

NEWSLETTER JANUARY 2019

NOTE FROM THE CHAIR



Dear Readers,

The first FEMM committee meeting in 2019 was held on 23 January. Given the European elections to be held in May and the approaching end of this legislative term, our committee has started this year ambitiously and with a number of votes in order to complete all the files in time. We welcomed the Romanian Presidency and in discussing their priorities again underlined our dissatisfaction with the lack of progress on gender equality in the European Union. Finally, an important hearing on the EU funding to fight violence against women and girls gave us much food for thought in particular in light of the upcoming negotiations with the Council on the new instrument Rights

and Values which will cover Daphne funds under the next MFF.

I also want to share a good news that the political agreement between the European Parliament and the Council was found on the proposal on the Work-life balance directive. After difficult negotiations, the European citizens will finally be able to benefit from the more just and gender-equal laws and policies on the family leaves and the accompanying measures enabling them to better balance their work and family lives.

And finally, please allow me to wish you all a very successful work in 2019 on advancing the rights and position of women in our societies!

Stay with us and follow our meetings via the [webstream](#)!

LAST COMMITTEE MEETINGS

23 JANUARY

Opinion on post-Arab Spring: way forward for the MENA region - Vote



The rapporteur, Maria Arena (S&D, Belgium) pointed out that while bold measures have been taken by some countries of the MENA region to improve conditions for women, including the enactment of quotas and gender parity in nominations which gave access to political life and participation in the decision making process to a greater number of women. Despite the increased assuming of leadership positions across public and private sectors, 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 makes suggestions on measures to be taken in order to make fundamental steps forward for

gender equality and women's rights in the MENA region. 55 amendment have been tabled, the rapporteur proposed 4 compromises.

The opinion was adopted by 21 votes in favour to 7 against with 0 abstentions.

[Link to the procedure](#)

Opinions on Discharge 2017: Commission and EIGE - Vote

Every year, the Committee on Budgetary Control prepares the discharge procedures for all institutions and Union bodies 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) considered 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. The opinion was adopted by 22 votes in favour to 6 against with 0 abstentions.

On the general budget of the Commission, the draft opinion addressed a series of requested 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. The opinion was adopted by 21 votes in favour to 7 against with 0 abstentions.



[Link to the procedure](#)

Opinion on European Semester for economic policy coordination: Employment and Social Aspects in the Annual Growth Survey 2019 – vote



In this opinion the rapporteur Pina Picierno (S&D, Italy) pointed out the persistent gender gaps in the EU and the need to eliminate them in order to achieve gender equality and to end the unacceptable gender discrimination. Specifically, the opinion called 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. Additionally, Gender Equality Index should be included as one of the European Semester's tools for monitoring progress towards employment and social targets. The opinion noted that women are affected by cuts to public services, including healthcare, education and housing, therefore calling on Member States to use 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 opinion was adopted by 19 votes in favour to 3 against with 6

abstentions.

[Link to the procedure](#)

Oral question and resolution on Women's rights in Western Balkans - Vote

The draft oral question and the draft resolution, for which the rapporteur is Biljana Borzan (S&D, Croatia), dealt with the situation of women's rights in the Western Balkans (focus on Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia, Kosovo and the FYR Macedonia). The initiative addressed the socio-economic factors impacting women's rights: employment rate and pay/pension gap, quality of education, life-long learning, possibilities to combine work and family life and, closely linked to this, the political participation of women in society. The texts also analysed violence against women in the Western Balkans considering the increase in prevalence, reporting of cases and societal awareness. Further, LGBTI rights and sexual and reproductive health and rights were discussed. 113 amendments have been tabled and the rapporteur has proposed 9 compromises. The resolution was adopted by 15 votes in favour to 3 against with 8 abstentions.



Presentation of the Council Presidency's programme by Marius-Constantin Budai, Minister for Labour and Social Justice, Romania



Mr Marius-Constantin Budai, Minister for Labour and Social Justice presented the priorities of the Romanian Presidency of the Council of the EU in the field of women's rights and gender equality. For the Romanian Presidency, the priority files are the Directive on Work-Life Balance for Parents and Carers and the Women on Boards Directive as well as a continuous work on the gender pay gap and on the ratification of the Istanbul Convention. 'Cohesion' is the motto of Romania's EU Council presidency.

Implementation of the EU Funds aimed at fighting violence against women and girls – Hearing

The aim of the hearing was to analyse the effectiveness of money spent on combating violence against women in the context of the EU accession to the Istanbul Convention. The event centred on the presentations of experts Ms Rosa Logar from the WAVE Network, Evelyn Probst from the Global Alliance against Trafficking in Women (GAATW) and Joanna Maycock of the European Women's Lobby. The Daphne programme was created in 1997 as an initiative to fund NGO projects that support victims of violence and combat the violence against women, children and young people. Due to the success of the initiative, the pilot was continued as the Daphne Programme for the period 2000-2003 with a funding of 20 million euros. It was followed by the Daphne II Programme 2004-2006 (average annual budget of €10 million) and later by the Daphne III programme for 2007-2013 (with average annual budget of €16.7 million). The current programme covers the period 2014-2020 as a part of the Rights, Equality and Citizenship (REC) Programme.



Oral question and resolution on Women's role in preventing radicalisation - exchange of views



FEMM Committee members discussed a draft oral question and a draft resolution on the Women's role in preventing radicalisation. The rapporteur Ms Jiménez Becerril (EPP, Spain), shed light in both oral question and resolution on the phenomenon that not only men but a growing number of women are becoming radicalised and the different paths towards radicalisation where internet and social media play an important role. To tackle and prevent radicalisation, she put forward questions to the Commission on its strategy, cooperation with other European institutions and the use of funds. While women, and especially female family members who are the first ones to spot any signs of radicalisation within their environment, can play a central part in prevention, the rapporteur also hints at the active role that women play in the preparation and in committing terrorist acts. She suggests that the right information and tools, creating counter-narratives and using programs to fund prevention campaigns, will help tackling women's radicalisation.

Mission to Italy - 2018

Within the frame of the programme for mission visits for the second half of 2018, the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality was authorised to send a delegation to Rome and Naples, Italy, 17-19 December 2018.

In the first location, the goal of the mission was to deal with the problem of abuse of the conscientious objection to deny the right of care to women (namely on sexual and reproductive rights) and to look into potential abuses and violations of Law 194 (regarding abortion), with a special focus on conscientious objection to abortion among doctors. In the second location, the delegation aimed at assessing the situation of women migrants who are victims of trafficking for the purpose of prostitution and to assess the measures in place to protect these victims. Following Members participated in the mission: Vilija Blinkevičiūtė (S&D)(chairperson of the mission), Anna Záborská (EPP), Monika Vana (Greens/EFA), Daniela Aiuto (EFDD), Pina Picierno (S&D), Eleonora Forenza (GUE/NGL) and Laura Agea (EFDD).



[Link to the Mission Report](#)

NEXT COMMITTEE MEETINGS

The next meetings will be held on

- 26 February 2019, 15.00 – 18.30 (Brussels)
- 27 February 2019, 9.00 – 12.30 (Brussels)

Then we will vote and/or discuss, among others, the following topics:

- Establishing rules on support for strategic plans to be drawn up by Member States under the Common agricultural policy (CAP Strategic Plans) and financed by the European Agricultural Guarantee Fund (EAGF) and by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) - vote
- Jurisdiction, recognition and enforcement of decisions in matrimonial matters and the matters of parental responsibility, and on international child abduction (recast) - vote
- Women's role in preventing radicalisation - vote
- The labour and social situation of women in the EU - public hearing
- 50/50 Campaign - European Women's Lobby - presentation and exchange of views

BULLETIN

Work-Life Balance Directive



The EP negotiators struck a deal with EU ministers on paternity leave and non-transferable parental leave to boost women's chances in the labour market in the 6th trilogue which took place on 24 January, leading the way to the new work-life balance directive.

The agreement sets minimum requirements for member states, in a bid to boost women's representation in the workplace and strengthen the role of a father or an equivalent second parent in the family. Negotiators agreed to introduce the right to at least 10 working days of paid **paternity leave** for fathers and equivalent second parents (where a second parent is recognised by national law) around the time of birth or adoption and paid at the level of sick pay. They also added two months of non-transferable and paid **parental leave**. This leave should be an individual right, creating the appropriate conditions for a more balanced distribution of caring responsibilities. Negotiators agreed that member states would set an adequate level of payment or allowance for the minimum non-transferable period of parental leave, taking into account that the take-up of parental leave often results in a loss of income for the family and a higher-paid family member (who is often a man) should be able to make use of this right. They further agreed on 5 days per year of **carer's leave** for workers providing personal care to a relative or a person living in the same household and with a serious medical condition or age-related impairment. Finally, working parents and carers will be able to request an adjustment to their working patterns in form of **flexible working arrangements** (for example remote working or flexible schedules).

Agnieszka KOZŁOWSKA-RAJEWICZ MEP, the lead negotiator of the Directive in the Women's Rights and Gender Equality Committee, said: *"The Parliament is strongly committed to improving work-life balance and boosting*

