



**2018/2684(RSP)**

12.9.2018

# **DRAFT MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION**

further to Question for Oral Answer B8-0000/2018

pursuant to Rule 128(5) of the Rules of Procedure

on experiencing backlash in women's rights and gender equality in the EU  
(2018/2684(RSP))

**João Pimenta Lopes**

on behalf of the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality

**European Parliament resolution on experiencing backlash in women's rights and gender equality in the EU  
(2018/2684(RSP))**

*The European Parliament,*

- having regard to the question to the Commission on experiencing backlash in women's rights and gender equality in the EU (O-0000/2018 – B8-0000/2018),
  - having regard to the motion for a resolution of the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality,
  - having regard to Rules 128(5) and 123(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas backlash can be defined as resistance to progressive social change, regression on acquired rights or seeking to maintain gender inequalities; whereas this resistance can be both formal and informal and can involve passive or active strategies to counter further progress;
- B. whereas all Member States have assumed obligations and duties under international law to respect, guarantee, protect and fulfil fundamental rights and the rights of women;
- C. whereas the Gender Equality Index shows persistent inequalities with only marginal progress from 2005 to 2015; whereas significant improvements are still needed in all Member States in order to create gender-equal societies in which women and men can enjoy equal levels of well-being in all areas of life and work;
- D. whereas the present decade has witnessed a visible drive against gender equality and the women's rights agenda across continents, including in the EU;
- E. whereas the main targets of this backlash appear to be common across countries and include the key areas of the institutional and policy framework for gender equality, such as gender mainstreaming, social and labour protection, education, sexual and reproductive health and rights, preventing and combating violence against women, and working space for women's organisations;
- F. whereas women's organisations have acted as catalysts of and leaders in legislative and policy developments in the past decade in the progression and implementation of women's rights, but are experiencing significant challenges in accessing funding;
- G. whereas in the first half of 2018, several countries in the EU witnessed backlash against the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention);
- H. whereas in 2017, the Council of Europe warned that women's sexual and reproductive rights were under threat as several members sought to restrict legislation on access to abortion and contraception; whereas in a similar vein, the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Committee on the

Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) issued a joint statement in August 2018 emphasising that access to safe and legal abortion, as well as to related services and information, were essential aspects of women's reproductive health, while urging countries to stop regressing on the sexual and reproductive rights of women and girls;

- I. whereas sexuality and gender equality education is not provided in many Member States and is falling short of international requirements, including the World Health Organisation Standards for Sexuality Education;
  1. Urges the Commission and the Member States to maintain a strong commitment to gender equality and women's rights;
  2. Notes that the nature, intensity and effects of the backlash have varied among countries and regions, which has in some cases remained at the level of rhetoric, while in others it has been concretised into measures and initiatives as part of a strategic approach;
  3. Considers that enshrining women's rights in law is not sufficient to achieve gender equality;
  4. Calls on all Member States to assume and abide by the international commitments and ensure respect for the principles enshrined in their fundamental laws as regards fundamental and women's rights;
  5. Emphasises that preventing and combating violence against women is more important than ever, as in addition to persistent problems in state responses, new forms of violence have spread, such as sexist hate speech, misogyny and online violence;
  6. Considers it striking that the backlash is built on a convention that targets violence against women, a policy area on which there is a strong consensus; is therefore worried that the rejection of the norm of zero tolerance of violence against women indicates that the very essence of the principles of human rights, equality and dignity is being questioned; calls on the Council to conclude the accession and full implementation of the Istanbul Convention by the EU and to advocate its ratification by the Member States;
  7. Expresses its strong support for the widespread initiatives, including grassroots initiatives, demanding equality for women and men promoted by women's organisations,
  8. Calls on the Member States to review their criteria for awarding funding to civil society organisations in order to ensure that they are bias free and support a strong and diverse civil society;
  9. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to ensure that their mechanisms for the distribution, monitoring and evaluation of funding are gender sensitive and responsive to the problems that specific organisations face at the time of backlash;
  10. Points out the disastrous long-term impact of austerity measures on women's economic empowerment and on gender equality, with rising unemployment and cuts in public services and benefits resulting in a care crisis that further disempowers women;

11. Calls on the Member States to end and reverse austerity measures and cutbacks that apply to gender equality programming, public services and, in particular, the provision of sexual and reproductive healthcare;
12. Expresses concern that the opponents of reproductive rights and autonomy have had a significant influence on national law and policy, seeking to impose further restrictions on women's health and reproductive rights;
13. Recommends that Member States ensure that comprehensive sexuality education is provided to all young people;
14. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Commission and the Council.