

FEMM

Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality

NEWSLETTER

WELCOMING WORDS FROM THE CHAIR



Dear Readers,

These past few months, which started with a very successful celebration of International Women's Day on March 3, have been bittersweet.

On the one hand, the FEMM Committee has managed to achieve significant milestones, which will bring us one step closer to achieve gender equality in the European Union. After almost ten years deadlock, the Council and the Parliament finally found an agreement for the Women on Boards Directive: an important solution to promote women in leadership positions. In this impulse, the Pay Transparency file aiming to eliminate the gender pay gap, is moving forward as the negotiations with the Council just started. And while awaiting the Commission's EU Care Strategy, Parliament adopted its resolution on "Towards a common European action on care". It has been a very active period.

Sadly, many of those successes have been overshadowed by the events in Ukraine. Despite the heroic resistance of the Ukrainian people, Russia's barbaric war continues. And as usual in such conflicts, women and girls paying the highest price. Every day, independent media sources alert us that mass rapes, sexual and gender-based violence, torture and genocide are being used as a 'weapon of war'. We will not rest until the perpetrators of these crimes are brought to justice. We also insist that the EU protects women and girls fleeing Ukraine from violence and trafficking, and ensures that they have access to the labour market and essential social health and care services, including SRHR services such as access to safe and legal abortion.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the Members and staff for the work we did together in the FEMM Committee in the last few months. After our hopefully relaxing break, we will be back with a lot of motivation to continue on some of these topics and also to start our work on many new ones!

I wish you all a good summer and I am looking forward to seeing you again on 8 September.

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War in Ukraine



The Russian war of aggression against Ukraine continues. Despite the heroic resistance of the Ukrainian people, the barbarity of the Russian invaders has caused millions of Ukrainians to flee, the vast majority to the EU. According to the UN Refugee Agency, 90% of the refugees fleeing the war against Ukraine are women and children. Rapes, sexual and gender-based violence and torture are being used as a weapon of war. In this context, the European Parliament has placed Ukraine at the very core of its agenda.

Below a more detailed overview of the work of the FEMM Committee on the subject.



International Women's Day 2022

In light of current events, the agenda of inter-parliamentary committee meeting organised by FEMM on 3 March 2022, previously focused on the future of Europe's women after the pandemic, was partly modified to address the situation in Ukraine. Special guest speakers included European Parliament President Roberta Metsola, French Minister for Equality, Diversity and Equal Opportunities Élisabeth Moreno, Vice-President of the Commission Věra Jourová, Icelandic Prime Minister Katrín Jakobsdóttir and Chair of the Verkhovna Rada's Committee on EU integration Ivanna Klymush-Tsintsadze.

On 8 March 2022, Ukrainian author Oksana Zabuzhko, who left Ukraine two weeks ago with only hand luggage, addressed the plenary of the European Parliament on the occasion of the IWD, speaking about the plight of her fellow citizens under attack by Russia.

Further information:

Watch it again [here](#)

Event page: [IWD 2022](#)

Resources: [EU Monitor](#) and [EC press release](#)



Exchange of views with Commissioner Ylva Johansson on 29 March 2022

On Tuesday, 29 March 2022, the FEMM Committee exchanged views with Commissioner for Home Affairs, Ylva Johansson, on the situation of women refugees from Ukraine.

Commissioner Johansson stated that her priority was the activation of the [Temporary Protection Directive](#) only seven days after the war began, by unanimous decision of the JHA Council. The main challenge to be faced is the implementation of the Directive with regard to the capacity of the Member States and that Member States share the burden equally. She reported information by the Minister of Interior of Ukraine that rape is used as a weapon of war by the Russian forces, as well as on reports about risks of trafficking in human beings faced by the refugees.

Further information:

Watch it again [here](#)



FEMM/LIBE joint hearing on the Situation of Women refugees from Ukraine on 21 April 2022

As a high proportion of the refugees are women and children, the joint hearing examined some of the issues already being faced by the refugees, such as risks of trafficking and sexual exploitation, as well as reception conditions, and looked also forward to the near- and medium-term with regard to healthcare, education and access to labour market. Yevheniia Batina, a refugee in Poland then took the floor to share her personal experience as a refugee.

Further information:

Event page: [Hearing](#)

Watch it again [here](#)

European Parliament resolution of 5 May 2022 on the impact of the war against Ukraine on women (2022/2633(RSP))

On the basis of a motion for resolution voted in FEMM on 26 April 2022, the Parliament adopted on 5 May 2022 a resolution that strongly condemns the use of sexual and gender-based violence as a weapon of war. EP expressed deep concern about the increasing number of reports of human trafficking, sexual violence, exploitation, rape, and abuse of women and children fleeing the war in Ukraine. With this resolution, the European Parliament calls on the EU to protect women fleeing Ukraine from violence and trafficking, and to grant them access to essential health services, including safe and legal abortion.

Further information:

Procedure file: [2022/2633\(RSP\)](#)

Adopted resolution [here](#)



FEMM mission to The Hague, The Netherlands on 23 - 25 May 2022

The FEMM Committee decided to send a delegation to The Hague on 23-25 May 2022 to find out what is being done to prevent and combat trafficking in human beings. While in the Netherlands, they discussed about the situation of refugees coming from Ukraine and the high risk of human trafficking due to their vulnerability. The delegation met with representatives of the Dutch government and Parliament, NGOs as well as Europol, Eurojust and ICC.

Further information:

Mission report [here](#)

Presentation by the Anti-trafficking Coordinator of the Anti-Trafficking Plan to Protect People Fleeing the War in Ukraine - jointly with LIBE - 15 June 2022

About 6.5 million people, mainly women and children (90%), have now tried to flee the war against Ukraine. For many of them, the risk of trafficking, violence and exploitation is high-risk all along their journey, in transit but also in the countries of destination as refugee/asylum seekers.

The EU Solidarity Platform presented on 11 May a tailor-made Common Anti-Trafficking Plan to address the risks of trafficking in human beings and support potential victims. The Anti-Trafficking Coordinator Diane Schmitt discussed with Members the details of the plan.

Further information:

Watch it again [here](#)



ICM - The rights of Ukrainian women fleeing the war - 12 July 2022

On 12 July 2022 from 14:30 until 18:00, FEMM jointly with LIBE and EMPL organise an inter-parliamentary committee meeting on the Rights of Ukrainian Women Fleeing the War.

The three committees will discuss with national parliaments and with participation of Commissioner Schmitt and invited experts the challenges faced by people fleeing Ukraine, mainly women and children, and the EU's policy responses.

The ICM will consist of two panels:

Panel I under the title "Situation of Ukrainian women refugees with regard to reception conditions, protection measures and safety risks" jointly organised by FEMM and LIBE committees

Panel II under the title "Ukrainian women fleeing the war: Access to social protection and the labour market, housing, childcare facilities and education" jointly organised by FEMM and EMPL committees.

Further information:

Event page [here](#)

Women on Boards Directive



The European Commission first presented its proposal of the Women on Boards Directive in 2012 and the European Parliament adopted its first reading position back in 2013. The file was blocked in the Council for almost a decade, until Employment and Social Affairs ministers finally agreed on a position in March 2022.

On 7th June 2022, EP and EU countries' negotiators finally agreed on a provisional agreement on the Directive, setting rules for the participation of the underrepresented sex on boards of publicly listed companies in the EU.

The Women on Boards Directive aims to introduce transparent recruitment procedures in companies, so that at least 40% of non-executive director posts or 33% of all director posts are occupied by the under-represented sex. Companies must comply with this target by 30 June 2026. In cases where candidates are equally qualified for a post, priority should go to the candidate of the under-represented sex.

Once Parliament and Council have formally approved the agreement, the Directive will enter into force 20 days after it has been published in the EU's Official Journal. Member States would need to implement the directive two years after it has been adopted. Parliament succeeded in including an assessment on the scope of the directive at a later stage on whether non-listed companies should be included in the scope of directive.

Further information:

Procedure file: [2012/0299\(COD\)](#)

Co-rapporteurs: FEMM: [Evelyn REGNER \(S&D, AT\)](#) and JURI: [Lara Wolters \(S&D, NL\)](#)

Text of the [provisisonal agreement](#)

[Press conference](#)

Towards a common European action on care



In the 2021 State of the Union address, the President of the Commission announced a European Care Strategy "to support men and women in finding the best care and the best life balance for them" to be presented in the third quarter of 2022. Accordingly, in the Commission Work Programme 2022, the Commission committed to present a European Care Strategy, including a Communication on a European care strategy, accompanied by the revision of the Barcelona targets and a proposal

for a Council Recommendation on long-term care. The package is expected for September 2022.

The EMPL and FEMM joint initiative report "Towards a common European action on care" insists on the crucial need for investments and a long-overdue reform of the care and social security systems in the Member States to reflect the principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights and to build resilience to current and future crises.

A high-level EMPL-FEMM hearing on "A European Care Strategy - How to improve the lives of the carers and their dependants" took place on 24 March, with participation of Dubravka Šuica, Vice-President of the European Commission for Democracy and

Demography, Nicolas Schmit, European Commissioner for Jobs and Social Rights and Helena Dalli, European Commissioner for Equality, as well as four experts and the Members of the two committees. The draft report prepared jointly by the FEMM and EMPL committees was adopted in a joint committee meeting on 21 June 2022 and on 05 July 2022 by the plenary.

Further information:

Procedure file: [2021/2253\(INI\)](#)

Co-rapporteurs: FEMM: [Sirpa Pietikäinen \(EPP, FI\)](#) and EMPL: [Milan Bragelj \(S&D; SI\)](#)

[Draft report](#)

Pay Transparency



Parliament decided on the 5 April 2022 to enter into negotiations with the Council on the Commission proposal for a Pay Transparency Directive. The mandate of the parliament based on the joint FEMM-EMPL Committees' report aims to oblige companies to report on gender pay gap, to prohibit pay secrecy in work contracts, to develop gender action plan when pay gap is higher than 2.5%. Finally, EU companies with at least 50 employees should be fully transparent regarding pay,

and MEPs want them to tackle any potential gender pay gap.

The Co-Rapporteurs should report on 12 July to the FEMM Committee on the results of the 1st trilogue, which took place on 30 June 2022, last day of the French presidency.

Work will now continue with further meetings at technical and political level with the Czech Presidency.

Further information:

Procedure file: [2021/0050\(COD\)](#)

Co-rapporteurs: FEMM:

[Samira Rafaela \(Renew Europe, NL\)](#) and EMPL: [Kira Marie Peter-Hansen \(Greens/EFA, DK\)](#)

Draft European Parliament legislative [resolution](#) on the proposal for a directive of the European Parliament and of the Council to strengthen the application of the principle of equal pay for equal work or work of equal value between men and women through pay transparency and enforcement mechanisms

General budget of the European Union for the financial year 2023



Following the release of the Commission Statement of Estimates (7 June), FEMM opinion rapporteur Monika Vana presented her six draft budgetary amendments. MEP Vana also noted the impact of the COVID crisis and the Russian war on Ukraine on the budget, lessening the scope for flexibility, especially in heading 6 "Neighbourhood and the World". Given this situation, the rapporteur highlighted the Commission's intent to issue an amending letter at the end of September. Ms Vana pointed out this is after the procedure for amendments will have closed (1

September), putting the democratic accountability of the budgetary procedure at stake. Ms Vana also highlighted that the process to implement a new pilot methodology to track contributions to gender equality is ahead of schedule.

Having a look at the proposed amendments from both the Rapporteur and the MEP, they all agree that EIGE should be allocated more budget. EIGE has been experiencing staffing problems for several years but the situation became very concerning as of 2020.

Within the deadline for amendments, FEMM Members tabled additional 26 budgetary amendments. The vote in FEMM will take place on 12 July 2022.

At the same time, the rapporteur will present her draft opinion for the accompanying resolution. The deadline for amendments to the opinion will be Friday 15 June at 11.00 .

Further information:

Procedure file: [2022/0212\(BUD\)](#)

Rapporteur for FEMM opinion: [Monika Vana \(Verts/ALE, AT\)](#)

Czech Presidency of the Council of the European Union



On 1 July 2022, the Czech Republic assumed the Presidency of the Council of the European Union. During the next 6 months, it will focus on the following five priorities:

Managing the refugee crisis and Ukraine's post-war recovery, Energy security, Strategic resilience of the European economy, Resilience of democratic institutions.

On Tuesday, 12 July 2022, the FEMM Committee will discuss with Minister of Labour and Social Affairs, Marian Jurečka, the priorities of the Czech Presidency 2022 mainly focusing on the consequences of war in Ukraine. With regard to the refugee crisis and working for Ukraine's post-war reconstruction, protection of women and children from war-affected Ukraine will be a priority, their access to education or women's access to the labour market, as well as mobilisation of all available resources and expertise and their coordinated use.

From 1 January to 30 June 2022, France held the Presidency of the Council. This period was marked by profound transformations and the invasion of Ukraine by Russia. The Presidency concluded several important files relevant for FEMM, such as the Women on Boards Directive, but also the Directive on Minimum Wage and the Digital Services Act.

Further information:

[Priorities of the Czech EU Presidency](#)

[18-month Programme of the Council \(1 January 2022 - 30 June 2023\)](#)

[French EU Presidency](#)

Combating violence against women and domestic violence



Violence against women and domestic violence are criminal offences, violations of human rights and forms of gender-based discrimination that are pervasive throughout the EU. In the EU, 33% of women have experienced physical and/or sexual violence and 55% of women have been sexually harassed.¹

Below a more detailed overview of the work of the FEMM Committee on the subject.

Directive on preventing and combatting violence against women and domestic violence

The proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council of 8 March 2022 aims to provide a comprehensive framework for effectively preventing and combatting violence against women and domestic violence throughout the Union.

The proposed Directive criminalises rape based on lack of consent, female genital mutilation and cyber violence, which includes non-consensual sharing of intimate images; cyber stalking; cyber harassment; and cyber incitement to violence or hatred. It also strengthens victims' access to justice, compensation in the course of criminal proceedings, and adequate and specialised protection, for instance, through free of charge helplines and rape crisis centres. Moreover, it provides for targeted support for groups with specific needs or at risk, such as women fleeing armed conflict.

Further information:

Procedure file: [2022/0066\(COD\)](#)

[Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council](#)

Co-rapporteur FEMM: [Frances Fitzgerald \(EPP, IE\)](#)

Combating gender-based violence online

On 10 May 2022, the FEMM Committee jointly with the LIBE Committee held a public hearing on combating gender-based violence online. Commissioner Helena Dalli and four guest experts, including Grevio and UN Women were invited to discuss these issues with LIBE and FEMM Members.

Further information:

[Event page](#)

Istanbul Convention

Finalising the [EU accession](#) to the Council of Europe's Istanbul Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence remains a political priority, as established in the EU 2020-2025 Gender Equality Strategy.

All EU countries have signed up, but some have yet to ratify it.

The Council decided that the draft decision on the signing of the Convention by the EU should be divided into two decisions, one covering judicial cooperation in criminal matters and the other asylum and non-refoulement. These two Council decisions were adopted in May 2017 and the EU signed the Convention on 13 June 2017. The next step in the process of the EU accession requires the adoption of Council decisions on the conclusion of the Convention. However, discussions are still taking place.

In relation to this, an exchange of views with the Legal Service on the Opinion 1/19 of the Court of Justice of the European Union regarding the Istanbul Convention took place on 23 June 2022 jointly with LIBE, for both the directive and convention.

Further information:

[Istanbul Convention](#)

Court of Justice opinion - [press release](#)

Public hearing on “Women’s Rights in Afghanistan”



On 7 April 2022, the European Parliament adopted a resolution on [‘Situation in Afghanistan, in particular the situation of women’s rights’](#).

In the resolution, the Parliament condemns Taliban policies erasing women and girls from public life and denying their most fundamental rights, including access to education, work, movement and healthcare. Since the Taliban takeover in 2021, women and girls have faced an increased risk of exploitation, including the risk of being trafficked for the purposes of forced marriage, sexual exploitation and forced labour.

On 10 May 2022, the FEMM Committee held a public hearing on “Women’s Rights in Afghanistan”, in order to examine the evolution of the situation of women’s rights in the country following the Taliban takeover. The speakers – Afghan women activists, journalists and artists – provided evidence about their work and experience and the current situation of women in Afghanistan.

Parliament also debated the situation in Afghanistan in plenary with EU Foreign Policy Chief Josep Borrell on 5 April 2022.

Further information:

[Event page](#)

Workshop on "Women and Cancer Prevention"



On Thursday, 16 June 2022, the Policy Department for Citizens' Rights and Constitutional Affairs, at the request of the FEMM Committee, organised a workshop entitled ‘Women and Cancer Prevention’.

One in three Europeans develops cancer during his or her lifetime and every year around 1.3 million people die of cancer in the EU. Up to half of all cancer deaths could be prevented if cancer is detected on time and adequately treated. Breast

cancer is the most common fatal cancer among women in the EU, while prostate cancer remains the most common among men. Women can be cancer patients or survivors, as well as informal caregivers, health professionals or scientists involved in cancer research.

Invited experts reminded that primary responsibility for health protection lies with the Member States. However, the EU has an important role to play in improving public health, preventing and managing diseases, mitigating sources of danger to human health, and harmonising health strategies between Member States.

In January 2022, the European Commission announced a new Europe’s Beating Cancer Plan, under which a few actions were launched. Over the last few years, priority has been given to the fight against Covid-19, but now we must focus on cancer.

Further information:

[Event page](#)

Women's poverty in Europe



According to Eurostat, there are currently 64,6 million women and 57,6 million men living in poverty in the Member States, which shows that the impact of poverty on women and men is different. The COVID-19 crisis has exacerbated existing inequalities: since the beginning of the pandemic, women have been disproportionately disadvantaged in the socioeconomic sphere, including, in some cases, by loss of employment.

On Thursday 16 June 2022, the FEMM Committee adopted the report "Women's poverty in Europe" (2021/2170(INI)), by rapporteur Lina Gálvez Muñoz, which proposes measures to ensure that women's poverty in Europe is no longer the result of a lifetime of discrimination. The report was by the plenary on 5 July 2022.

As one of the main requests, Parliament calls on the Commission to develop an ambitious 2030 European anti-poverty strategy, with concrete targets for reducing poverty and a focus on ending women's poverty and breaking the intergenerational cycle of poverty risks.

Further information:

Procedure file: [2021/2170\(INI\)](#)

Rapporteur: [Lina Gálvez Muñoz \(S&D, ES\)](#)

Report "[Women's poverty in Europe](#)"

Intersectional discrimination in the European Union



FRA survey data show that people with racial, ethnic minority or migrant backgrounds (including Roma, Muslims, Jews and people of African descent) regularly experience high levels of discrimination based on their ethnic or racial origin as well as their religion or belief in different areas of life.

Many women face intersecting inequalities and discrimination in the EU. Particularly women with disabilities, migrant and ethnic minority women, Black women, women of colour, Roma women, older women, women with lower education levels, women with health problems, and LGBTI+ women, are more often subject to multiple and intersectional forms of discrimination.

On Thursday 16 June 2022, the FEMM Committee adopted the "**Intersectional discrimination in the European Union: the socio-economic situation of women of African, Middle-Eastern, Latin-American and Asian descent**" report (2021/2243(INI)), by rapporteur Alice Kuhnke, which addresses the communities of women in Europe of African, Middle-Eastern, Latin-American and Asian descent, in order to better understand their socio-economic position within society. The report was adopted by the plenary on 6 July 2022.

In the report, Parliament stresses the need for EU policymaking to address and eliminate intersecting forms of discrimination, including through EU anti-discrimination and gender equality legislation and policies, and calls for the policies and actions under the Union of Equality to be strengthened, enhanced and adapted if necessary. It is needed to promote an EU framework on intersectional discrimination with cross-cutting objectives and measures.

Further information:

Procedure file: [2021/2243\(INI\)](#)

Rapporteur: [Alice Kuhnke \(Greens/FFA, Sweden\)](#)

[Recent study](#) on The socioeconomic position of women of African, Middle Eastern, Latin American and Asian descent living in the European Union

Adopted FEMM opinions

FEMM contributed with its opinions also to ongoing legislative and non-legislative work of other committees. The recently adopted opinions include:

Opinion on A long-term Vision for the EU's Rural Areas - Towards stronger, connected, resilient and prosperous rural areas by 2040 - FEMM rapporteur for opinion Christine Schneider (EPP, DE)

Opinion to the Proposal for a Directive on energy efficiency (recast) - FEMM rapporteur for opinion Alice Kuhnke (Greens/EFA, Sweden)

NEXT COMMITTEE MEETINGS

The FEMM Committee will meet again on 12 July and on 8 September 2022.

On 12 July the FEMM Committee jointly with the LIBE and EMPL committees is organising an inter-parliamentary committee meeting on « The Rights of Ukrainian women fleeing the war ».

Please find [here](#) the draft agendas of following upcoming meetings including a detailed draft programme for the ICM on 12 July.

EIGE BULLETIN



Read more in the [News Alert](#).

LATEST BRIEFINGS

The European Parliament's **Policy Department** for Citizens' Rights Affairs published the monthly highlights

[*Policy Departments' Monthly Highlights \(June 2022\)*](#)

[*Policy Departments' Monthly Highlights \(May 2022\)*](#)

[*Policy Departments' Monthly Highlights \(April 2022\)*](#)

[*Policy Departments' Monthly Highlights \(March 2022\)*](#)

Further information:

[Relevant Research-Subject files](#)

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