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DRAFT REPORT

on the gender dimension in Cohesion Policy
(2020/2040(INI))

Committee on Regional Development

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MOTION FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION

on the gender dimension in Cohesion Policy (2020/2040(INI))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to Articles 2 and 3(3) of the Treaty on European Union (TEU), and Articles 6 and 8 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU),
- having regard to Article 23 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union,
- having regard to the European Pillar of Social Rights and, in particular, to principles 2 and 9 thereof,
- having regard to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and, in particular, Goal 5, which seeks to achieve gender equality and improve living conditions for women by 2030,
- having regard to the European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life¹,
- having regard to the EU directives from 1975 onwards on various aspects of equal treatment for women and men (Directive 79/7/EEC², Directive 86/613/EEC³, Directive 92/85/EEC⁴, Directive 2004/113/EC⁵, Directive 2006/54/EC⁶, Directive 2010/18/EU⁷ and Directive 2010/41/EU⁸),
- having regard to its resolution of 24 May 2012 with recommendations to the Commission on application of the principle of equal pay for male and female workers

¹ https://www.ccre.org/docs/charte_egalite_en.pdf

² [Council Directive 79/7/EEC of 19 December 1978 on the progressive implementation of the principle of equal treatment for men and women in matters of social security, OJ L 006, 10.1.1979, p. 24.](#)

³ [Council Directive 86/613/EEC of 11 December 1986 on the application of the principle of equal treatment between men and women engaged in an activity, including agriculture, in a self-employed capacity, and on the protection of self-employed women during pregnancy and motherhood, OJ L 359, 19.12.1986, p. 56.](#)

⁴ [Council Directive 92/85/EEC of 19 October 1992 on the introduction of measures to encourage improvements in the safety and health at work of pregnant workers and workers who have recently given birth or are breastfeeding, OJ L 348, 28.11.1992, p. 1.](#)

⁵ [Council Directive 2004/113/EC of 13 December 2004 implementing the principle of equal treatment between men and women in the access to and supply of goods and services, OJ L 373, 21.12.2004, p. 37.](#)

⁶ [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, OJ L 204, 26.7.2006, p. 23.](#)

⁷ [Council Directive 2010/18/EU of 8 March 2010 implementing the revised Framework Agreement on parental leave concluded by BUSINESSEUROPE, UEAPME, CEEP and ETUC and repealing Directive 96/34/EC, OJ L 068, 18.3.2010, p. 13.](#)

⁸ [Directive 2010/41/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 7 July 2010 on the application of the principle of equal treatment between men and women engaged in an activity in a self-employed capacity and repealing Council Directive 86/613/EEC, OJ L 180, 15.7.2010, p. 1.](#)

- for equal work or work of equal value⁹,
- having regard to its resolution of 12 March 2013 on eliminating gender stereotypes in the EU¹⁰,
 - having regard to its resolution of 9 September 2015 on women’s careers in science and universities, and glass ceilings encountered¹¹,
 - having regard to its resolution of 19 January 2016 on external factors that represent hurdles to European female entrepreneurship¹²,
 - having regard to its resolution of 28 April 2016 on gender equality and empowering women in the digital age¹³,
 - having regard to its resolution of 14 February 2017 on promoting gender equality in mental health and clinical research¹⁴,
 - having regard to its resolution of 14 March 2017 on equality between women and men in the European Union in 2014-2015¹⁵,
 - having regard to its resolution of 4 April 2017 on women and their roles in rural areas¹⁶,
 - having regard to its resolution of 14 June 2017 on the need for an EU strategy to end and prevent the gender pension gap¹⁷,
 - having regard to its resolution of 3 October 2017 on women’s economic empowerment in the private and public sectors in the EU¹⁸,
 - having regard to its resolution of 16 January 2018 on women, gender equality and climate justice¹⁹,
 - having regard to its resolution of 13 March 2018 on gender equality in EU trade agreements²⁰,
 - having regard to its resolution of 17 April 2018 on empowering women and girls through the digital sector²¹,

⁹ [OJ C 264 E, 13.9.2013, p. 75.](#)

¹⁰ [OJ C 36, 29.1.2016, p. 18.](#)

¹¹ [OJ C 316, 22.9.2017, p. 173.](#)

¹² [OJ C 11, 12.1.2018, p. 35.](#)

¹³ [OJ C 66, 21.2.2018, p. 44.](#)

¹⁴ [OJ C 252, 18.7.2018, p. 99.](#)

¹⁵ [OJ C 263, 25.7.2018, p. 49.](#)

¹⁶ [OJ C 298, 23.8.2018, p. 14.](#)

¹⁷ [OJ C 331, 18.9.2018, p. 60.](#)

¹⁸ [OJ C 346, 27.9.2018, p. 6.](#)

¹⁹ [OJ C 458, 19.12.2018, p. 34.](#)

²⁰ OJ C 162, 10.5.2019, p. 9.

²¹ [OJ C 390, 18.11.2019, p. 28.](#)

- having regard to the opinion of the Advisory Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men of 19 December 2018 entitled ‘The future of gender equality strategy after 2019: the battles that we win never stay won’,
- having regard to its resolution of 15 January 2019 on gender equality and taxation policies in the EU²²,
- having regard to its resolution of 13 February 2019 on experiencing a backlash in women’s rights and gender equality in the EU²³,
- having regard to the Commission Staff Working Document of 6 March 2019 entitled ‘2019 Report on equality between women and men in the EU’ (SWD(2019)0101),
- having regard to the Gender Equality Index 2020 from the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), published on 16 October 2020,
- having regard to the study entitled ‘Gender in regional cohesion policy’ from the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), published on 25 January 2017,
- having regard to the Council conclusions of 10 December 2019 on ‘Gender-Equal Economies in the EU: The Way Forward’,
- having regard to the study entitled ‘Gender Dimension of the EU Cohesion Policy’ published by its Directorate-General for Internal Policies on 19 December 2019,
- having regard to its resolution of 30 January 2020 on the gender pay gap²⁴,
- having regard to its resolution of 13 February 2020 on the EU priorities for the 64th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women²⁵,
- 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 Commission factsheet of 17 June 2020 entitled ‘Coronavirus Pandemic – Impact on Gender Equality’,
- having regard to the Council of Europe communication of 29 May 2020 entitled ‘National minorities and COVID-19: inequality deepened, vulnerability exacerbated’,
- having regard to Rule 54 of its Rules of Procedure,
- having regard to the opinion of the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality ,
- having regard to the report of the Committee on Regional Development (A9-0000/2020),

²² Texts adopted, P8_TA(2019)0014.

²³ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2019)0111.

²⁴ Texts adopted, P9_TA(2020)0025.

²⁵ Texts adopted, P9_TA(2020)0039.

- A. whereas the principle of equality between women and men is a core value of the EU, enshrined in the Treaties and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union; whereas gender mainstreaming should therefore be implemented and integrated as a horizontal principle in all EU activities and policies;
- B. whereas cohesion policy is as an important policy tool to support gender equality;
- C. whereas promoting gender equality is important to reduce regional economic and social disparities and for ensuring the long-term sustainable development of regions;
- D. whereas the involvement of local and regional authorities, gender equality institutions and non-governmental organisations in partnership agreements and monitoring committees is still insufficient;
- E. whereas gender-disaggregated data and the adoption of appropriate selection procedures are considered useful for promoting gender equality;
- F. whereas policy coherence is lacking in the area of gender equality, and whereas a unified system facilitating an identical understanding and implementation of gender mainstreaming in the EU institutions does not yet exist;
- G. whereas preliminary studies suggest that the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated existing inequalities, by disproportionately impacting women and marginalised groups;
- H. whereas the EU Recovery Fund focuses on economic stimuli for sectors with a high share of male employment, which risks increasing gender inequalities in employment;

Role of cohesion policy in promoting gender equality to the benefit of socio-economic growth and sustainable development

1. Stresses the importance of cohesion policy in promoting gender equality and the EU Gender Equality Strategy; recalls that all policy goals need appropriate resources dedicated to their implementation;
2. Strongly believes that gender equality is still mainly addressed in a general manner and limited to the policy domains of the European Social Fund (ESF), as well as in the context analysis and programming phase, while more attention is needed in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation phases;
3. Believes that EU rules should be written in a clear and explicit way, and be binding in relation to gender equality;
4. Stresses the need for a strong political commitment on the importance of gender equality for the entire population and for economic growth and territorial development;
5. Considers regrettable the downgrading of gender equality in the public debate and policy agenda at EU and national level in post-2020 cohesion policy;
6. Emphasises the importance of a coordinated governance framework on gender equality, national guidelines and technical support, and stronger scrutiny at EU level after the adoption of operational programmes;

7. Points out the insufficient training and capacity-building of Managing Authorities and implementing partners as regards the gender dimension of the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESI Funds), as well as insufficient gender-oriented monitoring and evaluation systems;
8. Stresses the lack of a binding gender equality strategy at national and regional level and a lack of awareness as regards the benefits of pursuing gender equality for socio-economic growth and sustainable development;
9. Encourages the Member States to coordinate closely with local and regional authorities and civil society partners, in particular in the framework of the partnership agreement and when drafting the partnership principle, to take into account challenges related to effective equality policies at local and regional level;
10. Considers that programme stakeholders and monitoring committees still lack expertise on the implementation of a gender perspective in concrete projects, especially in European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) interventions; considers there to be a lack of guidelines, training programmes and concrete examples of good practice to address this;
11. Believes that all programmes implemented under cohesion policy should ensure gender equality throughout their preparation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, as well as equal opportunities for all, without discrimination based on gender or sexual orientation;
12. Recognises the burden placed on women as principal caregivers in formal and informal settings, as well as its social value, especially during the COVID-19 crisis; therefore points out the crucial role of cohesion policy in securing investments in care services, to improve working conditions in this sector and to support a transition towards a care economy;
13. Stresses that cohesion policy needs to support equal access to training for women in order to bridge the digital gender gap and to support the green and digital transitions;
14. Underlines the crucial role of cohesion policy in investing in high-quality public services, both for combating gender inequalities and for building social resilience and coping with economic, social and health crises;

Gender equality in post-2020 cohesion policy

15. Calls for a strong political commitment to gender equality at EU and national level in order to enhance the attention given by national and local stakeholders to gender equality, both from a human rights perspective and as a crucial factor for socio-economic development, and to promote further commitment in this area;
16. Calls for compulsory requirements on gender equality objectives to be introduced in all post-2020 operational programmes, with specific and interdisciplinary measures to be translated into all operations;
17. Strongly supports the ex ante requirement of developing a national gender equality

strategy to underpin cohesion policy interventions;

18. Stresses the importance of partnerships with gender equality bodies and their involvement in all programme phases; believes that all bodies created in the area of cohesion policy should be gender balanced;
19. Underlines that a gender impact assessment should be a mandatory part of Member States' evaluations on how the funds are spent and whether compliance with gender equality targets is respected;
20. Recalls that gender mainstreaming must be applied in all stages of the budgetary process; stresses the need to track spending on gender equality in all budget lines, not just in targeted measures, and to assess the final impact of the budgetary lines on gender equality; requests that the Commission, in cooperation with the European Court of Auditors, propose a methodology to that end; recommends the use of criteria such as the national median wage and the median annual gross income in purchasing power parity;
21. Calls on all institutions to provide guidance documents and training sessions, so as to disseminate concrete examples of good practices on gender mainstreaming; stresses, moreover, that at the project selection stage the criteria for gender mainstreaming should be strengthened through higher scoring and requirements for more practical actions; recommends making use of the existing tools developed by the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) such as its toolkit for gender budgeting in the ESI Funds;
22. Calls on the Commission to include the necessary recommendations on promoting the gender dimension and gender-related issues in its communication on the launch of the new cohesion policy 2021-2027;
23. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and the Commission.

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

The principle of equality between women and men is a core value of the EU, applicable to all EU activities and policies.

Among the EU policy instruments, Cohesion Policy is an especially impactful tool, in both the volume and the nature of its funding. The scope for the application of a gender dimension ranges from measures directly targeting gender equality in employment, social inclusion and education within the European Social Fund (ESF), to investments and services within the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), such as supporting female entrepreneurship, addressing the gender gap in research and innovation, and improving access to physical, ICT and social infrastructure.

Besides its contribution to gender equality, adopting a gender perspective in Cohesion Policy is also beneficial for the success and effectiveness of regional development policies. It contributes to more inclusive policy-making for all citizens, plays an important role in reducing regional economic and social disparities and supports the long-term sustainable development of regions.

In the programming period 2014-2020, a dual approach was taken to the gender dimension of Cohesion Policy, as a horizontal principle in all funds and as a direct ESF investment priority. This report points out that, while this approach has led to considerable success in certain aspects of Cohesion Policy and substantial efforts have been made to improve the consideration of the gender dimension in other areas, it is still far from realising its full potential. Furthermore, recent developments threaten to lead to setbacks rather than improvements in the immediate future.

One of the biggest challenges to the further improvement of the aspects of gender equality identified in this report is the absence of a strong political commitment to gender equality and a lack of awareness of its importance for the whole population and its contribution to economic growth and territorial development. This report therefore clearly emphasises the need for political commitment to gender equality at EU, national and local level, and for increased appreciation among national and local stakeholders of the multilayered benefits of gender equality, which make gender equality an economic and social issue.

A further challenge in the current application of gender mainstreaming is the unequal focus given to the different dimensions of Cohesion Policy. This focus is mostly limited to the ESF, where a direct connection is easier to identify, while insufficient consideration has thus far been given to the more indirect application of a gender dimension within the ERDF. Another distinction is the relatively strong focus placed on gender equality aspects in the programming phase, compared to a relative lack of attention given to gender equality in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation phases.

Post-2020 Cohesion Policy should therefore address this issue by broadening awareness, in terms of both the various funds and the different steps in the policy cycle.

A broader issue hampering the successful implementation of gender equality in EU policy-

making is the lack of policy coherence in the area of gender equality within the EU. A common understanding and implementation of gender mainstreaming in EU institutions does not yet exist and there are limited national guidelines and technical support for this purpose, as well as a lack of a methodology to track spending on gender equality. This report therefore strongly encourages work on an overarching framework and methodology, in addition to work on more specific guidance documents and training sessions, as well as the sharing of concrete examples of good practices on gender mainstreaming in the area of Cohesion Policy.

This is crucial, as a lack of knowledge about how to concretely support gender mainstreaming, especially in the ERDF intervention fields, is one of the main factors leading to a reduction in the effectiveness of Cohesion Policy with regard to gender equality. In the absence of adequate support, gender equality targets are often perceived as an additional administrative burden or as competing with, instead of supplementing, other Cohesion Policy project objectives.

With regard to future developments, a number of further challenges need to be addressed. Central among these is the danger of a further downgrading of gender equality in the public debate and in policy agendas at EU and national level, in the field of post-2020 Cohesion Policy.

The issue of inequality has also been further exacerbated by the COVID-19 crisis, which poses a threat to gender equality developments both with regard to the direct impact of the crisis and in the recovery phase.

Preliminary studies suggest that the COVID-19 pandemic has had a disproportionate impact on women and girls, particularly on members of marginalised groups. However, this issue has not been adequately addressed in current EU-level efforts towards social and economic recovery. The framework of the EU Recovery Fund focuses primarily on economic stimuli for sectors with a high share of male employment, while many of the sectors profoundly affected by the COVID-19 crisis have high shares of female employment. This risks contributing to increasing gender inequalities in employment within the EU.

The COVID-19 crisis has shown the crucial role of public services and social infrastructure, as well as the care sector, in ensuring social and economic resilience. It has furthermore emphasised the role women play as principle caregivers in formal and informal settings, as well as the value this creates for society.

Cohesion Policy will therefore have an important role to play in countering the adverse effects of this multilayered crisis on gender equality, while also having a key role in supporting the success of the economic and societal recovery.

Lastly, as the European Union is committed to accelerating the green and digital transitions through its recovery measures, these measures need to be accompanied by a focus on gender equality, such as in ensuring access to training for women in order to bridge the gender digital gap and supporting female employment, while also focusing on the validation of more traditionally female sectors of employment, in order to make sure that the benefits of the recovery are felt equally among different genders.