

Thursday 1 March 2018

P8_TA(2018)0060

EU priorities for the 62nd session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women

European Parliament recommendation of 1 March 2018 to the Council on the EU priorities for the 62nd session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (2017/2194(INI))

(2019/C 129/08)

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the 62nd session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women, its priority theme of ‘Challenges and opportunities in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of rural women and girls’ and its review theme of ‘Participation in and access of women to the media, and information and communications technologies and their impact on and use as an instrument for the advancement and empowerment of women’,
- having regard to the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in September 1995, the Declaration and Platform for Action for the empowerment of women adopted in Beijing and the subsequent outcome documents of the UN Beijing + 5, + 10, + 15 and + 20 Special Sessions on new actions and initiatives to implement the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, adopted on 9 June 2000, 11 March 2005, 2 March 2010 and 9 March 2015 respectively,
- having regard to Article 157(4) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union,
- having regard to its resolution of 9 September 2015 on empowering girls through education in the EU ⁽¹⁾,
- having regard to its resolution of 8 March 2016 on the situation of women refugees and asylum seekers in the EU ⁽²⁾,
- having regard to its resolution of 14 February 2017 on promoting gender equality in mental health and clinical research ⁽³⁾,
- having regard to its resolution of 4 April 2017 on women and their roles in rural areas ⁽⁴⁾,
- having regard to the UN resolution entitled ‘Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development’, adopted at the UN Sustainable Development Summit on 25 September 2015 in New York,
- 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 ⁽⁵⁾,
- having regard to the 1979 UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW),
- having regard to General recommendation No 34 (2016) of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women on the rights of rural women,

⁽¹⁾ OJ C 316, 22.9.2017, p. 182.

⁽²⁾ OJ C 50, 9.2.2018, p. 25.

⁽³⁾ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2017)0028.

⁽⁴⁾ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2017)0099.

⁽⁵⁾ OJ L 180, 15.7.2010, p. 1.

Thursday 1 March 2018

- having regard to the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention), and to its resolution of 12 September 2017 ⁽¹⁾ on EU accession thereto,
 - having regard to the Paris Agreement of 12 December 2015,
 - having regard to Rule 113 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality (A8-0022/2018),
- A. whereas equality between women and men is a fundamental principle of the Union, as recognised in the Treaties and the Charter of Fundamental Rights;
- B. whereas the fifth UN Sustainable Development Goal (SDG5) is to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls throughout the world, and should be fully integrated into the 2030 Agenda in order to achieve progress in all the SDGs and targets; whereas the SDGs include a goal to 'double the agricultural productivity and incomes of small-scale food producers, in particular women';
- C. whereas the Union and its Member States must be at the forefront of the empowerment of women and girls, and have a duty to work towards the achievement of full gender equality in the Union, and to promote this goal in all external relations;
- D. whereas social and economic circumstances and living conditions have changed substantially in recent decades and differ quite considerably between the various countries;
- E. whereas the lack of governmental action against gender inequality puts current and future achievements in the field at risk; whereas addressing traditional gender power relations, stereotypes and beliefs is key to ensuring women's empowerment and poverty eradication;
- F. whereas the discrimination suffered by women also affects rural women; whereas the majority of women in the world live in rural areas and are therefore more exposed to multiple forms of discrimination on the basis of age, class, ethnicity, race, disability and gender identity;
- G. whereas women's participation in the labour market in rural areas includes a wide range of jobs that go beyond conventional agriculture;
- H. whereas the work of rural women is often paid less than the work of men for the same output, is often formally unrecognised, as with unpaid care work, for example, and is not reflected in the number of women who are farm owners; whereas, however, women are key actors in achieving the transformational economic, environmental and social changes necessary for sustainable development;
- I. whereas rural women, who are often the primary care providers in their families and communities, encounter numerous difficulties in accessing childcare and elderly care for their families, which results in a disproportionate burden borne by women and hinders their integration into the labour market; whereas the provision of quality care services is essential for women and promotes work-life balance;
- J. whereas rural women encounter numerous difficulties in accessing adequate public health services owing to limited mobility and a lack of access to transport or means of contacting transport (for example, a mobile phone); whereas there is a need for comprehensive health services which address the physical, mental and emotional well-being of rural women (for example, to respond to gender-based violence); whereas access to sexual and reproductive health rights and education is more limited in rural areas;

⁽¹⁾ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2017)0329.

Thursday 1 March 2018

- K. whereas retaining populations in rural areas, devoting particular attention to areas with natural constraints, is essential for society as a whole, as the conservation of the environment and the landscape depend on it;
- L. whereas there is a direct link between gender inequality and environmental degradation;
- M. whereas climate change and its consequences have a particular and disproportionate negative impact on rural women and girls; whereas rural women are also powerful actors of change towards a more sustainable and ecologically sound agriculture and can play an important role in the creation of green jobs; whereas providing equal access for women farmers to land and other productive resources is key to achieving gender equality, food security and effective climate policies;
- N. whereas young women in rural areas continue to suffer from inequality and multiple forms of discrimination; whereas measures are needed to promote effective equality between men and women so that there are more work opportunities, including self-employment and in the science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) sector, which enable them to remain in rural environments, thereby ensuring generational renewal and the survival of the agricultural sector and rural areas;
- O. whereas the agricultural sector, in which women play an important role, is key to the vitality of rural areas, and to enhancing generational renewal, social cohesion and economic growth; whereas agriculture should provide safe, nutritious and healthy food; whereas the agricultural sector should also contribute to the diversification of the landscape, to mitigating climate change and to preserving biodiversity and cultural heritage;
- P. whereas nutrition plays a significant role in the development and well-being of girls; whereas poor nutrition leads to physical and mental problems such as stunting, infertility, listlessness, fatigue and poor concentration, thereby reducing women's economic potential and impacting on the well-being of the wider family and community;
- Q. whereas rural women need to be able to participate in decision-making bodies in the public sphere; whereas balanced representation is essential to achieving equality;
- R. whereas, with regard to risk prevention in the workplace, men and women are exposed to different factors; whereas, for example, calculations to evaluate the harmful effects of chemicals are often based on the physiques of men — who generally have greater muscle mass — and even disregard specific recommendations for pregnant or breastfeeding women; whereas, therefore, different factors need to be taken into account for adopting measures to ensure women's health in agriculture;
- S. whereas discrimination also affects women in the media sector; whereas the media play a crucial role for all of society and it is desirable, therefore, that women — who represent at least 50 % of society — are fairly involved in creating media content and decision-making in media organisations;
- T. whereas the role of the media sector is crucial for the promotion of gender equality, since the media not only reflect but also create role models and standards of conduct, thus shaping public opinion and culture in a significant way;
- U. whereas media coverage contributes to a broad understanding among all layers of society of the complexity of the situations of women and men;
- V. whereas women and children are disproportionately impacted by conflict, accounting for the highest proportion of refugees either in camps or on the move in search of safety;

Thursday 1 March 2018

- W. whereas in many societies women do not have equal entitlement to land and property through legal means, which exacerbates poverty and limits their economic development;
 - X. whereas trans women face disproportionate discrimination on the basis of their gender identity;
 - Y. whereas stronger support for sexual and reproductive health and rights is a pre-condition for gender equality and women's empowerment;
 - Z. whereas social norms with regard to the roles of women and men place women in a situation of greater vulnerability, particularly in relation to their sexual and reproductive health, and in the light of harmful practices such as FGM or child, early and forced marriages;
1. Addresses the following recommendations to the Council:

General conditions for empowering women and girls

- (a) to reconfirm its unwavering commitment to the Beijing Platform for Action;
- (b) to support mothers who are entrepreneurs in rural areas as they face specific challenges; stresses that fostering entrepreneurship among these women may not only entail a successful reconciliation of work-life balance, but also serve to stimulate new job opportunities and better quality of life in rural areas, and to encourage other women to put their own projects into practice;
- (c) to put an end to all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere and to combat all forms of violence, which represent serious violations of their fundamental rights, violations which are in turn a direct consequence of such discrimination;
- (d) to involve all governments and require them to draw up programmes aimed at eliminating sexual and gender-based violence and harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation and human trafficking;
- (e) to call on the Member States to fight gender stereotypes and invest in women's and girls' access to tailor-made education, lifelong learning and vocational training, especially in rural areas, particularly in STEM, as well as entrepreneurship and innovation, as these areas are important tools for achieving the SDGs, and to promote equality in the agricultural and food sectors, as well as in tourism and other industries in rural areas;
- (f) to develop policies aimed at eradicating poverty and ensuring an adequate standard of living for particularly vulnerable groups, including women and girls, especially through social protection systems;
- (g) to promote information, technical assistance measures and the 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;
- (h) to eliminate the gender pay gap, the lifetime remuneration (earnings) gap and the pensions gap;
- (i) to call on the Member States and regional and local authorities to guarantee universal access to adequate childcare and elderly care in rural areas;
- (j) to call on the Member States and regional and local authorities to provide affordable, high-quality facilities and public and private services for everyday life, especially in rural areas and with particular regard for health, education and care; notes that this would require the inclusion of rural childcare infrastructure, healthcare services, educational facilities, care homes for elderly and dependent people, sickness and maternity replacement services and cultural services;

Thursday 1 March 2018

- (k) to ensure gender mainstreaming, as a tool for integrating the principle of equality between women and men, and combating discrimination, into all policies and programmes by means of adequate financial and human resources;
- (l) to mobilise the necessary resources to achieve equality by mainstreaming gender into all policies and actions, including through gender budgeting, as a tool for integrating the principle of equality between women and men, and combating discrimination;
- (m) to ensure the full involvement of Parliament and its Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality in the decision-making process regarding the EU's position at the 62nd session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women;

The empowerment of rural women

- (n) to recall that the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women introduces the obligation to eliminate direct and indirect discrimination against women through legal, political and programmatic measures in all areas of life and that Article 14 of the convention is the only international obligation that addresses the specific needs of women in rural areas;
- (o) to ensure that rural women and girls have accessible, affordable and high-quality formal and informal education, including training, which should enable them to acquire new or to develop existing management, financial literacy, economic, marketing, and business skills, as well as citizenship, civil and political education, and technological and sustainable agriculture training; to ensure that women have the same opportunities and freedom of choice regarding the career they wish to pursue;
- (p) to ensure that rural women and girls can easily access credit and productive resources, and that they receive support on their entrepreneurial and innovation initiatives;
- (q) to safeguard the right of and access to high-quality universal healthcare which takes into account the physiological differences between women and men, and which is tailor-made for the needs of rural women and girls, particularly with regard to sexual and reproductive health and rights;
- (r) to condemn all forms of violence against women and to ensure that victims living in rural and remote areas are not deprived of equal access to assistance;
- (s) to improve the effectiveness, transparency and democratic nature of international, national, regional and local institutions which support and strengthen the roles of rural women, ensuring their presence through equal participation;
- (t) to facilitate the transition of rural women from the informal to the formal economy, and to recognise that women in rural areas work in a variety of fields and are often agents of change towards sustainable and ecologically sound agriculture, food security and the creation of green jobs;
- (u) to plan and implement climate-resilient agricultural policies which take due account of the specific threats faced by rural women as a result of natural or man-made disasters;
- (v) to guarantee the participation of rural women and girls in decision-making regarding the planning of and response to all stages of disasters and other crises, from early warning to relief, recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction, and to guarantee their protection and safety in the event of disasters and other crises;
- (w) to take all the necessary measures to ensure that rural women enjoy a safe, clean and healthy environment;

Thursday 1 March 2018

- (x) to provide high-quality, accessible infrastructure and public services for rural women and communities and to invest in their development and maintenance;
- (y) to facilitate digital development, as it can significantly contribute to creating new jobs, by simplifying entry into self-employment, boosting competitiveness and tourism development and creating a better balance between work and family life;
- (z) to support the establishment and ongoing activities of local community groups, which should meet periodically to discuss development-related issues and challenges and to take constructive action;
- (aa) to call on the Member States, the social partners and civil society to support and promote the participation of women in decision-making and in the governing bodies of professional, business and trade union associations and organisations in the areas of rural policies, health, education and agriculture, as well as in management and representation bodies through an equal presence;
- (ab) to recognise and support the active role of women in rural areas and their contribution to the economy as entrepreneurs, heads of family businesses and promoters of sustainable development;
- (ac) to ensure rural women's ownership rights, in particular of farm holdings and inheritance of land, which is an important tool for their economic empowerment and for enabling them to fully participate in and benefit from rural development;
- (ad) to ensure rural women's access to productive resources, e-platforms, markets, marketing facilities and financial services; to promote local, regional and traditional markets, including food markets, which are places where women generally have more opportunities to sell their products directly, leading to greater economic empowerment;
- (ae) to promote the employment of women in the STEM sector, particularly in positions which contribute to the circular economy and the fight against climate change;
- (af) to develop employment policies, services and programmes to address the precarious situation of rural women, who often work in the informal sector and who can face multiple forms of intersectional discrimination on the basis of sex, age, class, religion, ethnicity, disability or gender identity; to provide tailored assistance and support for their needs and interests;
- (ag) to establish programmes to ensure that women and their families have access to universal social protection systems which have an impact on their future retirement situation and thus reduce the pensions gap, which is multifaceted in nature;
- (ah) to collect gender-disaggregated data and develop statistics on the values, situations, conditions and needs of rural women in order to enable adequate policies to be drawn up; to monitor the situation of women in rural areas on a regular basis;
- (ai) to urge the ratification and implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, including Article 6 thereof on 'Women with disabilities'; to ensure the accessibility of goods, infrastructure and services;
- (aj) to call on the Commission, the Member States and regional and local governments to provide affordable, high-quality facilities and public and private services geared towards everyday life in rural areas, and to create the necessary conditions to improve the work-life balance for women in rural areas, in particular by guaranteeing suitable care facilities for dependants, accessible healthcare and public transport;

Thursday 1 March 2018

- (ak) to stress the importance of including safeguards in EU policies on the living and working conditions of women hired as seasonal agricultural workers, especially as regards the need for them to be given social protection, health insurance and healthcare; to encourage regional, 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 vulnerable people, and to foster their integration into the local community;

Participation in and access of women to the media, and information and communications technologies and their impact on and use as an instrument for the advancement and empowerment of women

- (al) to ensure access to reliable high-speed broadband internet infrastructure and services; to invest in and promote the use of new technologies in rural areas and agriculture; to acknowledge the important social, psychological and economic benefits thereof; to insist on the development of a holistic approach (the 'digital village'); to promote equal opportunities in access to and training in the use of these technologies;
- (am) to devote attention to women's presence and advancement in the media sector and to non-stereotypical media content;
- (an) to encourage public media organisations to establish their own equality policies providing for a balanced representation of men and women in decision-making bodies;
- (ao) to ensure that the growing sexualised portrayal of women and girls in the media is combated effectively, with due respect for freedom of expression;
- (ap) to encourage media organisations to prevent procedures of an organisational culture which is often uncongenial to a work-life balance;
- (aq) to tackle the gender pay gap in the media sector through anti-discrimination measures, ensuring equal pay for equal work between women and men;
- (ar) to take all the necessary measures against acts of violence against investigative journalists, devoting particular attention paid to female journalists, who are often more vulnerable;
2. Instructs its President to forward this recommendation to the Council and, for information, to the Commission.
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