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P8_TA(2017)0099

Women and their roles in rural areas

European Parliament resolution of 4 April 2017 on women and their roles in rural areas (2016/2204(INI))

(2018/C 298/02)

The European Parliament,

- having regard to Articles 2 and 3 of the Treaty on European Union (TEU) and Article 157 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU),
- having regard to Protocol No 1 on the role of National Parliaments in the European Union,
- having regard to Protocol No 2 on the application of the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality,
- having regard to Articles 21 and 23 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union,
- having regard to the Beijing Platform for Action,
- having regard to the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, adopted in 1979,
- having regard to 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 ⁽¹⁾,
- 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 ⁽²⁾,
- having regard to 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 ⁽³⁾,
- having regard to Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 laying down common provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and laying down general provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006 ⁽⁴⁾,
- having regard to Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 on support for rural development by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 1698/2005 ⁽⁵⁾,

⁽¹⁾ OJ L 6, 10.1.1979, p. 24.

⁽²⁾ OJ L 204, 26.7.2006, p. 23.

⁽³⁾ OJ L 180, 15.7.2010, p. 1.

⁽⁴⁾ OJ L 347, 20.12.2013, p. 320.

⁽⁵⁾ OJ L 347, 20.12.2013, p. 487.

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- having regard to Article 7 of Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013 on the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development,
- having regard to its resolution of 12 March 2008 on the situation of women in rural areas of the EU ⁽¹⁾,
- having regard to its resolution of 5 April 2011 on the role of women in agriculture and rural areas ⁽²⁾,
- having regard to its resolution of 8 July 2015 on the Green Employment Initiative: Tapping into the job creation potential of the green economy ⁽³⁾,
- having regard to its resolution of 8 September 2015 on family businesses in Europe ⁽⁴⁾,
- having regard to the recommendations issued on 17 October 2016 by the UN Committee on World Food Security on livestock production and world food security, in particular those relating to gender equality and women's empowerment,
- having regard to its resolution of 27 October 2016 on how the CAP can improve job creation in rural areas ⁽⁵⁾,
- having regard to Rule 52 of its Rules of Procedure,
- having regard to the joint deliberations of the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development and the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality under Rule 55 of the Rules of Procedure,
- having regard to the report of the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development and the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality (A8-0058/2017),

Multifunctionality of women's roles in rural areas

- A. whereas social and economic circumstances and living conditions have changed substantially in recent decades and differ quite considerably between the Member States as well as within them;
- B. whereas women make significant contributions to the rural economy, and whereas the diversification measures and the concept of multifunctionality, as an essential basis for sustainable development strategies, though not yet fully exploited in all areas, have opened up new opportunities for women, with the help of innovation and the creation of new concepts which make it possible to inject fresh dynamism into farming;
- C. whereas women are very often the promoters of the development of additional activities on or outside the farm beyond the scope of agricultural production, making it possible to impart real added value to activities in rural areas;
- D. whereas women living in rural areas are not a homogeneous group, given that their situation, occupations, contributions to society and ultimately their needs and interests vary significantly among and within Member States;
- E. whereas women are actively involved in agricultural activities, entrepreneurship and tourism, and play an important role in preserving cultural traditions in rural areas, which can contribute to the building and/or strengthening of regional identity;

⁽¹⁾ OJ C 66 E, 20.3.2009, p. 23.

⁽²⁾ OJ C 296 E, 2.10.2012, p. 13.

⁽³⁾ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2015)0264.

⁽⁴⁾ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2015)0290.

⁽⁵⁾ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2016)0427.

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- F. whereas equality between women and men is a core principle of the European Union and its Member States, and its promotion one of its principal objectives; whereas gender equality is a basic value of the EU recognised in the Treaties and in the Charter of Fundamental Rights, and the EU has assumed the specific task of integrating it in all its activities; whereas gender mainstreaming is an important tool in the integration of this principle into EU policies, measures and actions with a view to promoting equality between women and men, and combating discrimination in order to increase active involvement of women in the labour market, and economic and social activities; whereas this tool is also applicable to the EU Structural and Investment Funds, including the EAFRD;
- G. whereas family farming is the most common operational farming model in the EU-28 with 76,5 % of the work being carried out by the holder or members of his or her family ⁽¹⁾ and should thus be supported and protected; whereas family farming promotes intergenerational solidarity and social and environmental responsibility, thus contributing to the sustainable development of rural areas;
- H. whereas, in a context of growing urbanisation, it is essential to maintain an active, dynamic and prosperous population in rural areas, with particular attention to areas with natural constraints, as the conservation of the environment and the landscape depend on it;
- I. whereas the ageing of the population together with the decline in farming activity and economic decline in the EU's rural areas represent some of the main causes of depopulation and women's abandonment of rural areas, which has an adverse impact not only on the labour market but also on the social infrastructure; whereas this situation can only be halted if the European institutions and governments take all possible steps to ensure greater recognition of their work and rights and provide rural areas with the necessary services that make work-life balance possible;
- J. whereas rural tourism, which includes the supply of goods and services in the countryside through family and cooperative enterprises, is a low-risk sector, generates employment, makes it possible to combine personal and family life with work and encourages the rural population, especially women, to remain in the countryside;
- K. whereas the economic crisis has affected the European Union and has had a severe impact on many rural areas and regions; whereas the consequences of the crisis are still visible and young people from rural areas are facing serious levels of unemployment, poverty and depopulation that affect women in particular; whereas women directly experience the impact of the crisis in the management of their farms and homes;
- L. whereas such a situation poses a serious challenge for the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), which should ensure the development of rural areas while enhancing their potential;
- M. whereas it is necessary to maintain a sustainable and vibrant farming sector as the fundamental economic, environmental and social basis of rural areas, which contributes to rural development, sustainable food production, biodiversity and the creation of jobs;
- N. whereas the status of smallholder and family farms as primary food producers must be improved and their farming and livestock activities maintained by promoting innovation and adequate financial resources and measures at EU level; whereas 2,4 million farms in the EU disappeared between 2005 and 2010, most of which were small or family farms, increasing unemployment in rural areas;
- O. whereas the promotion of diversification measures and the development of short supply chains, as well as promotion of producer organisations (POs), can contribute to the sector's resilience, which faces the challenges of unfair trading practices and increasingly volatile markets;

⁽¹⁾ According to Eurostat's Farm Structure Survey.

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- P. whereas it is important to support and promote the participation of women in the agri-food value chain, since their role is mainly concentrated in production and processing;
- Q. whereas access to lifelong learning, the opportunity to validate skills acquired in non-formal settings, and the opportunity to re-train and to acquire skills that can be used in a dynamically developing labour market are crucial prerequisites for increasing women's employment in rural areas;
- R. whereas cooperatives, mutuals, social enterprises and other alternative business models have enormous potential to stimulate sustainable and inclusive economic growth and economically empower women in rural areas and in the agricultural sector;
- S. whereas the inclusion of women and girls in education and lifelong learning, particularly in areas of science, technology, engineering, and maths (STEM), as well as in entrepreneurship is necessary for achieving gender equality in the agricultural and food production sectors, as well as in tourism and other industries in rural areas;

Challenges for women in rural areas

- T. whereas women represent slightly less than 50 % of the total working-age population in the rural areas of the EU, but only about 45 % of the total economically active population; whereas many are never registered as unemployed or included in unemployment statistics and no clear figures exist on women's involvement in farming as owners or employees;
- U. whereas in the predominantly rural areas of the EU, only 61 % of women aged 20 to 64 were employed in 2009 ⁽¹⁾; whereas, in many Member States, women in rural areas have limited access to employment and their chances of working in farming are relatively poor, yet they still play an important role in rural development and in the social fabric of rural areas, through providing income for households or improving living conditions;
- V. whereas in 2014 women were responsible for about 35 % of total working time in agriculture, carrying out 53,8 % of part-time work and 30,8 % of full-time work, thereby making a significant contribution to agricultural production; whereas work carried out by spouses and other female family members on farms is often indispensable and constitutes nothing short of 'invisible work' due to a lack of professional status allowing for its recognition and for the women concerned to register with the social security services, which would prevent the possible loss of entitlements such as sick leave and maternity leave, and ensure their financial independence;
- W. whereas in some Member States, such as France, different legal statuses exist for wives who work regularly on the farm (coworker, employee or farm manager), which makes it possible for proper social protection to be extended to them to insure them against adverse eventualities in their personal life and their work;
- X. whereas on average only 30 % of farm holdings in the EU are managed by women; whereas there is a significant number of female workers in agriculture, and most women are classified as the holder's spouse, corresponding to 80,1 % of all spouses in 2007 ⁽²⁾;
- Y. whereas the farm owner is the person mentioned on bank documents and for the purposes of subsidies and accumulated rights, and the person who represents the farm within associations and groups; whereas not being the owner of the farm means not having any rights related to this ownership status (rights to single payments, suckler cow premiums, vine planting rights, income, etc.) and this places women farmers in a vulnerable and disadvantaged situation;

⁽¹⁾ European Commission (2011), 'Agriculture and Rural Development. EU Agricultural Economic Briefs. Rural Areas and the Europe 2020 Strategy — Employment', Brief No 5 — November 2011.

⁽²⁾ European Commission (2012), 'Agricultural Economic Briefs. Women in EU agriculture and rural areas: hard work, low profile', Brief No 7 — June 2012.

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- Z. whereas, to be able to benefit from positive aid schemes in favour of working women in agriculture, they should be recognised as owners or co-owners; whereas women's farm ownership or co-ownership should be promoted by the European Union, which would have positive effects on their situation in the labour market, social entitlements and economic independence, thus ensuring their greater visibility (and recognition of their contribution to the economy and incomes) in rural areas and increased access to land;
- AA. whereas women in rural areas need to be made more visible in European, national and regional statistics in order to reflect their situation and the role they play;
- AB. whereas increased access for young people and women to land would improve generational renewal in farming and foster economic growth and social well-being;
- AC. whereas the provision of quality and affordable public and private services, including care for children, elderly and other dependants, including persons with disabilities, is important for all inhabitants of rural areas; whereas such services are particularly important for facilitating a work-life balance, especially for women, given that they have been involved to a greater extent in looking after young, dependent and elderly members of the family;
- AD. whereas women have a multifunctional role in rural areas and, therefore, such services would enable them to work and further develop their careers while ensuring a fair distribution of family and care responsibilities;
- AE. whereas the basis for improving the quality of life in rural areas is the availability of infrastructure such as transport links, access to high-speed broadband Internet, including mobile data services and energy provision, as well as quality social, health and educational services;
- AF. whereas rural broadband coverage continues to lag behind national coverage across the EU-28; whereas, in 2015, 98,4 % of rural households were covered by at least one broadband technology, but only 27,8 % had access to next-generation services; whereas digital infrastructure, which is not fully developed in all rural areas of the EU, can be of great help in accessing information and educational opportunities, information-sharing and the exchange of good practices between women in rural areas, and can represent a key element in the support needed to maintain the female population of those areas;
- AG. whereas education is a fundamental tool for fostering the value of equality, which should be promoted across the board, not only in schools, but also in vocational training, and especially in training focusing on the primary sector;
- AH. whereas improving general conditions in rural areas will result in achieving an improved status for women in those areas;
- AI. whereas the significant contribution that women make to local and rural development is not sufficiently reflected in their participation in the corresponding decision-making processes, given that women in rural areas are often under-represented in decision-making bodies such as agricultural cooperatives, trade unions and municipal governments; whereas increasing women's representation in such bodies is highly important;
- AJ. whereas women in rural areas also suffer from gender pay and pension gaps, which are widening in some Member States; whereas establishing up-to-date statistics on the employment situation of women in rural areas, as well as their working and living conditions, therefore deserves greater attention;
- AK. whereas thematic sub-programmes on 'Women in rural areas' have not been created so far and women's participation in the use of the instruments available under rural development programmes until 2014 was regrettably low; whereas out of 6,1 million participants in training measures, only 28 % were women; whereas only 19 % of the beneficiaries of physical investment in farm holdings for modernisation and 33 % of the beneficiaries of diversification measures were women; whereas with regard to jobs created as a result of axis 3 measures (diversification of the economy in rural areas), only 38 % of the beneficiaries were women;

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1. Emphasises the active role of women in rural areas and recognises women's contribution to the economy in such areas as entrepreneurs, heads of the family business and promoters of sustainable development; takes the view that, from a social, economic and environmental perspective, female entrepreneurship is a major sustainable-development pillar for rural areas and should therefore be promoted, encouraged and supported within rural development strategies, and, in particular, through education and vocational training, promotion of female ownership, entrepreneurs' networks and access to investment and credit, promotion of their representation in managerial bodies, and through creating the opportunities necessary to support young, self-employed, part-time and often low-paid women;
2. Calls on the Commission, together with the Member States, to support successful reconciliation of work-life balance, the stimulation of new job opportunities and better quality of life in rural areas, as well as encouraging women to put their own projects into practice;
3. Welcomes the support for women in rural areas in the form of initiatives focusing on community appreciation or networking; stresses, in particular, women's fundamental role as members of smallholdings or family farms, which constitute the main socioeconomic cell of rural areas that cares for food production, preservation of traditional knowledge and skills, regional identities and protection of the environment; takes the view that women farmers have a significant role to play in ensuring the continued existence of smallholdings and family farms with prospects for the future;
4. Takes the view that, given the different roles, occupations and situations of women in rural areas, improving employment prospects requires tailored assistance and support for their needs and interests;
5. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to support, encourage, facilitate and promote access to the labour market for women in rural areas as a priority in its future rural development policies, and to formulate targets related to lasting paid employment in this context; calls also on the Member States to include in their rural development programmes strategies focusing specifically on women's contribution to achieving the objectives of the Europe 2020 Strategy;
6. Notes that women's participation in the labour market in rural areas includes a wide spectrum of jobs that goes beyond conventional agriculture, and stresses in this regard that women in rural areas can be agents of change in moving towards sustainable and ecologically sound agriculture and can play an important role in the creation of green jobs;
7. Calls on the Member States to make more targeted use and raise awareness of the European Progress Microfinance Facility, to use EAFRD-specific measures in favour of women's employment, to promote and enhance various types of working arrangements for women, taking into consideration the specific conditions in rural areas, to provide various types of incentives to support sustainability and the development of start-ups and SMEs, and to introduce initiatives in order to create new and maintain existing agricultural jobs and make them more attractive to young women;
8. Encourages the Member States to monitor the situation of women in rural areas on a regular basis and to make the greatest possible use of the specific instruments and existing measures under the CAP in order to increase the participation of women as beneficiaries, thereby improving their situation;
9. Recommends that the Commission keep and improve thematic sub-programmes on 'Women in rural areas' when reforming the CAP in the future, basing these programmes, inter alia, on the marketing, direct sale and promotion of products at local or regional level, as they can play a role in creating job opportunities for women in rural areas;
10. Points out that equality between women and men is a core objective of the EU and its Member States; calls on the Commission and Council to ensure that gender equality is incorporated in all EU programmes, actions and initiatives, and therefore calls for the application of gender mainstreaming within the CAP and the rural cohesion policies; proposes new targeted actions aimed at encouraging the participation in the labour market of women in rural areas via the EAFRD;
11. Hopes that a better understanding of the situation of women in rural areas will allow development of a European Charter for Women Farmers in the medium term, defining this concept, identifying direct and indirect forms of discrimination against women in rural areas and positive discrimination measures to eliminate them;

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12. Calls on the Member States, in the light of the conditionalities as regards equality between women and men, as an obligation and a core objective of the EU and its Member States, and of non-discrimination, to create greater synergies while using the instruments available under the EAFRD, Leader+, Horizon 2020 and the European Social Fund for creating better living and working conditions in rural areas, to pursue specific tailored policies aimed at the social and economic inclusion and empowerment of women and girls, especially for vulnerable and marginalised groups, and to raise awareness of all possibilities offered to them in rural areas under existing legislation;
13. Emphasises the importance of devising specific measures to promote training and employment and safeguard the rights of the most vulnerable groups of women with specific needs, such as women with disabilities, migrant women, including seasonal migrants, refugees and minorities, victims of gender-based violence, women with little or no training and single mothers, etc.;
14. Stresses the crucial role that women generally play with regard to book-keeping work on family farms, and, in this context, draws attention to the lack of support in the form of advice when a farm is struggling financially;
15. Encourages the Member States to ensure that women's participation in the management of farms is fully recognised, while promoting and facilitating their access to farm ownership or co-ownership;
16. Urges the Member States to promote information and technical assistance measures and an exchange of good practices between Member States concerning the establishment of a professional status for assisting spouses in farming, enabling them to enjoy individual rights, including, in particular, maternity leave, social insurance against accidents at work, access to training and retirement pension rights;
17. Calls on the European institutions to facilitate CAP provisions for a balanced distribution of aid, ensuring support for small farms;
18. Stresses the importance of supporting the participation of women in decision-making in rural areas by means of training activities designed to encourage their presence in areas and sectors in which they are under-represented, and by awareness-raising campaigns on the importance of the active involvement of women in cooperatives, both as partners and in management positions;
19. Encourages the Member States to promote equality between women and men in the various management and representation bodies to foster equal participation and power and increased representation of women in rural development working groups and monitoring committees and in all types of agricultural organisations, associations and public institutions, so that the decision-making process reflects the viewpoints of both women and men, and to encourage their participation in local action groups and the development of local partnerships under the Leader programme;
20. Calls for support from women's and farmers' organisations, which have an important role to play in encouraging and instigating new development and diversification programmes;
21. Calls on the Member States to fully implement the existing legislative acts on equal treatment of women and men, including in social security and maternity and parental leave matters; encourages them to improve the legislation on equality between women and men in the labour market, and to ensure social security coverage for both men and women working in rural areas;
22. Calls on the Commission to monitor the transposition of existing legislative acts in order to address the challenges and discrimination faced by women living and working in rural areas;
23. Highlights the need for effective measures to be taken at European and national levels to reduce the existing gender pay and pensions gaps; encourages the Commission, together with the Member States and respective regional authorities, to consider the multidimensional nature of the gender pension gap while designing specific policy measures within the EU strategy for rural development, as various factors, including gaps in employment and pay, interrupted careers, part-time work, informal work of assisting spouses, the design of pension systems and lower contributions, may lead to a wider gap in pensions;

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24. Further encourages the Member States to guarantee decent pension provision, including a national minimum pension intended, in particular, to help women in rural areas to maintain their economic independence once they reach retirement age;
25. Emphasises that EU policies on living conditions for women in rural areas must also take into account the living and working conditions of women hired as seasonal agricultural workers, especially as regards the need for them to be afforded social protection, health insurance and healthcare; stresses the need for the maximum value to be assigned to the work done by these women;
26. Urges the Member States to strengthen the role of the social partners and social welfare organisations, working alongside the authorities, in monitoring compliance with employment legislation, measures to prevent undeclared work, and adherence to welfare and safety standards, thereby facilitating the social and economic integration of female workers as a whole, including migrant, seasonal and refugee workers;
27. Calls on the Commission and the national authorities to develop information databases and networks at Member State level in order to register and raise awareness of the economic and social situation of women in rural areas and their contribution to society;
28. Calls, therefore, on the Commission and the Member States to review their statistical plans to include mechanisms measuring the overall contribution of women to rural income and the rural economy, disaggregating, where possible, indicators by gender, and to optimise the use of available data on the economic and social situation of women in rural areas and their involvement in the activities being carried out, in order to better tailor policy measures;
29. Calls for improved regular CAP monitoring, data collection and evaluation indicators to identify women's roles in agriculture and their engagement in 'invisible' work;
30. Stresses the need to pay more attention to establishing up-to-date statistics on female land ownership;
31. Calls on the Commission, together with the Member States and local and regional authorities, to provide not only adequate informational material on support possibilities specifically aimed at women farmers and women in rural areas, but also full access to education and vocational training in agriculture and all related sectors, including postgraduate training and specialist courses for entrepreneurs and agricultural producers, providing women with business development skills, knowledge and access to funding and micro-financing with a view to starting up and consolidating business activities, as well as enabling them to participate in a wide range of rural production activities and to boost their competitiveness in farming and rural areas, also within rural tourism connected to branches of commercial farming;
32. Calls for the provision of wide-ranging professional and business diversification advice and for action to be taken to enhance women's economic empowerment, to promote cooperatives, mutuals, social enterprises and alternative business models and to improve their entrepreneurial mindset and skills;
33. Recalls, in this context, that the Commission's New Skills Agenda represents an opportunity for Member States to better identify and certify skills acquired outside of formal education and vocational training in order to combat social exclusion and the risk of poverty;
34. Calls for the involvement of women with higher-level qualifications in agriculture, livestock-raising and forestry to be encouraged, and facilitated in so doing by training programmes to develop activities linked to the provision of advisory services to farms and innovation;
35. Recommends the progressive inclusion of equality modules in specialist agricultural training programmes, and in the development of teaching materials, the promotion of public campaigns for equality in rural areas and a focus being placed on the importance of equality at rural schools;
36. Emphasises the importance of advising and supporting women to enable them to carry out farming activities and perform other innovative functions in rural areas;

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37. Stresses the importance of promoting and supporting rural women's organisations, including encouraging the activity of networks, hubs, databanks and associations as a key social, economic and cultural development, as they establish networks and channels for information, training and job creation, seek to step up the exchange of experience and best practices at all levels and promote greater awareness of the social and economic situation of women in rural areas; encourages business ventures, associations, cooperatives and organisations representing women;

38. Calls on regional actors, drawing on funding from the second pillar, to implement awareness-raising programmes aimed at emphasising gender neutrality in all occupations and overcoming the persistent highly traditional distribution of roles in farming;

39. Calls on the Member States to facilitate equitable access to land, ensure ownership and inheritance rights and facilitate access to credit for women, in order to encourage them to set up in rural areas and play their part in the agricultural sector; encourages, further, the Member States to address the issue of land grabbing and land concentration at EU level;

40. Welcomes the new models of agricultural credit which have become possible in the context of close cooperation between the Commission and the European Investment Bank, and recommends that the Member States apply them as widely as possible;

41. Calls on the Member States and regional and local governments to provide affordable, high-quality facilities and public and private services for everyday life in rural areas, particularly with regard to health, education and care; notes that this would require the inclusion of rural childcare infrastructures, healthcare services, educational facilities, care homes for elderly and dependent people, sickness and maternity replacement services and cultural services;

42. Stresses the importance of providing new opportunities for paid employment, especially for women, in order to preserve rural communities, while creating the conditions to facilitate a satisfactory work-life balance;

43. Urges the Member States and regional authorities to make use of the Structural Funds and the Cohesion Fund to expand and upgrade transport infrastructure and to provide a secure energy supply and reliable high-speed broadband infrastructure and services in rural areas; stresses the importance of digital development in rural areas and the development of a holistic approach (the 'digital village');

44. Calls on the Commission to recognise the importance of extending its Digital Agenda to rural areas, as digital development can significantly contribute to creating new jobs, facilitating entry into self-employment, boosting competitiveness and tourism development and creating a better work-life balance;

45. Encourages local and national authorities and other institutions to guarantee the fundamental human rights of migrant and seasonal workers and their families, especially of women and particularly vulnerable people, and to foster their integration in the local community;

46. Draws attention to the disparities in access to childcare between urban and rural areas, as well as to the regional disparities in the implementation of the Barcelona objectives concerning childcare facilities;

47. Condemns all forms of violence against women and notes that assistance to victims plays a crucial role; calls, therefore, on the Member States and regional and local governments to send a strong message of zero tolerance for violence against women, and to implement policies and offer services tailored to the conditions existing in rural areas in order to prevent and combat violence against women, therefore ensuring that victims have access to assistance;

48. Calls, therefore, on the Member States and regional and local governments to ensure that victims of violence against women living in rural and remote areas are not deprived of equal access to assistance, and reiterates its call for the EU and its Member States to ratify the Istanbul Convention as soon as possible;

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49. Reiterates its call on the Commission to submit a proposal for an EU directive on violence against women;
 50. Emphasises that rural areas within the Member States have a crucial economic and food security role to play in our modern society, in which more than 12 million farmers provide a sufficient amount of healthy and safe food for half a billion consumers throughout the European Union; stresses that keeping these communities vibrant by encouraging women and families to stay in them is of the utmost importance;
 51. Calls, in this regard, on the Commission and the Member States to guarantee a strong and adequately funded CAP which serves European farmers and consumers, promotes rural development, mitigates the effects of climate change and protects and enhances the natural environment, while guaranteeing a high-quality and safe food supply and creating more jobs;
 52. Notes that rural areas often include natural and cultural heritage, which must be protected and developed, in conjunction with sustainable tourism and environmental education;
 53. Stresses the importance of multifunctionality as a concept, involving other economic, social, cultural and environmental activities in rural areas accompanying agricultural production which generate employment for women in particular; encourages the Member States, therefore, to promote measures to diversify activities, such as direct sales of products, social services, care services and agritourism; considers, in view of the growing interest in this type of tourism, that a network of businesses in this sector should be formed and best practices shared;
 54. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and the Commission.
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