



EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

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Committee on Foreign Affairs

2012/2255(INI)

8.3.2013

OPINION

of the Committee on Foreign Affairs

for the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality

on women's rights in the Balkan accession countries
(2012/2255(INI))

Rapporteur: Emine Bozkurt

PA_NonLeg

SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on Foreign Affairs calls on the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions in its motion for a resolution:

1. Stresses the need to make the question of women's rights central to the negotiations with potential candidate and candidate countries of the Western Balkans, thus ensuring that progress on women's rights is reflected in all the relevant negotiating chapters and that women are fairly represented at the negotiating table;
2. Calls on the Commission to monitor and report on women's rights, and their implementation, thoroughly in progress reports;
3. Reaffirms the need to mainstream women's rights and gender equality throughout the enlargement process, including in the future setup of the new Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA-II) for the 2014-2020 multiannual financial framework; emphasises that governmental commitment, together with structures and methods for implementing gender mainstreaming, is crucial for successful progress towards gender equality;
4. Considers that genuine gender equality also rests on equality and non-discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity; encourages the governments of accession countries to address lingering homophobia and transphobia in law, policy and practice, including by legislating on hate crimes, police training and anti-discrimination legislation;
5. Emphasises that, in the process of building properly functioning democratic institutions, securing the active participation of women – who comprise over half of the population in the Balkan countries – is crucial for democratic governance;
6. Strongly supports activities aimed at empowering women and strengthening their position in the societies concerned;
7. Stresses the need for women in the Western Balkans to take a prominent role in society through active participation and representation in political, economic and social life at all levels; points out that supporting equal opportunities policies is important for the economic and social development of the Balkan accession countries; points out that advancing towards women's equal participation in decision-making at all levels of government (from local to national, from executive to legislative powers) is of high importance; welcomes quotas and calls on those countries which have not already done so to promote female representation and, where necessary, to apply quotas effectively in political parties and national assemblies, and encourages those countries which have already done so to continue this process in order to enable women to participate in political life and overcome their under-representation; welcomes, in this connection, the recent international women's summit on 'Partnership for Change' held in Pristina in October 2012 under the auspices of the region's only female head of state, Atifete Jahjaga;
8. Considers the empowerment of women – through promoting, protecting and strengthening their rights, improving their social and economic situation, increasing their presence on

the labour market, securing their fair representation in political and economic decision-making processes and encouraging their entrepreneurship – as key to strengthening and consolidating democracy in the Balkan countries;

9. Notes with concern that women's employment rates in the Western Balkan countries remain very low and that women remain under-represented in the labour market; calls on the governments of the Western Balkan countries to encourage the active participation of women in the labour market by promoting, inter alia, measures to secure better working conditions, equal pay for equal work, lifelong learning, flexible work schedules and a fair balance between family life and work, as well as measures to reduce the gender pay gap and, consequently, the gender pension gap;
10. Call on the Western Balkan countries to develop active labour market schemes designed to curb unemployment among women; urges them to develop loan schemes and make funding available for starting businesses;
11. Stresses the importance of combating all forms of discrimination in the workplace, including gender discrimination in respect of recruitment, promotion and benefits; calls for the governments concerned to collect relevant and accurate statistical data;
12. Stresses that financing from European funds, including the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA), should increasingly target projects relating to the promotion of women's rights, including monitoring mechanisms; calls on the Commission to exercise due diligence with respect to the effectiveness of spending;
13. Condemns all forms of violence against women and stresses the need to strengthen law enforcement bodies in order successfully to address issues such as gender-based violence, domestic violence, forced prostitution and trafficking in women;
14. Condemns human trafficking in the Balkans, which is a form of modern-day slavery and, regrettably, is one of the fastest-growing transnational crimes; encourages the EU to offer continuous support for efforts to combat human trafficking, as the Western Balkan countries are countries of origin, transit and destination for trafficking in human beings, especially women and girls, and emphasises the need to combat actively the organised crime behind such trafficking; calls for close cooperation on this matter between the relevant EU institutions and governments; calls for more awareness-raising campaigns in the region;
15. Is concerned about the increasing marginalisation of women in decision-making on peace and security; stresses, in this connection, the importance of women's participation and representation in the peace process and politics, and of strengthening laws and mechanisms designed to ensure the security of women and girls by protecting them from, and preventing, gender-based violence; considers regrettable the lack of data on gender-based violence and underlines the need for consistent and systematic collection of gender-specific statistics in order to monitor progress in the implementation of legislation;
16. Underlines the importance of access to justice for women victims of wartime crimes, in particular rape; emphasises the responsibility of all states to put an end to impunity and to prosecute those responsible for genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes,

including crimes involving sexual violence against women and girls, such as rape, sexual slavery, forced prostitution, enforced pregnancy, enforced sterilisation and any other form of sexual violence of comparable seriousness, and to recognise and condemn these crimes as crimes against humanity and war crimes; stresses the need to exclude these crimes from amnesty provisions;

17. Stresses the ongoing need to deal with the past and to secure systematically justice and rehabilitation for victims of conflict-related sexual violence; urges the adoption and implementation of adequate state programmes for witness protection and the prosecution of these crimes;
18. Considers that women play an essential role in stabilisation and conflict resolution which is crucial to reconciliation in the region as a whole; welcomes the efforts of networks such as the Regional Women's Lobby to support women in peace-building and to promote access to justice for women in post-conflict countries;
19. Notes with concern that Roma women suffer double discrimination on the grounds of gender and ethnicity; calls on governments to adopt comprehensive anti-discrimination frameworks that would enable Roma women to secure their rights;
20. Stresses the importance of improving the situation of women in rural areas, especially vis-à-vis discriminatory customs and stereotypes.

RESULT OF FINAL VOTE IN COMMITTEE

Date adopted	4.3.2013
Result of final vote	+: 29 -: 1 0: 2
Members present for the final vote	Sir Robert Atkins, Arnaud Danjean, Mário David, Mark Demesmaeker, Michael Gahler, Marietta Giannakou, Ana Gomes, Takis Hadjigeorgiou, Liisa Jaakonsaari, Tunne Kelam, Evgeni Kirilov, Andrey Kovatchev, Vytautas Landsbergis, Francisco José Millán Mon, María Muñiz De Urquiza, Annemie Neyts-Uyttebroeck, Ioan Mircea Pașcu, Hans-Gert Pöttering, Tokia Saïfi, José Ignacio Salafranca Sánchez-Neyra, Nikolaos Salavrakos, Charles Tannock
Substitute(s) present for the final vote	Charalampos Angourakis, Nikolaos Chountis, Anne Delvaux, Norbert Neuser, Nadezhda Neynsky, Helmut Scholz, Alf Svensson, Ivo Vajgl
Substitute(s) under Rule 187(2) present for the final vote	Danuta Jazłowiecka, Monika Panayotova