



2019/2188(INI)

25.8.2020

OPINION

of the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality

for the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs

on reducing inequalities with a special focus on in-work poverty
(2019/2188(INI))

Rapporteur for opinion: Vilija Blinkevičiūtė

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SUGGESTIONS

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

- A. whereas equality between women and men and non-discrimination are founding values of the European Union, as expressed in the Treaty on European Union and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union;
- B. whereas equal opportunities deriving from the above-mentioned legislation need to continue to be promoted in order to reduce inequalities;
- C. whereas gender mainstreaming is an important tool for the integration of gender equality in all EU policies, measures and actions, including labour market and social policies to promote equal opportunities and combat all forms of discrimination against women;
- D. whereas the European Pillar of Social Rights includes recommendations on gender equality, equal opportunities and active support to employment;
 1. Notes that the average gender pay gap in the EU stands at 16 %, and the average gender employment gap at 11.5 %, that women are more affected by flexible working arrangements and atypical and flexible contracts (zero-hour contracts, bogus self-employment, temporary work, part-time work, etc.) than men, and that women are more likely to work in highly feminised, low-paid and undervalued sectors than men, to experience poverty and precariousness and to fall into the category of the poorest workers, as well as other intersectional categories such as single parent households, carers for dependents, women with disabilities and women with a limited education or insufficient support from care services; reaffirms that collective bargaining is a decisive factor in reversing and overcoming inequalities;
 2. Notes that, following the global economic and financial crisis in 2008, in-work poverty in the EU increased from 8 % to 10 % and that the current unprecedented global COVID-19 pandemic will have greater economic and financial consequences, which will have a direct impact in terms of increasing poverty, especially among women and the most vulnerable groups in society, as its effects will be felt more keenly by workers in the service, tourism, hospitality and care sectors, the self-employed, workers with precarious working conditions, temporary and seasonal workers, etc., among whom a higher proportion are women, as well as various other economic sectors that will be impacted by job losses, wage and/or working time reductions and increased care service needs during the pandemic;
 3. Highlights that an increase in female poverty has a greater impact on wider society as women tend to be mainly responsible for the purchase of basic goods and are key for the sustenance of the household; expresses concern about the impact this will have in terms of child poverty and draws attention to the fact that in 2017, children in the EU faced the highest risk of poverty or social exclusion of any age group; welcomes, in this regard, the Commission's commitment to deliver a 'child guarantee';
 4. Is concerned that the COVID-19 pandemic and the consequent economic downturn will

disproportionately affect disadvantaged groups of women, including inter alia single mothers, migrant women and women with low incomes, precarious work and part-time work and will put them at risk of poverty, unemployment, social exclusion and/or homelessness; calls on the Commission to integrate a gender perspective into and apply gender mainstreaming in all initiatives and additional EU funding programmes, particularly Next Generation EU and the reinforced 2021-2027 multiannual financial framework, to ensure that the economic policy response to the COVID-19 pandemic is tailored to the specific needs and experiences of women and to propose specific funding to support women in precarious and informal sectors and boost microfinancing for women entrepreneurs;

5. Notes that, although poverty rates among women vary considerably from one Member State to another, the risk of poverty and social exclusion in the risk groups to which older women, single women, women with children and single mothers, refugee and migrant women, women of colour, women from ethnic minorities, homosexual, bisexual and transgender women and women with disabilities belong is high, the average trend being that women are more at risk of poverty and social exclusion than men (22.8 % in 2018 in the EU); notes that other intersectional risk factors such as inactivity, lack of care services for children and dependant family members make some specific categories of women more vulnerable to poverty risks than others;
6. Stresses that one in two people from a non-EU migrant background are at risk of poverty or social exclusion, that levels of precarious work are especially high among migrant and refugee women, and that those with dependent or irregular status face extremely high rates of poverty; stresses that four out of five members of the Roma community have incomes below the poverty threshold and that fewer than one in five Roma women (aged 16 and over) are in employment; highlights that discrimination in access and quality of education, training and employment contribute to this reality; calls on the EU to work with the Member States to ensure the full implementation of EU and national employment standards without discrimination of any kind, including through monitoring, complaints and redress mechanisms that are effective, independent and accessible to all workers;
7. Points out that, 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; notes that those numbers show just how many women are affected, and must be examined alongside other indicators, such as age, life expectancy, income inequalities, the gender pay gap, household type and social transfers to understand their full significance; stresses that women's exposure to poverty is likely to be understated and calls on the Member States to collect poverty data in a way that reflects a person's household and individual reality, together with relevant equality data, and to conduct gender analyses of poverty statistics and policies, as one cannot assume that resources are equally shared among men and women within households;
8. Considers prostitution to be a serious form of violence and exploitation affecting mostly women and children; calls on the Member States to adopt specific measures to combat the economic, social and cultural causes of prostitution and support measures for people who are prostituted to facilitate their social and professional reintegration;
9. Notes with concern that poverty among women increases with age, mainly as a result of

the accumulation of various inequalities experienced throughout their working lives (unpaid care work, due to motherhood and other care responsibilities), life-long differences in pay and working time, with women more often having interrupted, atypical or part-time careers, resulting in lower pensions, different retirement ages for men and women in some Member States, and the fact that more older women live alone; notes with regret that the gender pension gap stands at around 39 %, more than double the gender pay gap, revealing that the impact of pay inequalities gradually increases over time; calls on the Member States and the Commission to work together to establish an EU framework for minimum income schemes and to implement specific measures to combat the risk of poverty and social exclusion for older women by raising women's pensions to match those of men and maintaining fair and solidarity-based social security systems in order to ensure a fair and decent income after a lifetime of work;

10. Stresses that in-work poverty can be addressed at some of its root causes and components, such as education, training and care services, which are determinant and must therefore be considered in policy-making;
11. Stresses that female poverty is a multifaceted problem directly influenced by the lack of fair valuation of work typically carried out by women, the impact of career breaks on promotion and pension advancement, unequal access to secure employment contracts and quality working conditions, unequal sharing of unpaid caring responsibilities and domestic work and segregation in education and subsequently in the labour market, resulting in women accounting for the largest share of low-paid workers; notes, therefore, that in order to reduce persisting inequalities and the feminisation of poverty, actions and policies have to be promoted in various fields and steps ranging from improving education to ensuring that high-quality childcare is accessible, affordable and available need to be taken to systematically address the gender employment gap and labour market segregation; reiterates, in that respect, its call on Member States to swiftly transpose and fully implement the Work-life Balance Directive;
12. Calls on the Commission to introduce further initiatives that favour the creation of jobs for women, especially for women facing multiple forms of discrimination, with a view not just to reducing poverty, but also to promoting quality of employment and their financial independence, avoiding job precariousness;
13. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to introduce initiatives to promote women's empowerment through education, vocational training and lifelong learning, as well as access to finance, female entrepreneurship and women's representation in future-oriented sectors with a view to ensuring access to high-quality employment; calls, in particular, for greater promotion of STEM subjects, digital education, artificial intelligence and financial literacy in order to combat prevailing stereotypes and ensure that more women enter these sectors and contribute to their development;
14. Highlights the regular dialogue with women facing poverty and decision makers through forums at national, regional and EU level to monitor the effectiveness of current policies/services and suggest solutions;
15. Notes that 70 % of the members of the global health and social workforce, such as doctors, nurses and care workers, are women; calls on the Commission and the Member States to target public investment to meet the needs of women health service providers,

such as protective gear including sanitary products, and to significantly level up wages and working conditions in female-dominated sectors;

16. Underlines the necessity to ensure adequate financing for NGOs and emphasise the need for them to access EU funds in order to deliver innovative and effective services to fight poverty;
17. Notes that the vast majority of shopkeepers, their employees and cleaners are women and are often only paid the minimum wage, and notes, furthermore, that the COVID-19 pandemic has put them at even greater risk of poverty; underlines the urgent need for extended rights to paid leave, teleworking, part-time work and improved social protection for women who are in precarious employment or have already lost their jobs and the urgent need to establish socio-economic safety nets for women in precarious employment or with precarious contracts;
18. Underlines the need to ensure access to childcare for all types of parents and families working in essential services and increase support for vulnerable families, including those caring for family members with disabilities;
19. Calls on the Commission to set out an EU-level response to extend support to small and medium-sized women-led businesses during and after the crisis;
20. Calls on the Commission to come forward as soon as possible with proposals to close the gender pay and pension gaps, among others, by championing the principle of equal pay for work of equal value and welcomes its commitment to present a proposal on binding pay transparency measures before 2021, as stated in the 2020-2025 Gender Equality Strategy, as well as to inter alia revise the Barcelona targets and explore pension credits for care-related career breaks, all of which will help to address gendered poverty and promote equal opportunities and the participation of women in the labour market; further calls on the Commission to present a timely revision of Directive 2006/54/EC (the Equal Treatment Directive) and to include the prohibition of any discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity or gender reassignment;
21. Calls on the Commission to come forward, as soon as possible, with an ambitious post-2020 European Disability Strategy that includes proposals to ensure the awareness of legal rights, including the right to work and the right to employment of persons with disabilities and measures to encourage their integration into the labour market and promote equal opportunities, with special attention on the situation faced by women with disabilities and ways to address intersectional forms of discrimination;
22. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to systematically examine and address all of the causes and forms of female in-work poverty;
23. Regrets that workers in the care sector are often particularly vulnerable due to poor working conditions and a lack of adequate social and labour protections, especially domestic care workers, and that their role has traditionally been undervalued; calls on the Commission to adopt an EU care strategy, responding to the social impacts on those with caring responsibilities, who are disproportionately women; stresses that this strategy should require significant investment in the care economy, strengthen policies to balance work and care responsibilities throughout a person's life and fill labour shortages, in particular through training, the recognition of skills and better working

conditions in these sectors.

INFORMATION ON ADOPTION IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

Date adopted	25.6.2020
Result of final vote	+: 28 -: 3 0: 4
Members present for the final vote	Christine Anderson, Simona Baldassarre, Robert Biedroń, Vilija Blinkevičiūtė, Annika Bruna, Margarita de la Pisa Carrión, Gwendoline Delbos-Corfield, Rosa Estaràs Ferragut, Frances Fitzgerald, Cindy Franssen, Helène Fritzon, Lina Gálvez Muñoz, Lívia Járóka, Arba Kokalari, Alice Kuhnke, Karen Melchior, Andželika Anna Możdżanowska, Maria Noichl, Pina Picierno, Sirpa Pietikäinen, Samira Rafaela, Evelyn Regner, Diana Riba i Giner, Eugenia Rodríguez Palop, María Soraya Rodríguez Ramos, Christine Schneider, Jessica Stegrud, Isabella Tovaglieri, Ernest Urtasun, Hilde Vautmans, Elissavet Vozemberg-Vrionidi, Chrysoula Zacharopoulou
Substitutes present for the final vote	Isabella Adinolfi, Elena Kountoura, Aušra Maldeikienė

FINAL VOTE BY ROLL CALL IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

28	+
GUE/NGL	Elena Kountoura, Eugenia Rodríguez Palop
ID	Isabella Adinolfi
PPE	Rosa Estarás Ferragut, Frances Fitzgerald, Cindy Franssen, Livia Járóka, Arba Kokalari, Aušra Maldeikienė, Sirpa Pietikäinen, Christine Schneider, Elissavet Vozemberg-Vrionidi
Renew	Karen Melchior, Samira Rafaela, María Soraya Rodríguez Ramos, Hilde Vautmans, Chrysoula Zacharopoulou
S&D	Robert Biedrón, Vilija Blinkevičiūtė, Heléne Fritzon, Lina Gálvez Muñoz, Maria Noichl, Pina Picierno, Evelyn Regner
Verts/ALE	Gwendoline Delbos-Corfield, Alice Kuhnke, Diana Riba I Giner, Ernest Urtasun

3	-
ECR	Margarita De La Pisa Carrión, Andželika Anna Mozdżanowska, Jessica Stegrud

4	0
ID	Christine Anderson, Simona Baldassarre, Annika Bruna, Isabella Tovaglierie

Key to symbols:

- + : in favour
- : against
- 0 : abstention