



---

*Plenary sitting*

---

**B9-0587/2021**

10.12.2021

## MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

further to Question for Oral Answer B9-0000/2021

pursuant to Rule 136(5) of the Rules of Procedure

on MeToo and harassment – the consequences for the EU institutions  
(2021/2986(RSP))

**Evelyn Regner**

on behalf of the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality

**European Parliament resolution on MeToo and harassment – the consequences for the EU institutions  
(2021/2986(RSP))**

*The European Parliament,*

- having regard to Articles 2 and 3 of the Treaty on European Union and Articles 8, 10 and 19 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union,
- having regard to Articles 21 and 23 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union,
- having regard to the International Labour Organization Violence and Harassment Convention and its main provisions (No 190),
- 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 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 occupation<sup>1</sup>,
- 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 its resolution of 26 October 2017 on combating sexual harassment and abuse in the EU<sup>2</sup>,
- 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 violence<sup>3</sup>,
- having regard to its resolution of 14 May 2020 on Parliament’s estimates of revenue and expenditure for the financial year 2021<sup>4</sup>,
- having regard to its resolution of 21 January 2021 on the gender perspective in the COVID-19 crisis and post-crisis period<sup>5</sup>,
- having regard to its resolution of 21 January 2021 on the EU Strategy for Gender Equality<sup>6</sup>,

---

<sup>1</sup> OJ L 204, 26.7.2006, p. 23.

<sup>2</sup> OJ C 346, 27.9.2018, p. 192.

<sup>3</sup> OJ C 232, 16.6.2021, p. 48.

<sup>4</sup> OJ C 323, 11.8.2021, p. 33.

<sup>5</sup> Texts adopted, P9\_TA(2021)0024.

<sup>6</sup> Texts adopted, P9\_TA(2021)0025.

- having regard to the European Institute for Gender Equality’s Gender Equality Index 2020 report,
  - having regard to the European Ombudsman’s report of 17 December 2018 on dignity at work in the EU institutions and agencies,
  - having regard to Annex II of its Rules of Procedure entitled ‘Code of Appropriate Behaviour for Members of the European Parliament in Exercising their Duties’,
  - having regard to Opinion SJ-0328/21 (D(2021)24350) of its Legal Service of 18 November 2021,
  - having regard to the question to the Commission entitled ‘MeToo and harassment – the consequences for the EU institutions’ (O-XXXXXX/2021 – B9-0000/2021),
  - having regard to Rules 136(5) and 132(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
  - having regard to the motion for a resolution of the Committee on Women’s Rights and Gender Equality,
- A. whereas gender equality is a core value of the Union enshrined in Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union; whereas the right to equal treatment and non-discrimination is a fundamental right enshrined in the Treaties and in the Charter of Fundamental Rights;
- B. whereas sexual harassment is defined in EU law<sup>7</sup> as an incident ‘where any form of unwanted verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature occurs, with the purpose or effect of violating the dignity of a person, in particular when creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment’; whereas sexual harassment is a form of violence against women and girls and an extreme form of gender-based discrimination which affects women and girls disproportionately; whereas gender-based violence is rooted in the unequal distribution of power between women and men and in sexism and gender stereotypes, which have led to domination over and discrimination against women by men; whereas some 90 % of victims of sexual harassment are female and approximately 10 % are male;
- C. whereas according to the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights report of 3 March 2014 entitled ‘Violence against women: an EU-wide survey, one in three women have experienced physical or sexual violence during their adult lives; whereas up to 55 % of women have been sexually harassed in the EU; whereas 32 % of all victims in the EU said the perpetrator was a superior, colleague or customer; whereas 75 % of women in professions requiring qualifications or top management jobs have been sexually harassed; whereas 61 % of women employed in the service sector have been subjected to sexual harassment;
- D. whereas cyber harassment, like other forms of gender-based cyber violence, has become increasingly common; whereas the European added value assessment on gender-based

---

<sup>7</sup>Directive 2006/54/EC.

cyber violence<sup>8</sup> estimated that 4-7 % of women in the EU had experienced cyber harassment in the 12 months before the survey;

- E. whereas the progress in addressing the issue of sexual harassment after three years of the MeToo movement is not sufficient and there is still a lot to be done, within the EU institutions and beyond;
- F. whereas research shows that harassment is more widespread than commonly believed and is significantly under-reported<sup>9</sup>; whereas harassment is often linked to other forms of discrimination in addition to gender-based discrimination, which has to be addressed with an intersectional approach and from all angles;
- G. whereas sexual violence and harassment in the workplace is a matter of health and safety and should be treated and prevented as such;
- H. whereas the victims of sexual harassment are often staff in the most vulnerable positions at Parliament, including young professionals, trainees, accredited parliamentary assistants (APAs) and contract agents;
- I. whereas one of the reasons for the under-reporting of sexual harassment is a lack of awareness, sometimes based on a low understanding of the gravity of the issue, a lack of knowledge of channels for victim support or of how the sensitivity of the issue is perceived, or a fear of victimisation or job loss;
- J. whereas the MeToo movement has pushed the EU institutions to plan and start to adapt their internal rules and procedures in order to better identify, counter and sanction harassment;
- K. whereas there is still a need to promote and further enhance gender equality and the implementation of gender mainstreaming in the EU, including in management positions in the institutions<sup>10</sup>;
- L. whereas whistle-blowers play a pivotal role in exposing sexual and psychological harassment, mismanagement and discrimination in the workplace;
- M. whereas in its earlier resolutions, Parliament called for numerous measures to ensure a zero-tolerance approach as the norm, but only a few of them were fully implemented in accordance with the demands of its resolution on combating sexual harassment and abuse in the EU, and therefore need to be followed up on;
- N. whereas the COVID-19 pandemic and the new working methods of the European Parliament implemented during the pandemic might have made physical harassment less likely, yet have also made it difficult for victims of harassment to report their complaints and turn to a counsellor for guidance and support;

---

<sup>8</sup>European Parliament study of March 2021 entitled 'Combating gender-based violence: Cyber violence – European added value assessment'.

<sup>9</sup>Report of the European Ombudsman on dignity at work in the EU institutions and agencies.

<sup>10</sup>Commission communication entitled 'A Union of Equality: Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025'.

### ***General remarks***

1. Strongly condemns all forms of gender-based violence, including sexual violence, and all forms of harassment, notably sexual harassment; strongly reaffirms its previously expressed commitment to tackle gender-based violence and its belief that a comprehensive directive covering all its forms is the best way to put an end to it; repeats its call for the Council to urgently conclude the EU's ratification of the Istanbul Convention on the basis of a broad accession without any limitations;
2. Stresses that harassment, and notably sexual harassment, experienced in a workplace constitutes a violation of human rights and a serious attack on a person's psychological and physical health, making them feel insecure at work and in some cases preventing them from doing their work; notes that women are far more likely to be exposed to sexual harassment than men;
3. Underlines that the key factor in creating a safe work environment is prevention, which should be achieved by providing information, raising awareness and promoting zero-harassment campaigns and policies, while at the same time building formal and informal structures to address harassment issues, notably sexual harassment issues, and to provide advisory and psychological assistance to victims, as well as advice on police contacts and referrals to providers of legal recourse;
4. Commends the efforts made by Parliament during the MeToo campaign, which contribute to breaking the silence and raising awareness of the need to implement better working conditions for all staff;

### ***Ensure zero tolerance towards harassment as an important aspect of Parliament's gender equality policy***

5. Considers that despite some efforts taken so far to introduce a zero-harassment policy, there are still cases of sexual harassment in Parliament and victims do not always dare to use the existing channels, meaning that efforts to prevent sexual harassment need to be stepped up;
6. Welcomes the 2018 decision of the Bureau laying down the procedure and measures for the prevention of harassment, notably sexual harassment, such as the code of appropriate behaviour for Members, which was incorporated into the Rules of Procedure in January 2019;
7. Welcomes the adoption of the European Parliament's Gender Action Plan in 2020 and the roadmap for its implementation in 2021;
8. Regrets, however, that the measures to address sexual harassment are not strong enough and do not include all actions requested in previous resolutions, and therefore:
  - a) calls for Parliament services to make anti-harassment training available in all official languages or with interpretation and to target outreach activities at individual delegations and political groups;
  - b) calls for Parliament services to create a public list of Members who have

participated in these anti-harassment training sessions to be published on the website of the European Parliament as a good example for other Members;

- c) calls again<sup>11</sup> for stronger measures to prevent all forms of harassment, notably sexual harassment, and in particular calls for the introduction of mandatory anti-harassment training for all Members at the earliest convenience and the very beginning of the mandates of newly elected Members in line with the legal advice received, because voluntary harassment prevention training has proven to be insufficient;
  - d) calls for Parliament services to assess potential consequences, such as the possibility of limiting the recruitment of staff without infringing on the right of Members to the defrayal of parliamentary assistance, among other possible measures, in the event of non-compliance with the obligation set out in paragraph 8(c) of this resolution, when a Member refuses to participate in mandatory anti-harassment training;
- 9. Calls for the improvement of awareness-raising and the introduction of compulsory training on Parliament's zero-harassment policy for all people working in its premises on a regular basis, providing them with tools to recognise all forms of harassment, including sexual harassment in particular, and to report it, as well as with tailored information about available support structures; underlines the necessity of making these support structures more widely known and easily accessible;
  - 10. Also calls for measures to aim to provide protection against victimisation of or retaliation against complainants, victims, witnesses and whistle-blowers;
  - 11. Calls for Parliament to continue to condemn sexual harassment publicly and design an awareness-raising campaign aimed at combating all forms of harassment within the European Parliament;
  - 12. Welcomes the introduction of confidential counsellors for victims of harassment, notably sexual harassment, as they are a valuable source of support and advice, and invites the relevant bodies within Parliament to ensure that they are accessible to everyone in need and capable of providing all necessary assistance; underlines the importance of a transparent selection procedure and a time frame for the mandates of members of the anti-harassment committees and confidential counsellors;
  - 13. Calls for the introduction of professional mechanisms by the relevant bodies within Parliament intended to support and help victims of sexual harassment by making them more accessible and visible and by ending stigmatisation; underlines the need to avoid victimisation and calls for those bodies to ensure that the career progression of victims

---

<sup>11</sup>Resolution on the EU's accession to the Istanbul Convention and other measures to combat gender-based violence, paragraph 16: 'Calls on the President of the European Parliament, the Bureau and Parliament's administration to continue working to ensure that the European Parliament is a workspace free from harassment and sexism, and to implement the following measures, in line with the demands adopted in the 2017 resolution on combating sexual harassment and abuse in the EU: ... to implement mandatory training courses on respect and dignity in the workplace for all MEPs and all categories of staff'; Resolution on combating sexual harassment and abuse in the EU, paragraph 17.

is not impaired;

14. Calls for more targeted training for all levels of management regarding their institutional role in incorporating the zero-harassment policy into their daily practices, with a special focus on groups in the most vulnerable positions, such as trainees, APAs and contract agents;
15. Recognises the efforts made so far to try to ensure gender equality and gender mainstreaming in Parliament, including gender balance in management positions, and stresses that the full implementation of the roadmap and the planned regular revisions to improve Parliament's Gender Action Plan could contribute to creating a culture of mutual respect, preventing any form of harassment and making Parliament gender-sensitive; stresses the importance of raising awareness of the Gender Action Plan and its roadmap to ensure its effective implementation; asks for them to be published on Parliament's website;
16. Notes the work of the Advisory Committee on Harassment and its Prevention in the Workplace and the Advisory Committee dealing with complaints between Accredited Parliamentary Assistants and Members of the European Parliament concerning Harassment and its Prevention at the Workplace; calls for full transparency on how Parliament is addressing issues of harassment while protecting the identity of those affected, and invites both committees to draft and publish their monitoring reports and risk assessments annually on the European Parliament website, to implement control mechanisms, and, in particular, to publish the external assessment carried out on the Advisory Committee dealing with complaints between Accredited Parliamentary Assistants and Members of the European Parliament concerning Harassment and its Prevention at the Workplace; calls again<sup>12</sup> for an independent evaluation by external and transparently chosen auditors of the current system with regard to its effectiveness and, if necessary, for modifications to be proposed as soon as possible and before the end of this legislative term in order to ensure independence and gender balance and avoid conflicts of interest in the existing structures, and therefore:
  - a. asks for the composition of the two committees to be changed to ensure that independent experts with proven expertise in tackling harassment issues in the workplace, including doctors, therapists and legal experts in the domain of harassment are formal members with voting rights;
  - b. points out that Members of the European Parliament could be victims of sexual harassment and calls for concrete action in this regard by the relevant Parliament services and political groups;
  - c. recommends that a task force of independent experts be set up with a mandate to examine the situation of sexual harassment and abuse in Parliament, in order to carry out an evaluation of its existing Advisory Committee dealing with complaints between Accredited Parliamentary Assistants and Members of the European Parliament concerning Harassment and its Prevention at the Workplace and the Staff Advisory Committee for Parliament Staff on Harassment Prevention,

---

<sup>12</sup> Resolution on Parliament's estimates of revenue and expenditure for the financial year 2021, paragraph 55.



and propose adequate changes;

17. Recommends that the European Ombuds(wo)man provide Parliament's High-Level Group on Gender Equality and Diversity, once a year, with data on complaints about maladministration relating to cases of alleged harassment in Parliament brought before it;

#### ***Cooperation between the EU institutions***

18. Calls on all EU institutions and agencies to regularly exchange their best practices in tackling harassment, including anti-harassment policies, guidelines or any new provisions on how to deal with it;
19. Calls for all EU institutions to introduce a network of confidential counsellors or external mediators to provide guidance and support to victims of sexual harassment and encourages cooperation between confidential counsellors in different EU bodies, which is essential for smaller bodies with fewer staff members available to provide adequate support;
20. Calls for all EU institutions to assess and adapt their internal policies accordingly in order to allow everyone, not just permanent staff, but also trainees and external contractors, to use both formal and informal structures to bring attention to harassment cases and to seek advisory and psychological assistance;
21. Calls on the European Parliamentary Research Service to commission a study on the added value of whistle-blower platforms in workplaces and how it could be applicable within the EU institutions, the outcomes and recommendations of which should be presented in a workshop or hearing with exchanges of views in relevant Parliament committees;
22. Calls on the Commission to provide sufficient instruments for dealing with cases of harassment, avoiding secondary victimisation and ensuring timely responses when reviewing the EU Staff Regulations;
23. Calls on the EU agencies and bodies to adapt their internal rules combating all forms of harassment, notably sexual harassment, and to ensure that they also implement the fundamental principle of gender equality throughout their staff and management levels, also taking into account the new remote working conditions and the related lessons learnt during the COVID-19 pandemic; calls on the Commission to monitor the implementation of these rules against harassment and the principle of gender equality action plans to promote and further enhance gender equality in EU agencies and bodies;

◦

◦ ◦

24. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the EU agencies and bodies, the governments and parliaments of the Member States and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.



