



TEXTS ADOPTED

P8_TA(2016)0487

Rights of Women in the Eastern Partnership States

European Parliament resolution of 13 December 2016 on rights of women in the Eastern Partnership States (2016/2060(INI))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to Articles 2 and 3(3) of the Treaty on European Union (TEU), which establish gender equality as one of the main principles on which the EU is founded,
- having regard to the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) of 18 December 1979,
- having regard to the UN Beijing Platform for Action (1995) for equality, development and peace,
- having regard to UN Security Council Resolutions 1820 (2008), 1325 (2000) and, most recently, 2242 (2015) on Women, Peace and Security,
- having regard to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action of September 1995, and the International Conference on Population and Development Programme of Action (Cairo Conference) of September 1994, as well as the outcomes of their review conferences,
- having regard to the Joint Communication by the Commission and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions of 18 November 2015 on the Review of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) (SWD(2015)0500),
- having regard to the Council conclusions of 18 February 2008 on the European Neighbourhood Policy, of 20 April 2015 on the review of the European Neighbourhood Policy and of 14 December 2015 on the Review of the European Neighbourhood Policy,
- having regard to the Joint Declaration of the Prague Eastern Partnership Summit of 7 May 2009,
- having regard to the Joint Declaration of the Vilnius Eastern Partnership Summit of 28-29 November 2013 entitled ‘Eastern Partnership: the way ahead’,

- having regard to the Joint Declaration of the Riga Eastern Partnership Summit of 21-22 May 2015,
- having regard to the Association Agreements / Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas (AAs/DCFTAs) between the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community and their Member States, of the one part, and Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, of the other part,
- having regard to Regulation (EU) No 232/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 March 2014 establishing a European Neighbourhood Instrument¹ (ENI),
- having regard to the Council Conclusions of 20 July 2015 on the Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy 2015-2019,
- having regard to the Council Conclusions of 26 October 2015 on the Gender Action Plan 2016-2020,
- having regard to the Joint Staff Working Document of the Commission and the High Representative of the Union of 21 September 2015 ‘Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment: Transforming the Lives of Girls and Women through EU External Relations 2016-2020’,
- having regard to its resolution of 21 January 2016 on Association Agreements / Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas with Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine²,
- having regard to its resolution of 17 December 2015 on the Annual Report on Human Rights and Democracy in the World 2014 and the European Union’s policy on the matter³,
- having regard to its resolution of 8 October 2015 on the renewal of the EU Plan of Action on Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment in Development⁴,
- having regard to its resolution of 8 October 2013 on Gendercide: the missing women?⁵,
- having regard to its previous resolutions and to its recent resolution of 9 July 2015 on the review of the European Neighbourhood Policy⁶,
- having regard to the Council of Europe Project on Improving Women’s Access to Justice in Five Eastern Partnership Countries,
- having regard to the Istanbul Convention of the Council of Europe of 2011,
- having regard to the OECD’s Istanbul Anti-corruption Action Plan country reports and progress reports for the Eastern Partnership (EaP) countries,

¹ OJ L 77, 15.3.2014, p. 27.

² Texts adopted, P8_TA(2016)0018.

³ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2015)0470.

⁴ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2015)0350.

⁵ OJ C 181, 19.5.2016, p. 21.

⁶ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2015)0272.

- having regard to the International Labour Organisation gender equality conventions, namely the Equal Remuneration Convention (No 100) of 1951, the Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention (No 111) of 1958, the Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention (No 156) of 1981 and the Maternity Protection Convention (No 183) of 2000,
 - having regard to Rule 52 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Women’s Rights and Gender Equality and the opinion of the Committee on Foreign Affairs (A8-0365/2016),
- A. whereas, according to the Prague Declaration, the Partnership is based on commitments to the principles of international law and to fundamental values, including democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms; whereas the Riga Declaration referred to gender equality as a ‘promising new area of cooperation’;
 - B. whereas enhanced differentiation between, and greater ownership by, partner countries are key principles for the reviewed ENP, taking into account the specific situation of each country;
 - C. whereas gender equality between women and men is enshrined in the constitutions and legal systems of all the EaP countries, and all the countries have ratified most of the important international conventions in this area without reservations; deploring the fact that women are still subject to social discrimination in the EaP countries;
 - D. whereas all the EaP countries have developed strategies, programmes or action plans to improve the situation of women;
 - E. whereas in the EaP States, only 17 of 136 senior ministerial positions were held by women in 2015, on average women constituted 16 % of the elected Members of Parliament, and on average women accounted for only 17 % of the highest-ranking civil service positions; whereas only three political parties in the whole region were led by women;
 - F. whereas vertical and horizontal segregation of women’s employment in the labour markets of the EaP States remains deeply entrenched in their cultural and social norms; whereas women are also burdened by the ‘second shift’ of unpaid domestic work;
 - G. whereas stereotypes widely conveyed by society leave women in a subordinate role; whereas these stereotypes start to develop during childhood, are reflected in educational and training choices and continue into the labour market;
 - H. whereas many women in rural areas lacking other possibilities tend to accept low-paid jobs in agriculture, often without official registration and without any social security rights; whereas eradicating inequalities between men and women in agriculture could help ensure equal access to employment for men and women, as well as equal pay for work of equal value;
 - I. whereas women and men in EaP countries often face difficulties in accessing sexual and reproductive health services and rights (SRHR), and serious barriers still exist for poor women, migrants, ethnic minorities and those who live in rural areas; whereas fewer than 50 per cent of women in EaP countries use modern methods of contraceptive, and

in some countries even fewer than 20 per cent, the main reasons being poor counselling, high costs, and lack of choice and unreliable supply of contraceptives;

- J. whereas serious shortcomings in access to justice for women victims of gender-based violence persist, in particular an absence of criminalisation of all forms of violence against women, severe under-reporting of such crimes, very few convictions for rape, and very little or no state funding for support services;
- K. whereas while significant differences exist between the EaP countries concerning the prevalence of violence against women and the acceptance of such violence, the rate is relatively high – the lifetime prevalence of physical violence is over 20 % in four of the six countries; whereas there are not enough comparable data to determine the prevalence of workplace physical, sexual and psychological violence, also very probably due to under-reporting; whereas the risk of violence is much higher for women belonging to ethnic minorities, such as the Roma;
- L. whereas the countries of the Eastern Partnership continue to be countries of origin, and in some cases transit and destination countries, for trafficking in human beings involving women and young girls, including for sexual exploitation;
- M. whereas protracted conflicts continue to hamper development in the region, with profound effect on the lives and human rights of the people affected, including women and girls;
- N. whereas the ongoing conflict in eastern Ukraine has deepened gender stereotypes that emphasise men as protectors and women as caring supporters, and limited women's engagement and involvement in conflict resolution;
- O. whereas in Ukraine more than 1,5 million people – two thirds of them women and children – have been internally displaced since the conflict and suffer from impeded access to healthcare, housing and employment;
- P. whereas Roma girls in Moldova spend on average less than four years in school, compared to 11 years for non-Roma girls, as a result of child and early marriages, unplanned pregnancies and childcare responsibilities;
- Q. whereas the EU and its Member States are committed to the protection, fulfilment and enjoyment of human rights by women and girls and strongly promote them in all their external relations, including those that go beyond development cooperation;
- R. whereas gender equality remains a horizontal priority within the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) and the European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI), and whereas the reviewed ENP should include enhanced support for civil society and a renewed focus on the importance of gender equality; whereas civil society plays a very important role in achieving gender equality in the Eastern Partnership;
- S. whereas several EU programmes are open to EaP partner countries, such as Erasmus+, Cosme, Creative Europe and Horizon 2020;
- T. whereas prenatal care and skilled birth attendance at delivery, with backup emergency obstetric care and essential supplies in place are crucial in reducing maternal mortality; whereas EaP countries are still lagging behind in reaching all women, especially those

in the poorest, most remote areas and those belonging to marginalised groups such as national minorities, migrants and women with disabilities;

1. Considers the situation in the area of women's rights in the EaP countries to be in need of improvement; points out that profound economic changes and economic uncertainty have had a negative effect on the economic situation of women, leading to shortcomings in their de facto equality;
2. Points out that overall political stability and respect for human rights are generally a necessary precondition for enhancing women's rights and improving their situation in the countries concerned;
3. Expresses the need for the EaP countries to take immediate action to increase equality between women and men in society, including adoption of national action plans and cooperation with international organisations and civil society stakeholders;
4. Calls on the EaP countries to overcome gaps in their anti-discrimination frameworks, and for greater use of legislation against discrimination on the grounds of sex, including greater use of international standards in judicial decisions, in order to increase the enforceability of laws, and for an end to violations of women's rights in these countries;
5. Notes that in some EaP countries, the situation of LGBTI individuals is still precarious and alarming, despite the decriminalisation of homosexuality; condemns in the strongest terms all forms of discrimination and violence against LGBTI people, and calls on the national authorities to adopt policies to combat all forms of discrimination based on sexual orientation;
6. Stresses the need for public awareness campaigns and institutional changes targeting the elimination of grave stereotypes concerning women, which negatively affect all areas of women's participation in society;
7. Calls on the national authorities to be vigilant and firm and to impose penalties on people who insult or stigmatise LGBTI people, especially in public service and public space;

Participation of women in decision-making processes

8. Deplores the fact that women are significantly and noticeably absent from the structures of power in the EaP States;
9. Points out persisting discriminatory practices on the political scene of the EaP countries, where, even if women succeed in achieving high-level political and decision-making positions, their capabilities and skills continue to be questioned;
10. Calls for equal access to power and representation of women at all levels of government and decision-making, in order to support their leadership role; acknowledges the essential role of civil society organisations and international NGOs in boosting positive reforms and measures to protect women's rights and improve their participation in political and economic activities; encourages exchanges of best practice on the promotion of women's political participation in decentralised institutions and local authorities; highlights the fact that sustainable results are best achieved when led by political parties, and therefore underlines the key role of European political parties and

their women's sections;

11. Calls on the EaP States to promote and strengthen political participation and leadership by women; emphasises that increased participation of women in administrations leading key reforms, such as anti-corruption and economic reforms, would be beneficial; welcomes all efforts aimed at reaching this goal, such as obligatory quotas for the lists of candidates, grants, training and support provided to female politicians and activists, mentoring programmes and awareness-raising campaigns to change the image of women in the media;
12. Underlines the positive role that the Euronest Parliamentary Assembly can play in promoting women's political participation and their visibility in the Eastern Partnership; welcomes the first meeting of the Euronest Women's Forum, which took place in March 2016; also encourages, more generally, the creation, and support of by the EU, of transnational networks of women in politics;
13. Strongly supports women's participation and role in governmental and non-governmental anti-corruption organisations, actions and programmes and in the fight against corruption; takes the view that, in general, an increase in women's participation in the political life and senior administration of EaP countries would contribute to a renewal of the political class and thus to the ongoing political transitions;
14. Recalls that EU Electoral Observation Missions and other international electoral observation missions provide, in their reports, recommendations regarding women's participation in the electoral process; calls on the EU to make full use of these recommendations in the framework of the European Neighbourhood Policy;

Economic participation of women

15. Notes that, overall, women are integrated to a relatively high extent in the labour force in the EaP countries, but that their economic participation has been declining in the recent past;
16. Notes that gender stereotypes and discrimination against women prevent greater inclusion of women in the labour market and are at the root of additional barriers to female entrepreneurship activities;
17. Deplores the fact that women are employed to a much greater extent in services and state sectors with significantly lower wages than in the sectors employing a majority of males, that the gender pay gap remains high and can be as much as 50 %, and that women encounter cultural and sociological barriers in their access to managerial positions, as is also often the case in the EU;
18. Regrets the fact that women are predominantly active in low-paying sectors despite their higher levels of education in all EaP countries; calls for women's involvement in decision-making and the process of implementing economic policies, for the promotion of business programmes for the integration and promotion of women in companies and enterprises, and for the implementation of local development projects aimed at the economic empowerment of women; encourages a targeted approach to ensuring more female role models in leadership and managerial positions, in order to allow the younger generation to believe in their ability to be leaders in all sectors of work; stresses

the need for women to participate actively in trade unions, and highlights the urgent need to overcome discriminatory legal and structural barriers for women in the work environment in order to achieve equal pay for equal work, so as to eliminate wage and pension differences between the two sexes;

19. Notes that affordable childcare services and clear parental leave provisions are decisive in improving the participation of women in the labour market; notes that in some cases the lack thereof impacts girls' and young women's access to education and their career development because they have to take care of their siblings;
20. Underlines the fact that women most often bear the responsibility for care of elderly and dependent persons and that women with children are often hindered in their professional reintegration; stresses that equal sharing between men and women of unpaid work such as care and domestic responsibilities is one of the preconditions for women's participation in the labour market and their economic independence; urges the national authorities to further strengthen the network of quality care facilities for elderly and dependent people;
21. Highlights that the protective legal provisions existing in some EaP countries, prohibiting the employment of women in potentially dangerous occupations, restrict the access of women to certain professions and work and further limit their possibilities in the labour market; encourages these countries to review such provisions;
22. Points out the importance of good quality education and vocational training for women and girls in order to facilitate their inclusion in the labour market, and the role of education in removing the stereotypes surrounding the role of women; highlights the need for targeted support and mentoring for women entrepreneurs, who often lack access to credit or to trade networks and face high regulatory burdens;
23. Encourages the development of a social economy for women and facilitation of the use of microcredits as a tool for economic independence of women and for stimulation of business programmes that seek to involve women in companies and enterprises; notes in this regard the crucial importance of transparency, fair access and availability of information about the financial support instruments;
24. Calls for equal access to education for all children, including at the levels of childcare and early, primary, secondary and university education, and in STEM subjects, paying particular attention to the education and training of girls living in rural areas, through education and encouragement at an early age, which will help foster growth in the crucial sector of economic development; calls for the opening up of all educational paths for women and of professions which are still banned for women; emphasises the problem of child labour, which prevents children from accessing adequate education or vocational training, which will subsequently have an impact on their ability to attain a good position on the labour market; supports broader association of partner countries with EU agencies and programmes such as Horizon 2020, Creative Europe, COSME and Erasmus+;
25. Underlines that child labour remains a critical issue in some EaP countries, especially Moldova, Georgia and Azerbaijan; calls on these countries to set specific targets for eliminating all forms of child labour and to ensure the full enforcement of the relevant laws;

Violence against women

26. Expresses the need to combat domestic violence and gender-based violence, including sexual harassment, forced surrogacy and trafficking in human beings for sexual exploitation in the EaP countries, which is often unreported owing to societal acceptance of such behaviour;
27. Condemns the use of sexual violence against women and girls as weapons of war, including mass rape, sexual slavery, prostitution and gender-based forms of persecution, including trafficking, as well as sex tourism; stresses the need to combat forced marriages, as defined by the United Nations (UN), including child/early marriage, and calls on the eastern neighbours to consistently oppose any form of exploitation and abuse of women through surrogacy; calls on the EaP states to take steps as a matter of urgency to prevent and prosecute serious crimes of this kind committed within their jurisdiction, and even outside their own territory; stresses the need for sufficient funding for initiatives against violence against women and girls which guarantees longer-term access to effective services for victims and survivors, and should therefore be adequately staffed and resourced; requests that positive measures such as vocational training programmes be taken as a matter of urgency for victims of violence, particularly if they have children in their charge, in order to integrate them into the labour market;
28. Draws attention to the fact that gender-related crimes and crimes of sexual violence are classified in the Rome Statute as war crimes, crimes against humanity or constitutive acts with respect to genocide or torture; welcomes in this context UN Security Council resolution 2106 on the prevention of sexual violence in conflict, adopted on 24 June 2013;
29. Underlines the need for effective protection mechanisms for women human rights defenders;
30. Calls on the EaP countries to dedicate more resources to combating all forms of violence against women, including amending legal instruments and providing assistance to victims of violence; stresses the need for institutional changes in order to combat societal stereotypes further stigmatising victims of rape and violence;
31. Stresses the importance of SDG 5 with special regard to point 2 thereof, which calls for the elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls in the public and private spheres, and the need to review existing legislation in EaP states regarding violence against women and girls in terms of its adequacy in effectively preventing and eliminating violence against women and girls, with special attention to the need for laws to address all forms of violence (physical, sexual, psychological, economic) and adequate penalties for perpetrators, as well as compensation for victims and survivors;
32. Calls on the EaP countries to design measures to ensure that the justice chain is gender-responsive, including through the training of legal professionals, police officers and other staff dealing with notifications and reports of violence against women and girls, so that the victims of such violence receive serious hearing, and calls further for greater cooperation and expertise on the part of the police, the legal profession, doctors, psychologists, authorities and voluntary bodies dealing with victims of such attacks;

33. Reiterates that gender-biased sex selection is a severe form of gender-based violence and a violation of human rights; encourages public awareness campaigns to change the attitudes of society concerning sex selection practices, and calls for increasing efforts to prevent and combat them;
34. Urges the governments to increase efforts to investigate and prosecute suspected traffickers and convict labour and sex traffickers, to protect the integrity of the women concerned according to the 'Nordic model' and to support NGO partners that provide rehabilitation and reintegration services to victims;
35. Calls for greater cooperation between EaP States on the one hand and the EU agencies and Member States' law enforcement bodies on the other hand, in order to combat trafficking in human beings, which is also one of the most profitable organised crime activities, and dismantle criminal networks;
36. Encourages the EaP countries to sign and ratify the Istanbul Convention on preventing and combating violence against women as soon as possible, since none of the countries concerned have ratified it, and calls on the authorities to put in place and strictly monitor the effective implementation of national strategies to combat violence against women;
37. Calls for the application of the Beijing Platform for Action to education and health as basic human rights, including access to voluntary family planning, the full range of reproductive and sexual health services, including contraception, safe and legal abortion, and sex education;
38. Underlines that the risk of dying from cervical cancer is 10 times higher in EaP countries than in Western Europe, that it is the most common form of cancer among women of 15-44 years of age and that it therefore has far-reaching effects on the fabric of society; calls for nationally organised screening and vaccination programmes to combat these trends;
39. Calls on the Member States to ensure that EaP women's rights, such as access to visas, legal residence rights and social rights, are granted individually and are not dependent on marital status or spousal relationship;
40. Stresses the need for family reunification procedures to give individual rights to women and girls joining their families in the EU, so that they do not have to depend on a possibly abusive relationship with a family member for access to health, education or work;

Women's role in peaceful resolution of conflicts

41. Highlights the role women play in conflict resolution, peace building and conflict-related emergencies, such as providing humanitarian assistance to displaced people; underlines that women should be fully included in peace negotiations, reconstruction efforts and political transitions;
42. Encourages further efforts towards the peaceful resolution of conflicts and calls for greater involvement of women in such processes, in line with UN Security Council Resolutions 1325 and 2242 on Women, Peace and Security;

43. Calls for specific protection for women and girls seeking asylum, because women and girls are particularly vulnerable and may be fleeing gender-based violence, but may be unable or unwilling to disclose relevant information during the Refugee Status Determination process;

Examples of best practice

44. Stresses the importance of exchange of best practices and positive examples that can be replicated in other countries of the EaP; considers that projects to be highlighted must include ‘Women in Politics in Moldova’, a UN Women – UNDP initiative funded by the Government of Sweden, which supports capacity building of women in politics and awareness-raising campaigns regarding women’s contribution to the political process;
45. Welcomes the EU and EBRD Eastern Partnership Countries – Women in Business Programme, which offers women-led SMEs access to finance and business advice through credit lines, risk management support and technical assistance to local partner banks that work with women-led SMEs, and business advisory services, training and mentoring;
46. Points out positive examples of greater inclusion of women in conflict resolution and reconciliation, such as the Trans-Caucasus Women’s Peace and Security Dialogue, established in 1994 and developed by the National Peace Foundation (US), which was created in order for women in Caucasus to work on projects such as the rehabilitation of child victims of war, training for peace and democracy building;
47. Supports empowerment projects that raise women’s self-confidence, guarantee their participation and increase their power and authority to take decisions in all areas affecting their lives; draws special attention to the role of freedom of expression and opinion in women’s empowerment; strongly supports empowerment projects aimed at promoting the participation of women in local elections such as the WiLD (Women in Local Democracy) project, which saw 70 % of its female beneficiaries elected during the 2013 and 2014 elections in Armenia, or their participation in the process of implementing economic policies, such as the UNDP project currently being implemented in Azerbaijan aimed at supporting the establishment of women-led businesses in the Masalli region; welcomes the Council of Europe project on ‘Improving Women’s Access to Justice in Five Eastern Partnership Countries’, which aims at identifying and supporting the removal of obstacles for women’s equal access to justice and strengthening the capacity of EaP countries to design measures to ensure that the justice chain is gender-responsive, including through the training of legal professionals;

EU support in the context of the European Neighbourhood Policy

48. Underlines that in the last five years EUR 103 million have been spent on 121 projects and programmes to promote gender equality in the European neighbourhoods, including the EUR 5 million Women in Business Programme in the EaP countries; recognises that significant support has already been provided by the EU towards achieving goals in the area of women’s rights and gender equality, including through TAIEX peer-to-peer assistance that helps with public administration reform and promotes cooperation on fundamental principles and policies;

49. Points out that while gender equality is a horizontal principle within the ENP and the ENI, more precise and measurable targets in the area of gender equality should be pursued, also with regard to the new Gender Action Plan in Development 2016-2020; Underlines the urgent need for gender mainstreaming as a strategy for realising gender equality, and for positive action in the National Action Plans of the European Neighbourhood Policy;
50. Calls on the Commission to use gender mainstreaming in all areas of the ENP and ENI, thus ensuring that specific gender equality targets are developed and monitored;
51. Notes that within the reviewed ENP, country-specific reports should focus on priorities agreed with partners; welcomes the fact that regular reports, which will track developments in the neighbourhood, will also include a focus on gender equality;
52. Urges the inclusion of women's rights and gender equality issues on the agendas of regular political and human rights dialogues with the EaP partners, together with proposed actions;
53. Underlines the important role of parliamentary diplomacy in all of the above areas and the need to exchange best practices;
54. Considers it important to gather harmonised data regarding the situation of women in the EaP countries; encourages the possibility of the introduction of the Gender Equality Index, developed by the European Institute for Gender Equality, in the EaP countries as part of projects funded by the ENI;
55. Stresses the need to provide support from the ENI to grassroots women's organisations and civil society, which are best positioned to reach out to local populations and help to raise awareness and tackle problems encountered by women and girls in the regions;
56. Encourages the Member States to develop stronger bilateral and multilateral links with EaP countries and an active involvement in transitional help, technical support and experience sharing; believes that Member States in close physical proximity to the EaP countries could play an important role in facilitating stronger links and in involving other Member States in EaP partnerships;
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57. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and the Commission.