision-making positions by highlighting the economic and societal advantages thereof, and sharing best practices, in order to break the deadlock on the Women on Boards directive;
13. Welcomes the support for gender parity in elected bodies such as the European Parliament and stresses that it must serve as a role model in this regard;

Digital policies for gender equality

14. Regrets the underrepresentation of women in the ICT sector, and points out the risk of this reinforcing and reproducing stereotypes and gender bias through the programming of AI and other programs; calls for technologies and AI to be transformed into tools in the fight to eradicate gender stereotypes and to empower girls and women to enter science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) and ICT fields of study and to stay on these career paths;

Gender mainstreaming in all EU policies and funding of gender equality policies

15. Reiterates the importance of gender mainstreaming as a systematic approach to achieving gender equality; welcomes, therefore, the Commission's newly established task force on equality; underlines the importance of transparency and the involvement of women's rights and civil society organisations; urges the Commission to incorporate provisions making the consideration of inputs from the task force compulsory for Directorates-General;
16. Urges that gender mainstreaming be incorporated into EU environmental and climate policies, such as the Green Deal, that financial and institutional support, gender expertise and strong policy measures to encourage the equal participation of women in decision-making bodies and national- and local-level climate policy be guaranteed, and

that recognition and support be given to women and girls as agents for change;

17. Notes that tax policies have varying impacts on different types of households; stresses that individual taxation is instrumental in terms of achieving tax fairness for women;

Countering backlashes against gender equality

18. Reiterates the need for a regular exchange between Member States and the Commission on gender aspects in health, including guidelines for comprehensive sex and relationship education, gender-sensitive responses to epidemics and sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR); calls on the Commission to include SRHR in its next EU Health Strategy, and to support Member States in providing high-quality and low-threshold access to healthcare services;
19. Demands support for women's rights defenders and women's rights organisations in the EU and worldwide; calls for continuous monitoring of the state of play in relation to women's rights and disinformation on gender equality policies in all Member States and for an alarm system to highlight regression; calls on the Commission to support studies analysing the impact of attacks and disinformation campaigns on women's rights and gender equality, and calls on the Commission to analyse their root causes, developing fact checks and counter-narratives;

Gender equality through external relations

20. Calls for coherence between and the mutual reinforcement of the EU's internal and external policies on the principles of gender mainstreaming and gender equality, countering gender stereotypes and norms, as well as harmful practices and discriminatory laws, through external relations;
21. Welcomes the Commission's commitment to ensuring the inclusion of a specific chapter on trade and gender equality in the modernised Association Agreement with Chile, and to promoting and supporting the inclusion of such chapters in all further EU trade and investment agreements;
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22. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and the Commission.

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

This year, to mark the 25th anniversary of the adoption of the objectives set out in the Beijing Platform, assessments of various kinds will be carried out all over the world in order to determine how much progress has been made towards achieving gender equality. These assessments will once again show very clearly that true gender equality, extending to every sphere of life, is progressing only by inches and gender inequalities persist unimpressed by all our efforts.

Violence against women and even femicides keep being a daily reality, economic independence for women is still not secured due to the strong segregation in education and on the labour market, unequal pay and the unpaid care work burden mainly lie on the shoulders of women. In addition, the exclusion of women from decision-making positions continue. Positions, in politics, economy and culture, that could make a difference and include the possibility to change these (structural) inequalities are not equally distributed between the genders.

The EU-Gender Equality Index, drawn up by the European Institute for Gender Equality and in which the EU scores an average of 67,4 points out of a possible 100, shows that the EU is only a bit more than half way to complete equality and therefore supports the above-mentioned assumptions.

Reaching gender equality has been hindered by the measures and effects of the economic crisis and the lack of political will to make it a priority despite the odds during the last decade. Today it has to face deliberate attacks and backlashes orchestrated in several Member States, defending the status quo instead of going forward. Thanks to the strong movements of citizens in some Member States, the feared regressions in quite a number of countries could not be adopted (at least on paper), and the demand for complete equality and additional measures could not be silenced and either should be our political will. However, gender inequality and structural discrimination continue being reinforced by different societal challenges, as recently seen during the crisis related to the Covid-19 outbreak. While women's work in relevant sectors, like healthcare and food supply, is essential to the functioning of society, women's needed access to sexual and reproductive health services and support structures like helplines and shelters in case of violence tend to be limited during these times.

We need to end this trend now and create a common and ambitious framework for the next five years to produce effective and coherent measures to tackle all forms of discrimination against women and men. We must do our utmost to end discrimination on the grounds of ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, religious beliefs, class, nationality or age. Thus, an intersectional approach is needed when it comes to gender equality, but also in any other European policy.

Furthermore, it is the rapporteur's opinion that the EU's economic, social, and employment aims cannot be achieved unless gender equality is fully achieved. Equality must therefore be understood as a strategically significant, universal goal. Thus, the work of the EU Institutions and Member States must thoroughly incorporate the principles of gender mainstreaming, gender impact assessment and gender budgeting.

The Commissions proposition for a new EU-Gender Equality Strategy, which was presented during its first 100 days in office, can be seen as a clear political signal to back all efforts to

achieve gender equality. It defines common goals and the necessary measures in the area of women's rights and gender equality in the EU, to end gender-based violence and stereotypes, to ensure equal participation and opportunities in the labour market, including pay transparency in order to make equal pay for work of equal value a reality, and to finally achieve gender-balance in decision-making positions. Furthermore, it follows the idea of equal carers and equal earners, proposing measures that make it possible for women and men to equally share paid and unpaid work.

The rapporteur especially welcomes the commitment to fight gender bias and stereotypes that are one of the main underlying reasons for discrimination and the throughout use of an intersectional approach, concentrating efforts on women and men in all their diversity, which is a much-needed approach in order to make a real difference to all women and men in the EU.

As the Commission's strategy was designed with the possibility for continuous amendments, the European Parliament will continuously monitor the strategy and propose additional actions and measures. This report is designed as the first of several ones to come, highlighting the positive measures planned but also underlining additional goals, actions and measures needed in order to design a comprehensive and coherent policy-making on EU-level to finally realise a gender-just EU and world.