

The gender perspective in the Covid-19 crisis and post-crisis period

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The Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality adopted the own-initiative report by Frances FITZGERALD (EPP, EI) on the gender perspective in the COVID-19 crisis and the post-crisis period.

The report stressed the need to adopt a gender-sensitive approach in all aspects of the response to the COVID-19 crisis. It invited the Commission to facilitate the creation of a standing network for sharing best practice among Member States on how to address the gender aspects of COVID-19. It called on the Council to establish a dedicated configuration on gender equality and a formal working party in order to deliver common and concrete measures at the highest political level.

COVID-19 health-related aspects and the gender impact

Noting the higher mortality rate of COVID in men, the report called on the World Health Organisation (WHO) and relevant EU agencies to look at the differential health impact on women and men with a view to identifying how the virus and any potential vaccine or treatment might affect women and men differently.

Rejecting any attempt to backtrack on sexual and reproductive rights, Members stressed that Member States must ensure quality and affordable access, without discrimination, to sexual and reproductive health and health services, information and supplies during and after the crisis. They called on the Commission to consider emergencies such as COVID-19 and their impact on gender-specific health aspects, such as sexual and reproductive rights, in its health-related policy responses.

Gender-based violence during the COVID-19 pandemic

Members called on Member States in their response to the COVID-19 outbreak to:

- address gender-based violence faced by women and girls, including transgender women and intersex people;
- establish safe and flexible emergency alert systems, provide new telephone, email and text message support services for direct contact between police and online services such as hotlines, digital platforms, pharmacy networks, and provide emergency funding for support services and civil society organisations;
- update protocols for victims of gender-based violence to help them seek help, report crimes and access health services.

For its part, the Commission should:

- develop an EU protocol on violence against women in times of crisis and emergencies;
- promote awareness-raising, information and promotion campaigns to combat domestic and gender-based violence in all its forms;
- propose a directive to combat all forms of gender-based violence.

Members called for the urgent adoption of targeted measures to promote gender equality by earmarking dedicated funding to address the specific needs of women after the crisis, particularly in the areas of employment, gender-based violence and sexual and reproductive rights, either in the Next Generation EU or in the MFF for the period 2021-2027.

COVID-19, economy, recovery and gender impact

Members called for account to be taken of the fact that the COVID-19 crisis disproportionately affects women in the socio-economic sphere, including their income and employment rates, which may increase gender inequalities and discrimination in the labour market. They called for all programmes under the next MFF and the Next Generation EU to incorporate the gender perspective.

The report called, inter alia, for:

- the examination of the nature and location of work after the crisis, stressing that working from home is not an alternative to childcare;
- investment in care to ensure gender equality and women's economic empowerment;
- men to make use of flexible working arrangements, as a disproportionate number of women usually avail themselves of such arrangements;
- account to be taken of the particularly difficult situations faced by single parents, a large majority of whom are women (85 %), in the pandemic and post-crisis period;
- women's participation in the economy to be increased and make equal pay for equal work a guiding principle when designing measures in response to the COVID crisis;
- support to be given to women entrepreneurs who will seek to build on the skills they have acquired during the crisis.

The report also highlighted the situation of women with disabilities, migrant women, as well as the specific problems of homeless women and women in prostitution, including their increased vulnerability to gender-based violence and lack of access to health facilities.

External action

The report highlighted the vulnerable position of women and girls in many parts of the world, particularly in fragile and conflict-affected countries. It called on the Commission to:

- ensure that financial support to partner countries to respond to the crisis is also targeted to support women and girls;
- pursue a trade policy based on values, including respect for human rights, including gender equality;
- place women and girls at the heart of its global response and empower them to play an active role in the response to the pandemic.

The report called for gender equality to be included among the policy priorities to be considered at the upcoming conference on the future of Europe.