



2023/0264(BUD)

04.10.2023

OPINION

of the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality

for the Committee on Budgets

on the draft general budget of the European Union for the financial year 2024 -
all sections
(2023/0000(BUD))

Rapporteur for opinion: Robert Biedroń

PA_NonLeg

SUGGESTIONS

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

- A. whereas gender equality is a core value of the Union enshrined in Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union; whereas Article 8 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European states that 'in all its activities, the Union shall aim to eliminate inequalities and to promote equality', thus establishing the principle of gender mainstreaming, which stipulates that the gender equality perspective must be integrated across all policies and programmes, including all levels of the budgetary process;
- B. whereas budgets are never gender neutral and therefore need to be established with the clear objective of anti-discrimination and the goal of reaching everyone and their specific needs; whereas Parliament has repeatedly called for sufficient funding for the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) and the Daphne Strand and Equality and Rights Strand of the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values (CERV) programme, which is urgently needed to combat gender-based violence and ensure gender equality across the Union;
- C. whereas the Commission has further developed a methodology to track gender equality-related spending in the 2021-2027 MFF, which focuses on policy design and resource allocation and in particular the presentation of an ex-post gender impact assessment on a more granular level and reporting on expenditure;
- D. whereas, even taking into account the balance of personal, family and professional life, the Union budget should include an increase in investment in high-quality public care services, including public networks of nurseries and crèches and public services of free time activities for children and a public health care network, as well as the defence of public, accessible and quality health systems and a public social security system, ensuring their universality;
- E. whereas it is important to focus on enhancing women's potential in all sectors of the economy, including the digitalised economy, information and communication technologies (ICT) and science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM);
- F. whereas the non-compliance with the rule of law in Poland has had an adverse impact on women, girls and LGBTI individuals;
- G. whereas the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) is under greater and unsustainable strain due to an increased workload and requests for research, in particular in the context of the backlash against women's rights and gender equality across the Union and the situation of women fleeing Ukraine; whereas EIGE has repeatedly called for eight contract agents with the established general cost to the budget of exactly EUR 327 500; whereas increasing the staff of EIGE would prevent downscaling of its critical activities and the refusal of requests coming from the Union institutions, bodies, offices and agencies for technical assistance on gender mainstreaming due to insufficient human resources;

- H. whereas there is a worrying and increasing backlash against gender equality, women's rights and the LGBTIQ+ community, including the proliferation of rampant transphobia; whereas economic precarity can contribute to the rise of gender based violence in all its forms; whereas there is a need to increase public, financial and human resources to intervene among groups at risk of poverty and to address situations posing particular risks for women, LGBTIQ+ people children and young people, the elderly, or persons with disabilities, as well as those experiencing homelessness;
- I. whereas sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) are human rights, protected under international and European law; whereas Parliament in its resolution of 7 July 2022 called for the right to safe and legal abortion to be included in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union; whereas abortion must be a voluntary decision at the request of women, freely taken, in line with medical standards based on World Health Organisation guidelines; whereas access to free safe and legal abortion services must be guaranteed;
1. Underlines that a gender perspective should be fully integrated at all levels of the budgetary process; calls for mandatory implementation of gender budgeting and the inclusion of gender related objectives in all Union programmes as well as for identification of relevant budget lines, effective monitoring of the Union budget's contribution to gender equality and a gender-sensitive review of all programmes and spending in order to make necessary adjustments in the following MFF period; reiterates its calls for the need to accelerate progress in gender equality, including through the promotion of budgets and funds that advance gender equality, as well as for greater investment in gender statistics; underlines that this is crucial for the Union that is facing crises and conflict and backlashes against women's rights and gender equality;
 2. Recommends that funds, in particular, be increased to enable the protection of motherhood, parenthood and early childhood through appropriate programmes; calls, therefore, for maternal and child health to be given particular importance in the 2024 Union budget; further recommends that funds be secured for the protection, promotion and support of breastfeeding and breastfeeding, thus contributing to the achievement of the World Health Organisation's objective of ensuring that, by 2025, the global rate of exclusive breastfeeding in the first six months of the baby's life is at least 50 %, which requires, among other measures, the adequacy of the duration and remuneration of maternity and paternity leave;
 3. Calls on the Commission to ensure that there are enough budgetary allocations to ensure that official communication of the Union and Member States is gender inclusive and, where possible, also in braille;
 4. Calls on the Commission to increase budget allocation to civil society organisations that promote women's rights, gender equality, LGBTIQ+ rights, and social justice in Europe and beyond, including in conflicts such as Ukraine; highlights the importance of reaching smaller grassroots organisations in order to guarantee the best impact on women's rights and gender equality and therefore welcomes tenders and other financial support to such intermediaries; stresses that sexual and reproductive health and rights are fundamental rights and highlights the continued importance to fund organisations working in the field, such as those that facilitate cross-border cooperation between

organisations providing safe and legal abortions; calls for budgetary allocations under EU4Health programme for the research into gender specific conditions such as endometriosis and fibroids with an intersectional perspective, along with the provision of cross-border services to ensure the provision of safe and legal abortion to all citizens;

5. Repeats its concern at the correlation between the attacks on the rule of law and the backlash on gender equality and women's and LGBTIQ+ rights; calls on the Commission to strengthen the rule of law in the Union, and thus protect fundamental rights and gender equality, via the rule of law conditionality mechanism for access to Union funds; calls on the Commission to explore the core mission of those to whom Union funds are granted and to withhold funding from actors who seek to use Union funds for the purposes of backsliding human rights, particularly women's rights and gender equality; therefore calls on the Commission to freeze all funds to Poland until the Polish authorities comply with the rulings of the Court of Justice of the European Union;
6. Calls on the Member States to safeguard sexual and reproductive health and rights and reiterates the need for the Union budget to play a more active role, inter alia, by ensuring the existence and awareness of reproductive health programmes and services, including by guaranteeing free access to contraceptive methods, thereby safeguarding the fundamental right to health and ensuring essential care and medicines for voluntary family planning, specifically covering, inter alia, the issues of reproduction, preparation for childbirth maternal and neonatal health and fertility treatments;
7. Reiterates the need for the Union budget to play a more active role in pursuing the UN Sustainable Development Goals; calls, therefore, for it to support measures and projects aimed at eradicating female and child poverty, promoting greater and better integration into the labour market, eliminating labour and wage inequalities between men and women, improving access to and delivery of healthcare, and combating violence against women, children and young people;
8. Recalls the important role played by the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) in understanding and addressing the extent and causes of gender inequality in the Union, especially in the context of the backlash against women's rights and conflict related, economic and health crises; recalls that EIGE has experienced persistent issues with understaffing, which were further aggravated through the sharp increase in requests for technical assistance as a result of the prioritisation of gender mainstreaming in all Union policies and initiatives in the EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025; calls on the Commission to allocate the sum of EUR 327 500 as a minimum to EIGE to ensure that EIGE can employ the eight contract agents that it needs to fulfil its mandate, meaning that additional funding as well as additional staff is needed to enhance its research capabilities, expand its data collection and analysis activities, and support the development of innovative tools and methodologies to effectively address gender inequalities in the Union and ensure that the current staff have an adequate work-life balance; underscores that EIGE's request for contract agents is based on budgetary appropriations and only will secure the minimal levels necessary to enable it to execute its mandate and to respond to the needs of its stakeholders;
9. Recalls that one in three women in the Union has been affected by gender-based

violence, at an estimated economic cost of EUR 290 billion per year¹; calls for additional ongoing funding of the Equality and Rights Strand of the CERV programme and the Daphne programme to combat all forms of gender based violence in the Union, including in the framework of the effective implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence and sexual abuse against women, girls and other forms of domestic violence; underlines the requirement to allocate at least 40 % of the funds dedicated to the Equality, Rights and Gender Equality strand and to the Daphne strand of the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values Programme to activities to prevent and combat at all levels all forms of gender-based violence, and at least 15 % to activities promoting women's full enjoyment of rights, gender equality, including work-life balance, women's empowerment and gender mainstreaming;

10. Laments the scourge of gender based violence that is pervasive not only in the Union, but throughout the world; highlights that women in armed conflicts suffer disproportionate consequences, including conflict based gender-based violence, sexual violence and trafficking for sexual exploitation; calls on the Commission to increase budget allocation to civil society organisations that promote women's rights in Europe and beyond, including organisations dealing with combatting gender based violence, including women's rights organisations, LGBTIQ+ organisations and organisations providing services and support for victims of conflict gender based violence; calls on the Commission to increase budget allocations to the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument specifically to fund civil society organisations working on the prevention of gender based violence in conflict and providing support to survivors, including actions and organisations preventing conflict based GBV and for additional appropriations to be used for trainings for civil society organisations in order to raise their capacity and provide training to law enforcement to deal with such cases;
11. Underlines that any equality strategy should address all forms of violence against women, including setbacks and violations of women's sexual and reproductive health and rights; reiterates that access to health care and public services, including access to abortion and psychological support for women victims of violence, should be considered a priority;
12. Stresses the importance of using European Structural and Investment Funds such as the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) to promote gender equality, women's employment and access to the labour market, childcare and long-term care facilities, particularly in the light of the Union's 14% average gender pay gap; underlines the need for budgetary allocations to support women's entrepreneurship and women's economic independence and promote a progressive approach to ensure and encourage access for women to loans, equity finance, venture capitalists, business angels and investors through Union programmes and funds, such as the European Social Fund; calls for an increase in the budget of ESF+ in order to increase funds for the EaSI strand; stresses the importance of cohesion policy in promoting gender equality, welcomes that a gender equality related expenditure tracking system was included for the ESF+, the ERDF and the Cohesion Fund, which will allow for better monitoring of the investments related to gender equality;

¹ <https://eige.europa.eu/publications-resources/publications/costs-gender-based-violence-european-union>

13. Underlines there needs to be greater emphasis on strategic investment and sustainable growth in the Union and within Member States in order to improve economic cohesion and create jobs, in particular for young women and girls in all their diversity; highlights the importance of investments in high-quality public services, including healthcare and social infrastructure for coping with the social and health crises, building social resilience and combating inequalities and ensuring equal pay for equal work of equal value; stresses the importance of creating high quality jobs in those sectors, aiming at achieving a just transition towards a less carbon intensive society;

INFORMATION ON ADOPTION IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

Date adopted	19.9.2023
Result of final vote	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> +: 26 </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> –: 6 </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> 0: 0 </div>
Members present for the final vote	Isabella Adinolfi, Christine Anderson, Robert Biedroń, Vilija Blinkevičiūtė, Annika Bruna, Maria da Graça Carvalho, Margarita de la Pisa Carrión, Gwendoline Delbos-Corfield, Rosa Estaràs Ferragut, Lina Gálvez Muñoz, Livia Járóka, Arba Kokalari, Alice Kuhnke, Elżbieta Katarzyna Łukacijewska, Karen Melchior, Johan Nissinen, Maria Noichl, Carina Ohlsson, Pina Picierno, Evelyn Regner, Diana Riba i Giner, Eugenia Rodríguez Palop, María Soraya Rodríguez Ramos, Maria Veronica Rossi, Christine Schneider, Sylwia Spurek
Substitutes present for the final vote	Abir Al-Sahlani, Laura Ballarín Cereza, Silvia Modig, Eleni Stavrou, Hilde Vautmans
Substitutes under Rule 209(7) present for the final vote	Martin Hojsik

FINAL VOTE BY ROLL CALL IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

26	+
PPE	Isabella Adinolfi, Maria da Graça Carvalho, Rosa Estaràs Ferragut, Arba Kokalari, Elżbieta Katarzyna Łukacijewska, Christine Schneider, Eleni Stavrou
Renew	Abir Al-Sahlani, Martin Hojsík, Karen Melchior, María Soraya Rodríguez Ramos, Hilde Vautmans
S&D	Laura Ballarín Cereza, Robert Biedroń, Vilija Blinkevičiūtė, Lina Gálvez Muñoz, Maria Noichl, Carina Ohlsson, Pina Picierno, Evelyn Regner
The Left	Silvia Modig, Eugenia Rodríguez Palop
Verts/ALE	Gwendoline Delbos-Corfield, Alice Kuhnke, Diana Riba i Giner, Sylwia Spurek

6	-
ECR	Johan Nissinen, Margarita de la Pisa Carrión
ID	Christine Anderson, Annika Bruna, Maria Veronica Rossi
NI	Livia Járóka

0	0

Key to symbols:

+ : in favour

- : against

0 : abstention