



**2015/2228(INI)**

26.1.2016

# **DRAFT REPORT**

on poverty: a gender perspective  
(2015/2228(INI))

Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality

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## MOTION FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION

### on poverty: a gender perspective (2015/2228(INI))

*The European Parliament,*

- having regard to Articles 2 and 3(3) of the Treaty on European Union,
- having regard to Articles 8, 151, 153 and 157 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union,
- having regard to the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, in particular its provisions on social rights and on equality between men and women,
- having regard to the 1979 UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW),
- having regard to the EU's growth strategy, Europe 2020, and in particular its objective to reduce the number of Europeans living below national poverty lines by 25 % by 2020, thereby lifting over 20 million people out of poverty,
- having regard to the Commission 2013 Social Investment Package (SIP),
- having regard to the European Social Fund Gender Mainstreaming Community of Practice (GenderCop), and in particular the GenderCop working group on poverty and inclusion,
- having regard to Article 7 of the Common Provision Regulation for the Structural Funds 2014-2020,
- having regard to the 2014 Annual Convention of the European Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion,
- having regard to 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 (recast),
- having regard to Council Directive 2010/18/EU of 8 March 2010 on implementing the revised Framework Agreement on parental leave concluded by BUSINESSEUROPE, UEAPME, CEEP and ETUC and repealing Directive 96/34/EC,
- having regard to the Commission Roadmap of August 2015 on a new start to address the challenges of work-life balance faced by working families,
- having regard to the Commission staff working document of 3 December 2015 entitled 'Strategic engagement for gender equality 2016-2019' (SWD (2015)278 final),
- having regard to its resolution of 8 March 2011 on the face of female poverty in the

European Union<sup>1</sup>,

- having regard to its resolution of 13 September 2011 on the situation of women approaching retirement age<sup>2</sup>,
  - having regard to its resolution of 25 October 2011 on the situation of single mothers<sup>3</sup>,
  - having regard to its resolution of 24 May 2012 on the application of the principle of equal pay for male and female workers for equal work or work of equal value<sup>4</sup>,
  - having regard to its resolution of 12 March 2013 on the impact of the economic crisis on gender equality and women's rights<sup>5</sup>,
  - having regard to its resolution of 10 March 2015 on progress on equality between women and men in the European Union in 2013<sup>6</sup>,
  - having regard to its resolution of 9 June 2015 on the EU Strategy for equality between women and men post 2015<sup>7</sup>,
  - having regard to its resolution of 8 October 2015 on the application of 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<sup>8</sup>,
  - having regard to Rule 52 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 and the Committee on Culture and Education (A8-0000/2016),
- A. whereas poverty rates among women vary greatly between the Member States; whereas regardless of how specific the groups at risk are such as older women, lone parents, women with disabilities, the poverty rates among migrant women and women from ethnic minorities are the same throughout the European Union;
- B. whereas single-parent families, especially families headed by single mothers, are at greater risk of poverty or social exclusion; whereas according to Eurostat, women accounted for 56.6% of single-parent households in the Union in 2014; whereas poverty has a strong impact on children and there is a risk of transmission of poverty over several generations;
- C. whereas living at risk of poverty translates into social exclusion in terms of access to public transport, primary healthcare services, decent housing and culture;

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<sup>1</sup> OJ C 199 E, 7.7.2012, p. 77.

<sup>2</sup> OJ C 51 E, 22.2.2013, p. 9.

<sup>3</sup> OJ C 131 E, 8.5.2013, p. 60.

<sup>4</sup> OJ C 264 E, 13.9.2013, p. 75.

<sup>5</sup> Texts adopted, P7\_TA(2013)0073.

<sup>6</sup> Texts adopted, P8\_TA(2015)0050.

<sup>7</sup> Texts adopted, P8\_TA(2015)0218.

<sup>8</sup> Texts adopted, P8\_TA(2015)0351.

- D. whereas the gender pay gap stands at 16.3 % and whereas the atypical and flexible forms of working contracts (zero hour contracts, temporary work, interim jobs etc.) also affect women more than men; whereas these insecure contracts put women at greater risk of poverty and result in a category of the 'working poor' being created;
- E. whereas women often take the responsibility for the care of elderly or ill family members as well as for children, resulting in their lower participation in the labour market, which consequently diminishes their overall income; whereas the establishment of high-quality childcare services and facilities at affordable prices reduces the risk of impoverishment; whereas few Member States have achieved or surpassed the Barcelona objectives;
- F. whereas for the whole EU27, 34 % of single mothers of active age are at risk of poverty versus 17 % in the case of other families of active age with children;
- G. whereas the pension gap averages 40%; whereas this pension gap represents an obstacle to women's economic independence and is one of the reasons why women find themselves falling below the poverty line as they grow older;
- H. whereas the increasing risk of poverty is closely linked to budget cuts in education, social security systems and care services; whereas women have been hardest hit by the crisis and the austerity measures taken in several European countries;
- I. whereas the stereotypes widely conveyed by society contribute to the feminisation of poverty; whereas these stereotypes are developed during childhood and are reflected in the choice of training and education and on into the labour market; whereas women are still too often confined to 'women-friendly' tasks and remain under-represented in certain areas such as mathematics, science, engineering, and so on; whereas these stereotypes lead to discrimination in terms of reclassification;
- J. whereas there are shortcomings in the characterisation of the concept of 'household' in terms both of data collection and of taxation; whereas this concept of 'household' does not allow the policy-making process to take into account the situation of women in terms of income or fiscal obligations; whereas the taxation system in force influences women's access to the labour market and their economic independence;
- K. whereas the Europe 2020 strategy, which seeks to make the EU a smart, sustainable and inclusive economy, entails ambitious targets, such as a 75 % employment rate and a reduction of at least 20 million in the number of people affected by or at risk of poverty and social exclusion by 2020;

### **Poverty and work-life balance**

1. Notes that the lack of affordable high-quality care, whether for children or for the sick or elderly, contributes to the gender employment gap, the pay gap and the related pension gap; emphasises that equal access to childcare and free, high-quality education is central to securing equal opportunities and breaking poverty cycles;
2. Calls on the Member States and the Commission to develop and utilise the available financial instruments, including the Social Investment Package, to meet the Barcelona

objectives; calls, in this context, for the Social Fund and the ERDF to be improved, for priority to be given, in the use of social investments and the EFSI regulation, to the establishment of public and private childcare facilities, and for the flexibility mechanism introduced in the context of the Stability and Growth Pact to be used for financing of childcare facilities; proposes the creation of a specific line in the EU budget to fund, through a co-financing mechanism, incentives for specific areas where there is a shortage of childcare facilities and where the female employment rate is extremely low;

3. Calls on the Commission to undertake a comprehensive and global legislative action to modernise in a coherent way the types of leave, namely maternity, paternity, parental and carers' leave, so as to boost women's participation in the labour market;
4. Calls for there to be a move towards the individualisation of rights in social equity policy;

### **Poverty and work**

5. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to implement policies to promote the employment of women and the integration into the labour market of socially marginalised groups of women, in the light of the objectives of the Europe 2020 strategy, with an emphasis on life-long learning, the development of affordable and high-quality public care services, flexible working time arrangements and measures to combat the segregation of men and women by occupation and sector;
6. Notes that women are disproportionately and often involuntarily concentrated in precarious work; urges the Member States to consider implementing the International Labour Organisation (ILO) recommendations intended to reduce the scale of precarious work, such as restricting the circumstances in which precarious contracts can be used and limiting the length of time workers can be employed on such a contract;
7. Reiterates its call on the Commission to revise the existing legislation in order to reduce the pay and pension gap between men and women;
8. Invites the Commission to carry out an impact assessment on minimum income schemes in the EU and to consider further steps that would take into account the economic and social circumstances of each Member State as well as an assessment of whether the schemes enable households to meet basic personal needs; invites the Commission to evaluate on this basis the manner of, and the means for providing an adequate minimum income above the poverty threshold of 60 % of national median income in all Member States in line with national practices and traditions while respecting their individual characteristics in order to support social convergence across the EU;

### **Poverty: general recommendations**

9. Notes that people living in poverty often pay a higher unit cost compared to the better-off for the same goods and services that are essential to their social and economic survival, particularly with regard to telecommunications and energy; calls on the Member States to work closely with suppliers and operators on the development of

support schemes and social pricing for the most deprived in society;

10. Stresses that in all Member States the risk of poverty and social exclusion among children is strongly linked to their parents' level of education, and in particular to that of their mothers, and their parents' situation in the labour market and their social conditions; stresses the need to establish a framework of support for teenage mothers, for whom leaving school early is a first step towards poverty;
11. Notes that the absence of a partner income is a major contributing factor to the poverty trap and to the social exclusion of women; notes the often precarious situation of divorced women who are heads of household, for whom an adequate level of maintenance should be defined;
12. Notes that women's economic independence plays a crucial role in their ability to escape situations of violence; calls for the provision of social protection systems guaranteeing the social rights of women who are victims of violence;
13. Believes that many aspects of female poverty remain unrecognised, including for example the exclusion of women from access to culture and social participation; considers that the severe material deprivation indicators relating to access to culture are inadequate and that more indicators should be developed for assessing exclusion, particularly its influence on the vicious circle of poverty;
14. Encourages the Member States and the Commission to develop exchanges of best practice on legislative and budgetary instruments for combating poverty;
15. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and the Commission.

## EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

The problem of female poverty and the social exclusion of women has been a matter of great concern to Parliament for several years. There have been numerous resolutions calling for the causes and consequences of the many facets of this insecurity to be addressed. However, it has to be stated that in 2016 little progress has been achieved despite the efforts made.

The economic crisis from which the Union is gradually emerging pushed up the statistics for the number of people, both men and women, who are at risk of poverty and social exclusion.

According to the latest statistics available on the distribution of monetary poverty and income inequalities in the EU, 16.6% of the EU-28 population were considered to be at risk of poverty after social transfers. This risk was 17.2% for women as against 16.1% for men. Admittedly, those figures conceal many differences across the Member States.

However, women are still on average always more affected than men, and all the more so if they are single mothers, pensioners, immigrants or disabled. They continue to be over-represented in insecure jobs, career breaks, 'women-friendly' occupations (health care, domestic work, etc.) and part-time jobs, and more due to the need to care for relatives than to deliberate choice.

The pay gap compared to their male counterparts and the pension gap which results from disrupting a career path in the attempt to combine private and professional lives place on the shoulders of women in financial difficulties a heavy burden and day-to-day uncertainty as to their economic independence.

This report identifies the persistent inequalities that women suffer. It highlights the efforts that need to be made by the EU and the Member States to give to all, without distinction of gender, equal opportunities in the field of employment, social security, pay, education, child care and culture. It recalls the means, particularly financial, already available to Europe and the Member States to stem the trend towards the impoverishment of half the population.

For the fight against female poverty is a matter of social justice. The public expenditure incurred by the Member States to reduce this injustice, whether direct or indirect, should not be seen as a waste or as a mere cost item, but as a wise and worthwhile investment which breaks the vicious cycle of poverty.

This expenditure would both liberate the workforce from the constraints of family obligations and sustain the domestic demand needed for the EU economy to recover.

Addressing the issue of female poverty would also offer, at least in part, a way of resolving the problem of child poverty in the long term, and thus global poverty.