

NEWSLETTER NOVEMBER 2018

NOTE FROM THE CHAIR



Dear Readers,

November has been a truly hectic month for our Committee. We have had three Committee meetings, including a daylong one. Due to the amount of topics addressed during these meetings I will only highlight the decisions adopted by FEMM Members with their vote as well as some of the exchanges of views we held.

From the meeting of 8 November, I would like to mention the exchange of views that FEMM held with two representatives of the International Association of Institutions of Advanced Gender Studies regarding the situation of gender studies in Hungary and other Member States.

During its meeting of 21 November, FEMM adopted two key files: the draft report on Gender Equality and taxation policies in the EU (jointly with ECON); and the legislative opinion on the establishment of the Rights and Values programme in the framework of the next MFF. The meeting included a hearing on Children victims or witnesses of gender-based violence within families. The hearing took place on the occasion of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women and dealt with one of the worst consequences of violence against women: violence within the family, because domestic violence has a harmful effect on the development of children.

In the daylong meeting of 27 November, Members adopted, among others, the following initiatives: the draft report on Gender mainstreaming in the European Parliament; the oral question and the resolution on the Backlash in Women's Rights and Gender Equality in the EU; the legislative opinions on the Justice Programme and on the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument, both in the framework of the next MFF and the oral question and resolution on Policy challenges and strategies against women's cancers and related comorbidities.

Experiencing Backlash in Women's Rights and Gender Equality in the EU was the title of the hearing that opened our Committee meeting of 27 November. The event allowed FEMM Members to reflect on the difficult situation that women's rights and gender are currently facing in Europe. This situation risks to create a climate in which societal progress and human rights are not as valued and respected as before.

Thank you to all who came or followed us via [webstream](#).

LAST COMMITTEE MEETINGS

9 NOVEMBER

European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) - Adoption of draft opinion



The rapporteur, Ms Kozłowska-Rajewicz (EPP, Poland) highlights, among others, the importance of education, particularly ICT education, the importance of the reconciliation of professional work with family duties and the situation of young people who are neither in employment nor in education and training. 92 amendments were tabled. The rapporteur proposed 10 compromises.

The European Social Fund Plus, part of the EU's budget from 2021-2027, will be the main financial instrument to strengthen Europe's social dimension. The proposed ESF Plus Regulation will integrate the current ESF, YEI, FEAD, EaSI and the EU Health programme with the ESF being complementary to other funds. The draft opinion was adopted by 13 votes in favour to 1 vote against, with 1 abstention.

[Link to the Procedure](#)

Gender studies in Hungary - Exchange of views

Gender Studies are at stake in Hungary due to the decision of the government cancelling the funding of the two existing master programmes in this field.

A letter sent by the International Association of Institutions of Advanced Gender Studies (RINGS) drew the attention of FEMM Members to this possibility some weeks ago. Since then, the deletion from the list of accredited masters programmes has taken place by the means of a governmental decree published in the Hungarian official gazette which came into effect on 13 October.

The representatives from the network discussed this and informed FEMM Members about the situation of gender studies in other Member States.



21 NOVEMBER

Gender equality and Taxation policies in the EU - Vote



The draft report, whose rapporteurs are Mr Ernest Urtasun (Greens/EFA, Spain) on behalf of FEMM and Ms Marisa Matías (GUE/NGL, Portugal) on behalf of ECON, stresses that taxation policies can have explicit or implicit gender biases. According to the text, the lack of a gender perspective in EU and national taxation policies reinforces current gender gaps, creates disincentives for women to enter and remain in the labour market, and reproduces traditional gender roles and stereotypes.

The draft report calls on the Commission to support gender equality in all taxation policies and to issue specific guidelines and recommendations to Member States. It also urges Member States to shift from joint taxation to individual taxation, to eliminate tax-related disincentives to female employment and to provide for VAT exemptions, reduced rates and zero-rates for products and services with positive social, health and/or environmental effects. The report was adopted by 41 votes in favour to 10 votes against with 15 abstentions

[Link to the Procedure](#)

Establishing the Rights and Values programme - Vote

Within the new Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) for 2021-2027, the Commission decided to create a Justice, Rights and Values Fund with two underlying funding programmes: the Justice programme and the Rights and Values programme. It has been decided that FEMM will be associated committee to the LIBE's report on the Rights and Values programme, which contains the strand Daphne, envisaged to fund actions against violence against women. The rapporteur, Ms Sirpa Pietikäinen (EPP, Finland), introduces amendments which strengthen the provisions of the proposal in view of the gender equality. In specific, she adds the promotion and implementation of the Istanbul Convention as an additional focus of the Daphne strand. The opinion was adopted by 21 votes in favour to 2 votes against with 2 abstentions.



[Link to the Procedure](#)

Discharge 2017: Commission and EIGE - Consideration of draft opinions



Every year, the Committee on Budgetary Control (CONT) prepares the discharge procedures for the European Commission, all other institutions and Union bodies (agencies and joint undertakings) in receipt of funds from the EU General Budget. FEMM Committee usually submits two opinions: one to the discharge for the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) and one to the discharge for the European Commission.

On EIGE the rapporteur, Ms Malin Björk (GUE/NGL, Sweden), considers that the discharge can be granted following the Court of Auditors positive opinion for with regard to the EIGE's annual account for the financial year 2017.

On the Commission, the draft opinion addresses a series of requests to the Commission, such as: explicitly mentioning gender equality in heading 3, 'Security and citizenship'; keeping a separate budget line for the Daphne specific objective; increased transparency, targeted actions and specific budget lines in order to meeting the goals of gender equality in EU external action, including Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights; and the inclusion of targeted actions on women's rights and gender equality within migration and asylum policies. The opinions will be voted on 23 January 2019.

[Link to the procedure \(EIGE\)](#)

[Link to the procedure \(Commission\)](#)

Children victims or witnesses of gender-based violence within families – Hearing

Domestic violence is a violation of children's rights whether they are victims themselves or witnesses of violence in the family. Domestic violence has a harmful effect on the development of children. The exposure to gender-based violence denies children their right to a safe and stable home environment. Domestic violence against children has many different manifestations and can be in the form of sexual violence, physical and/or psychological violence. FEMM Members addressed via the exchange of views with the five experts invited, the problem of children who are victims of gender-based violence, both as witness or as direct victims and who, in some cases, lose their mother killed by their father.



[Link to the Study of PolDep](#)

27 NOVEMBER

Experiencing Backlash in Women's Rights and Gender Equality in the EU - Hearing



While the progress of women's rights and the achievement of gender equality are fundamental values and goals of the EU, we are currently witnessing a number of backlashes in these areas. Gender equality policies, sexual education and women's reproductive rights are questioned. We can see general tendencies worldwide, but in some Member States the situation seems to be particularly worrying. In recent years, anti-abortion campaigns, smear campaigns against women's rights organisations, defunding of feminist organisations as well as the substitution of gender mainstreaming with family mainstreaming have been seen. This seems to hinder the proper functioning of civil society organisations, but also risks to create a climate in which societal progress and human rights are not as valued and respected as before. FEMM members discussed with the experts Katrine Thomassen (Centre for Reproductive Rights), Christian Berger and Lena Jäger (Frauenvolksbegehren) and Virginija Langbakk (EIGE) the current state of the backlash and the way forward.

Experiencing Backlash in Women's Rights and Gender Equality in the EU - Adoption of question for oral answer and a resolution

Recently the world has witnessed a trend pointing to a growing backlash against women's rights and gender equality. The rapporteur and the Members bring to the attention the attempts to limit women's decisions over their bodies and lives to a more conservative role, promotion of discrimination and violence towards LGBTI people, halting of education reforms negatively affecting gender equality, gender studies and sexuality, lack of efforts on the prevention and combating of violence against women, intensification of sexist hate speech, misogyny and online violence. Moreover, women's rights organizations are in some Member States facing a more hostile environment.



The rapporteur, Mr. João Pimenta Lopes (GUE/NGL, Portugal), would like to put forward several questions to the Commission about its strategy of dealing with the rising backlash against women's rights and gender equality in the EU. Specifically, whether the Members are interested to know if the Commission is working to identify the main causes of the backlash at EU level. Given the evidence and extension of the backlash across the Member States, is the Commission envisaging to develop a strategy to counter the backlash and strengthen the promotion of gender equality and gender mainstreaming overall and how is it working with the women's movements, often endangered on the ground?

The question for oral answer was adopted. The motion for a resolution was adopted by 17 votes in favour to 5 votes against with 3 abstentions.

Gender mainstreaming in the European Parliament - Vote



The rapporteur, Ms Angelika Mlinar (ALDE, Austria), takes stock in the draft report of the state of play inside the Parliament on promoting and achieving gender mainstreaming, both in its administration and at the political level.

Gender mainstreaming is used as one of the means to advance gender equality in the Parliament. The rapporteur assesses progress made over the last two years (since the previous report on gender mainstreaming was adopted), welcomes all the achievements and underlines

the shortcomings. The draft report gives concrete recommendations on how to further improve the situation, including some recommendations for the 2019-2024 parliamentary term.

The FEMM Committee held exchange of views on the draft report on 10 October. The report was adopted by 19 votes in favour to 6 votes against with no abstentions.

[Link to the procedure](#)

Justice programme - Vote

The opinion, whose rapporteur is Ms Angelika Mlinar (ALDE, Austria), aims at introducing the gender perspective in the proposed MFF Justice Programme. The rapporteur considers that the EU's justice system does not deliver adequate justice and protection to women and girls and consequently, victims of gender-based violence do not receive the necessary support. In order to tackle this situation the text calls for a gender-sensitive access to justice for all as a principle of the functioning of a European area of Justice. The opinion also calls to support and promote judicial training, with a view to fostering a common legal, judicial and rule of law culture taking into consideration the gender perspective and supporting the rights of victims of crime, particularly women and children.



The rapporteur highlights the importance of supporting the work of civil society organisations and calls for providing an adequate level of funding opportunities for them, especially for small and medium size organisations.

Finally, the rapporteur underlines the need for gender and age disaggregated data and indicators to report on the progress of the Programme. The opinion was adopted by 18 votes in favour to 2 votes against, with 4 abstentions.

[Link to the Procedure](#)

Establishing the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument - Vote



The rapporteur, Ms Eleonora Forenza (GUE/NGL, Italy,) finds that the gender perspective in the Commission's proposal is very weak and proposes amendments to improve it. She highlights the need for this Regulation to address the rise of the backlash against women's rights and gender equality globally and assist the organizations working on sexual and reproductive health and rights, as well as fighting against different forms of gender-based violence. On migration issues the rapporteur considers that this instrument should take a more human rights- and gender-sensitive approach. The final opinion as adopted suggests that at

least 85% of Official Development Assistance funded programmes should have gender equality as a significant objective, and Gender equality and women and girls' empowerment as the new thematic programme with a budget of EUR 1700 million. The opinion was adopted by 17 votes for, 6 against and 2 abstentions.

[Link to the procedure](#)

European Semester for economic policy coordination: Annual Growth Survey 2019 - Adoption of position in the form of amendments

The rapporteur, Mr Ernest Urtasun (Greens-EFA, Spain) points out that there is still a lack of gender perspective and indicators in the framework of the European Semester and calls for greater inclusion of gender mainstreaming perspective in the formulation of the country specific recommendations. He also calls for a strengthening of public services such as education, health or childcare, that are key for an equal and fair participation of women in the labour market. 20 amendments were adopted.



[Link to the procedure](#)

Policy challenges and strategies against women's cancers and related comorbidities - Vote



Eurostat's data shows that around 1.3 million people die yearly because of cancer in the EU and out of that approximately 600 thousands are women. The draft resolution is calling for a comprehensive EU strategy and evidence-based, cost-effective policies against cancer and related comorbidities.

The resolution, which rapporteur is Ms Daniela Aiuto (EFDD, Italy), also notes that the situation is fragmented and diverse across the EU and there are many significant disparities among Member States, therefore, it stresses that cooperation at European level together with the efficient use of EU funds can contribute to the development of an effective EU strategy against cancer.

Parliamentarians invite the Commission to create and support high-quality cancer care systems with standards for cancer screening programmes in the EU that would be common for all Member States.

The Commission could also serve as a platform to exchange best practices among the Member States with regard to cancer care models and standards for cancer programmes tailored to individual situation and financial capabilities to address common challenges in a synergistic way.

Finally, the Members of the Committee are also inviting the Commission and Member States to establish awareness campaigns of gender specific cancers disproportionately affecting women and on how to prevent cancer with information about the modifiable lifestyle factors that can prevent cancer.

The question for oral answer was adopted. The motion for a resolution was adopted by 23 votes in favour to 1 vote against with no abstentions.

Strategic planning on the CAP - Consideration of draft opinion

The Commission proposal for the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) for 2021-2027 sets the budgetary framework and main orientations for the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) on which basis the Commission presents a set of regulations laying down the legislative framework for the CAP in the period 2021-2027. In particular, the Commission identified higher environmental and climate action ambition, as well as better targeting of support as top priorities of the post-2020 CAP. It also proposed as a way to improve the performance of the CAP to shift the policy focus from compliance to performance, and rebalances responsibilities between the EU and the Member State level with more subsidiarity. The new model aims at better achieving EU objectives based on strategic planning, broad policy interventions and common performance indicators, thus improving policy coherence across the future CAP and with other EU objectives. The rapporteur, Ms Marijana Petir (EPP, Croatia), introduced amendments aiming at strengthening the gender focus by identifying targets for interventions in favour of women to be added in particular to the specific objectives of the proposal.



[Link to the procedure](#)

Post-Arab Spring: Way Forward for the MENA region - Consideration of draft opinion



The rapporteur, Ms Maria Arena (S&D, Belgium), points out that while bold measures have been taken by some countries of the MENA Region to improve women's conditions, including the enactment of quotas and gender parity in nominations, the status of women however has not improved in most Arab Spring countries and their social, economic and political demands have not been fulfilled. The rapporteur additionally makes suggestion on which measures should be taken in order to make fundamental steps forward for gender equality and women's rights in the MENA region. The opinion will be voted on 23rd January in FEMM committee.

[Link to the procedure](#)

European Semester for economic policy coordination: Employment and Social Aspects in the Annual Growth Survey 2019 - Consideration of draft opinion

The draft opinion to EMPL report points out persistent gender gaps in the EU and the lack of a gender perspective and gender indicators in the framework of the European Semester. Therefore, the rapporteur, Ms Pina Picierno (S&D, Italy), calls on the Commission to ensure greater inclusion of a gender mainstreaming perspective in the development of country-specific recommendations, stability and convergence programmes and national reform programme by introducing qualitative targets and measures that address persistent gender gaps and to systematically apply the principle of gender budgeting. The rapporteur also calls for inclusion of the Gender Equality Index as one of the European Semester's tools for monitoring progress towards employment and social targets.



The draft opinion notes that women are more affected by cuts to public services, including healthcare, education and housing, therefore, rapporteur reiterates that Member States should be using more structural funds for investment in public care structures and services for children, the elderly and other dependents in order to facilitate women's return to the labour market and ensure a work-life balance.

The draft opinion once again underlines the importance of equal treatment and opportunities between women and men, the right to equal pay for work of equal value, and the right to high-quality, affordable care services and calls on the Commission to carry out gender impact assessment of the structural reforms implemented so far.

[Link to the Procedure](#)

Women's rights in Western Balkans - Consideration of question for oral answer and a resolution



The draft oral question and the draft resolution, which rapporteur is Ms Biljana Borzan (S&D, Croatia), deal with the situation of Women's Rights in the Western Balkans. The initiative addresses the socio-economic factors impacting on women's rights: employment rate and pay /pension gap, quality of education, life-long-learning, possibilities to combine work and family responsibilities and, closely linked to this, the political participation of women in society. The draft resolution and the oral question also analyse violence against women in the Western Balkans considering rates, evolution of rates, reporting of cases of violence against women and societal awareness. The draft texts also discuss LGBTI rights and sexual and reproductive health and rights.

From a geographical point of view the initiative focus on Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro, Serbia, Kosovo and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

NEXT COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Our next Committee meeting will take place on 23 January 2019. These are some of the topics that will be dealt with:

- Post-Arab Spring: Way Forward for the MENA region -Adoption of draft opinion
- Discharge 2017: General budget of the EU - European Commission/EIGE - Adoption of draft opinions
- Presentation of the Council Presidency's programme
- Implementation of the EU Funds aimed at fighting violence against women and girls - Hearing

BULLETIN

EIGE



Women with disabilities face a double disadvantage

Women with disabilities face a double disadvantage because of their gender and their disability. They are confronted with more obstacles than women without disabilities and face more challenges than their male peers. They are less likely to have a university degree, work outside the home and experience a higher risk of poverty. Due to gender stereotypes, the bulk of caring responsibilities and housework often falls on their shoulders. These are some of the findings from EIGE's Gender Equality Index that analyses gender equality among and between different groups of people.

To find out more, read EIGE's factsheet:

[Link to the factsheet](#)



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