

# Equality between women and men in the European Union in 2018-2020

2021/2020(INI) - 15/12/2021 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 500 votes to 105, with 87 abstentions, a resolution on equality between women and men in the European Union in 2018-2020.

Women's rights are human rights and thus universal and indivisible, as enshrined in the Treaty on European Union and the Charter of Fundamental Rights. The struggle for gender equality and the promotion and protection of women's rights is a truly collective responsibility that requires faster progress and efforts by EU institutions and Member States.

## *An economy based on equality between women and men*

Members are concerned about the gender pay gap (14.1%) and the pension gap (29.5%) that persist in the EU, as well as the often precarious employment situation of women.

Parliament stressed that respect for the right to work, as well as **equal pay and equal treatment**, is an essential precondition for equal rights, economic independence and professional fulfilment for women. It called on the Commission and the Member States to promote policies to eliminate precarious work and involuntary part-time work in order to improve the situation of women in the labour market.

Member States should address gender inequalities through policies that value work, pay, working conditions and living conditions of all workers and their families.

Members welcomed the Commission's proposal for binding pay transparency measures but stressed that this alone will not be enough to address the deep inequalities between women and men. They called on Member States to also develop an **action plan with clear objectives** to tackle the gender pay and pension gaps. In addition, Member States should impose firm measures, including sanctions, when companies fail to comply with labour legislation against discrimination and gender bias.

The Commission and the Council are called upon to ensure **conditionality** in the allocation of EU funds to companies, to ensure that all budgetary appropriations in the Multiannual Financial Framework 2021-2027 respect the principle of gender equality and to promote gender budgeting in all EU policies.

Stressing the right to a **good work-life balance**, Parliament called for greater protection for maternity and paternity by increasing the duration of equal and fully paid leave. It called for the right to flexible working arrangements after maternity and paternity leave to be ensured in practice, to enable both parents to share family responsibilities.

## *The eradication of gender-based violence*

The resolution underlined the need to combat the exploitation, inequalities, discrimination and violence affecting women, noting that harassment in the workplace leads to women being excluded from their chosen careers and sectors and constitutes a serious assault on their psychological and physical health. Members urged the EU and its Member States to devise '**Me Too**' legislation to combat sexual harassment in the workplace.

Domestic violence **increased by 30%** in some Member States during the first lockdown resulting from COVID-19. Parliament called on Member States to implement effective policies to combat violence against women and to ensure that perpetrators are identified and prosecuted, in order to help prevent violence and death, as well as to provide protection, assistance and compensation to women victims of such violence.

Stressing that **sexual exploitation** constitutes a serious form of violence affecting mostly women and children, Members highlighted the need for Member States to ensure adequate funding for social and psychological support and access to public services for victims of trafficking or sexual exploitation and specialised services dedicated to the social inclusion of vulnerable women and girls.

Parliament called on the EU and the Member States, including Bulgaria, Czechia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania and Slovakia, to ratify and/or duly implement the Istanbul Convention.

### ***Health, education, inclusion and poverty***

Access to **sexual, reproductive and other forms of healthcare** for women is a fundamental right. Sexual and reproductive health and rights services are essential healthcare services that should be available to all, including migrant and refugee women.

Member States are called on to tackle sexism and harmful gender stereotypes in their education systems and to combat gendered labour market segmentation in **careers in science, technology, engineering and mathematics** (STEM). Female participation in sporting activities should also be promoted.

Lastly, Members called for gender equality to be mainstreamed into all policymaking and to carry out gender impact assessments when setting up any new policy to help ensure a more coherent and evidence-based EU policy response to gender equality challenges.