



Plenary sitting

B9-0402/2020

9.12.2020

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

to wind up the debate on the statements by the Council and the Commission

pursuant to Rule 132(2) of the Rules of Procedure

on the need for a dedicated Council configuration on gender equality
(2020/2896(RSP))

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on behalf of the Renew Group

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**European Parliament resolution on the need for a dedicated Council configuration on gender equality
(2020/2896(RSP))**

The European Parliament,

- having regard to Articles 2 and 3(3) of the Treaty on European Union (TEU) and Articles 8, 10, 19, 153(1)(i), 157 and 236 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU),
- having regard to Articles 21 and 23 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union,
- having regard to Article 2(1) of the Council's Rules of Procedure,
- having regard to the Commission proposal of 2 July 2008 for a Council directive on implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation (Anti-Discrimination Directive) (COM/2008/0426),
- 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 occupation¹,
- having regard to the Commission proposal of 14 March 2012 for a directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on improving the gender balance among non-executive directors of companies listed on stock exchanges and related measures (Women on Boards Directive) (COM(2012)0614),
- having regard to the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention), which entered into force on 1 August 2014,
- having regard to the Commission proposal of 4 March 2016 for a Council decision on the conclusion, by the European Union, of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (COM(2016)0109),
- having regard to its resolution of 28 November 2019 on the EU's accession to the Istanbul Convention and other measures to combat gender-based violence²,
- having regard to its resolution of 30 January 2020 on the gender pay gap³,
- having regard to its resolution of 23 October 2020 on Gender Equality in EU's foreign

¹ OJ L 204, 26.7.2006, p. 23.

² Texts adopted, P9_TA(2019)0080.

³ Texts adopted, P9_TA(2020)0025.

and security policy⁴,

- having regard to the Gender Equality Index 2020 of the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), published on 28 October 2020,
 - having regard to the EIGE report of 19 November 2020 on gender inequalities in care and pay in the EU,
 - having regard to the Council conclusions of 10 December 2019 entitled ‘Gender-Equal Economies in the EU: The Way Forward’,
 - having regard to the Council conclusions of 2 December 2020 on tackling the gender pay gap,
 - having regard to the European Pillar of Social Rights and, in particular, principles 2, 3, 9 and 15 thereof,
 - having regard to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) agreed in 2015, in particular goals 5 and 8,
 - having regard to the Commission communication of 5 March 2020 entitled ‘A Union of Equality: Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025’ (COM(2020)0152),
 - having regard to the joint communication from the Commission and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy of 25 November 2020 entitled ‘EU Gender Action Plan (GAP) III – An ambitious agenda for gender equality and women’s empowerment in EU external action’ (JOIN(2020)0017),
 - having regard to the Commission communication of 12 November 2020 entitled ‘Union of Equality: LGBTIQ Equality Strategy 2020-2025’ (COM(2020)0698),
 - having regard to the Commission communication of 18 September 2020 entitled ‘A Union of equality: EU anti-racism action plan 2020-2025’ (COM(2020)0565),
 - having regard to the Commission communication of 7 October 2020 entitled ‘A Union of Equality: EU Roma strategic framework for equality, inclusion and participation’ (COM(2020)0620),
 - having regard to Rule 132(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas gender equality is a fundamental value and a key objective of the EU; whereas the right to equal treatment and non-discrimination is a fundamental right enshrined in the Treaties and in the Charter of Fundamental Rights, and should be fully respected;
- B. whereas Article 8 of the TFEU lays down the principle of gender mainstreaming under which the Union should aim to eliminate inequalities, and to promote equality, between men and women in all its activities;
- C. whereas discrimination on the basis of gender and gender identity often intersects with

⁴Texts adopted, P9_TA(2020)0286.

discrimination on other grounds, such as race, colour, ethnic or social origin, genetic features, language, religion or belief, political or any other opinion, membership of a national minority, property, birth, disability, age or sexual orientation, triggering double and multiple discrimination; whereas a horizontal, intersectional perspective and gender mainstreaming in EU policies are essential in achieving gender equality and equality in general;

- D. whereas a horizontal, intersectional perspective is essential in any gender equality policy in order to recognise and address these multiple threats of discrimination; whereas EU policies have not taken an intersectional approach thus far and have focused mostly on the individual dimension of discrimination, which does not address its institutional, structural and historical dimensions; whereas intersectional analysis not only allows us to understand structural barriers, but also provides evidence on which to set benchmarks and steer a path towards strategic and effective policies against systemic discrimination, exclusion and gender inequalities;
- E. whereas according to the EIGE Gender Equality Index 2020, no EU country has yet fully achieved equality between women and men; whereas the EU's progress on gender equality is still slow, with the index score improving on average by one point every two years; whereas at this rate, it will take over 60 years for the EU to reach gender equality;
- F. whereas gender-based violence in all its forms constitutes discrimination and a violation of human rights entrenched in gender inequality, which it helps to perpetuate and reinforce; whereas gender-based violence is one of the biggest obstacles to achieving gender equality; whereas a 2014 survey by the Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) showed that one in three women have experienced physical or sexual violence since the age of 15, that 55 % of women have faced one or more forms of sexual harassment and that, on average, one woman dies every two and a half days as a result of domestic violence; whereas a life free from violence is a prerequisite for equality; whereas there are approximately 3 500 femicides in the EU every year linked to domestic violence;⁵ whereas gender-disaggregated and gender-sensitive data of a comparable nature are essential in order to reflect the full extent of gender-based violence, make inequalities visible and create targeted policies; whereas gender-disaggregated and gender-sensitive data are still lacking in different areas of EU and Member State policy;
- G. whereas according to the latest figures from the Commission, the EU gender gap in hourly pay is 16 %, although this varies significantly across Member States; whereas the gender pay gap rises to 40 % when employment rates and overall labour market participation are taken into account; whereas the situation is even worse when women retire, as their pensions are worth about 37 % less than men's as a consequence of the gender pay gap, among other factors; whereas the employment rate in the EU, which varies significantly across Member States, was still higher for men (79 %) than for women (67.4 %) in 2018; whereas 31.3 % of employed women aged 20-64 in the EU worked on a part-time basis in 2018, compared with 8.7 % for men; whereas women are overrepresented in the informal economy, involuntary part-time work, and precarious and low-paid jobs;

⁵ [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2018/630296/EPRS_BRI\(2018\)630296_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2018/630296/EPRS_BRI(2018)630296_EN.pdf)

- H. whereas unpaid care and domestic work is mostly carried out by women, which has an impact on employment and career progression and contributes to the gender employment, pay and pension gaps; whereas estimates show that in the care sector, 80 % of services are provided by informal carers who are mostly women (75 %), including migrant women;
- I. whereas women are therefore still underrepresented and suffer various forms of discrimination in the labour market, and whereas the goal is to provide them with the same opportunities in the workplace as men in order to reduce those gaps;
- J. whereas according to the Commission communication of 14 January 2020 on a strong social Europe for just transitions (COM(2020)0014), improved childcare and long-term care services are a means to ensure that care responsibilities are shared more equally between women and men, with a view to facilitating women's participation in the labour market on an equal footing with men;
- K. whereas gender gaps and structural barriers persist in many areas, restricting women and men to their traditional roles and limiting women's opportunities to fully benefit from their fundamental right of equality in employment, work and pay;
- L. whereas women are underrepresented in decision-making positions, including in the economic sector, and gender parity in elected bodies is far from being achieved; whereas according to the EIGE, less than a third of all parliamentarians in the EU are women; whereas most decision-making bodies lack expertise in gender equality;
- M. whereas stereotypical views of gender roles contribute to gender inequalities and help to perpetuate gender-based violence; whereas it is in the interest of society as a whole to counter gender inequalities, and whereas the participation of men in efforts to counter gender inequality and gender-based violence is crucial;
- N. whereas access to sexual and reproductive healthcare and rights is essential to achieving gender equality; whereas the denial of sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) is a form of gender-based violence; whereas Parliament has addressed SRHR in its newly adopted EU4Health Programme, with a view to ensuring timely access to goods that are needed for the safe provision of SRHR;
- O. whereas positive progress has been achieved in the EU, but there is still room for improvement, as we witness a serious backlash against gender equality and women's rights, including within the area of SRHR; whereas this regression must be countered and gender equality and women's rights protected at the highest political level;
- P. whereas the COVID-19 pandemic has had a disproportionate impact on women and girls as a result of existing inequalities that lead to, among other issues, an exponential increase in gender-based violence and higher labour market drop-out; whereas the incorporation of a gender perspective at all stages of the response to the COVID-19 crisis is essential;
- Q. whereas occupying as they do the most precarious jobs in our society, women have been hardest hit during the COVID-19 pandemic by partial unemployment, the risk of losing their jobs and forced telework owing to the lack of childcare; whereas one fifth of

women in the EU were already at risk of poverty or social exclusion⁶; whereas women also constitute 85 % of single-parent families, which are even more at risk of precariousness and increased poverty; whereas 500 million people⁷ in the world are expected to fall into poverty in the coming months, most of them women; whereas poverty and social exclusion have structural causes that need to be eradicated and reversed, in particular through policies on employment, housing, mobility and access to public services;

- R. whereas the COVID-19 crisis has shown the importance of EU integration and of strengthening cooperation and dialogue between Member States, exchanging solutions and delivering EU-level actions and coordinated responses, including in the field of gender equality;
- S. whereas for the first time ever, gender mainstreaming will be a horizontal priority in the multiannual financial framework 2021-2027, following an agreement between Parliament and the Council, and should be accompanied by impact assessments of each legislative and policy proposal and gender-responsive monitoring and evaluation of programmes, including by tracking the funds dedicated to gender equality; whereas the implementation of gender budgeting should also be monitored at the highest political level in the Recovery and Resilience Facility and the main EU funding programmes; whereas gender equality and the fulfilment of women's and girls' rights are preconditions for economic recovery and inclusive sustainable development;
- T. whereas eight years since its approval, the Istanbul Convention has not yet been ratified by all Member States, or by the EU; whereas the Istanbul Convention is the most important existing international tool to prevent and combat gender-based violence;
- U. whereas in several resolutions, such as its resolution of 28 November 2019 on EU accession to the Istanbul Convention and other measures to combat gender-based violence, Parliament called on the Council to activate the 'passerelle clause' enshrined in Article 83(1) of the TFEU in order to include gender-based violence in the list of Eurocrimes; whereas Parliament has, on many occasions, called for a directive to prevent and combat gender-based violence;
- V. whereas seven years since the Commission put forward its proposal and Parliament adopted its position at first reading, no agreement has yet been reached on the directive on improving the gender balance among non-executive directors of companies listed on stock exchanges and related measures (Women on Boards Directive), and the proposal has been blocked in the Council ever since;
- W. whereas twelve years since its proposal by the Commission, no agreement has yet been reached on the Council directive on implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation, and the proposal has been blocked in the Council ever since;
- X. whereas in its conclusions of 10 December 2019 entitled 'Gender-Equal Economies in the EU: The Way Forward', the Council stressed that 'while old challenges remain, new

⁶ Eurostat, 2018.

⁷ According to NGOs (Oxfam) and the UN.

ones are emerging. Objectives set for gender equality have not been fully achieved' and called on the Commission and the Member States to 'strengthen gender equality [...] by actively promoting high-level political dialogue on gender equality issues at EU level, and at the highest political level';

- Y. whereas high-level political dialogue and dialogue at EU level has proven to be efficient in reducing disparities between Member States and promoting European integration in most policy areas; whereas a structured dialogue at the highest political level is essential to protect and promote women's rights and gender equality through the adoption of gender-responsive Union legislation;
- Z. whereas the role of the Council as co-legislator of the EU is essential; whereas Council configurations must be designed to respond to current political challenges and priorities; whereas the lack of a dedicated Council configuration on gender equality increases the risk of adopting gender-blind legislation;
- AA. whereas the current Commission has shown a strong commitment to the advancement of gender equality in its President's political guidelines and through subsequent actions;
- AB. whereas gender equality issues are currently addressed at the Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council level, which does not properly reflect all aspects to be tackled;
- AC. whereas Parliament has already called for the establishment of a new Council configuration of ministers and secretaries of state in charge of gender equality;
- AD. whereas several presidencies of the Council of the European Union have made positive efforts to organise informal meetings for ministers and secretaries of state in charge of gender equality and to put gender equality issues on programme agendas; whereas this practice must be institutionalised through a permanent dedicated forum;
- AE. whereas united action is essential in order to upwardly converge and harmonise women's rights in Europe through a strong pact between Member States, by sharing and implementing the most ambitious Union legislation and the implementation of best practices currently in force in the EU;
- AF. whereas while there is a Commissioner exclusively responsible for equality and Parliament has a committee dedicated to Women's Rights and Gender Equality, there is no specific Council configuration on gender equality and ministers and secretaries of state in charge of gender equality have no dedicated and formalised forum for discussion;
- AG. whereas the European Council, acting by qualified majority, has the right to establish (or amend) the list of configurations in which the Council meets, other than those of the General Affairs Council and of the Foreign Affairs Council;
- 1. Regrets that the ministers and secretaries of state in charge of gender equality have no dedicated institutional forum to ensure that Member State representatives regularly meet, discuss, legislate, take political decisions and exchange best practices; stresses that bringing together ministers and secretaries of state in charge of gender equality will

provide for a better focused and more efficient forum for cooperation, ensuring stronger integration of gender equality into EU strategies and policy processes, a coherent approach and coordination of all related policies;

2. Stresses the importance of gathering ministers and secretaries of state in charge of gender equality in one dedicated, formal forum in order to deliver common and concrete measures and legislation to address the challenges in the field of women's rights and gender equality and ensure that gender equality issues are discussed at the highest political level, taking into account the distinct forms of discrimination that racialised women, women belonging to ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities, older women, women with disabilities, Roma women, LGBTI women, refugee and migrant women, and women at risk of social exclusion suffer;
3. Stresses the importance of the political signal expressed through the establishment of a Council configuration on gender equality; affirms that a specific Council configuration on gender equality, allowing ministers and secretaries of state in charge of gender equality to regularly meet and discuss, will strengthen gender mainstreaming in Union legislation, as well as dialogue and cooperation between Member States, the exchange of best practices and legislation, and the capacity to deliver common responses to EU-wide problems, and will contribute to narrowing the gaps between Member States and harmonising the protection of women's rights and gender equality in Europe via an intersectional approach;
4. Underlines that a specific Council configuration on gender equality would represent a key element in unblocking the negotiations on the main files related to gender equality, namely the ratification of the Istanbul Convention, the adoption of the directive on improving the gender balance among non-executive directors of companies listed on stock exchanges and related measures (Women on Boards Directive), and the Council directive on implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation (Anti-Discrimination Directive), and in boosting other gender issues that should be addressed in the coming years, such as adding gender-based violence to the list of Eurocrimes and the adoption of a future directive on gender-based violence;
5. Calls on the Council and the European Council to establish a Council configuration on gender equality in order to facilitate gender mainstreaming across all EU policies and legislation;
6. Calls on the European Council to act by qualified majority and amend the list of configurations in which the Council meets, in accordance with Article 236 of the TFEU and Article 2(1) of the Council's Rules of Procedure;
7. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission and the governments and parliaments of the Member States.