



TEXTS ADOPTED

P9_TA(2024)0074

The EU priorities for the 68th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women

European Parliament resolution of 8 February 2024 on the EU priorities for the 68th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (2023/2973(RSP))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the 68th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women and its priority theme, ‘Accelerating the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls by addressing poverty and strengthening institutions and financing with a gender perspective’,
- having regard to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action of 15 September 1995 and the outcomes of its review conferences,
- having regard to the 1979 UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women,
- having regard to Articles 21 and 23 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union,
- having regard to the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the principle of ‘leaving no one behind’ and, in particular, Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 1 which seeks to end poverty, SDG 5 which seeks to achieve gender equality and improve living conditions for women, SDG 8 which seeks to achieve sustainable and economic growth,
- having regard to the EU action plan on gender equality and women’s empowerment in external action 2021–2025 (GAP III),
- having regard to the EU gender equality strategy for 2020-2025 of 5 March 2020,
- having regard to its resolution of 22 June 2022 on a common European action on care¹,
- having regard to its resolution of 24 June 2022 on women’s poverty in Europe²,

¹ OJ C 47, 7.2.2023, p. 30.

² OJ C 47, 7.2.2023, p. 2.

- having regard to Article 157(4) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union,
 - having regard to the questions to the Council and to the Commission on the EU priorities for the 68th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (O-000056/2023 – B9-0005/2024 and O-000057/2023 – B9-0006/2024)),
 - having regard to Rules 136(5) and 132(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the motion for a resolution of the Committee on Women’s Rights and Gender Equality,
- A. whereas ensuring women’s rights and gender equality is a fundamental principle of the EU enshrined in Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union and Article 23 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union; whereas gender mainstreaming and gender budgeting are important tools for reaching this aim and integrating these principles in all EU policies, measures and actions, including in its external dimensions;
 - B. whereas 189 countries across the world, including the European Union and its Member States, committed to work towards gender equality and empowering all women and girls at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995; whereas SDG 5 of the Sustainable Development Agenda adopted by UN Member States in 2015 sets 2030 as the deadline for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in all their diversity;
 - C. whereas the EU needs to acknowledge its responsibility to include gender perspectives in all areas of its external policies, such as development cooperation, humanitarian aid, trade, agriculture, climate and migration, in order to have an impact on the eradication of global female poverty;
 - D. whereas the feminist foreign policy concept aims to empower women and girls, resolving crises and reducing negative impact on women, girls and gender equality, including fighting female poverty; whereas the EU should strive to follow such a holistic approach in its external action;
 - E. whereas the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action stressed that gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, and the fulfilment of their human rights, are critical factors in the eradication of poverty; whereas there is a strong mutual interdependence between poverty, and social and political exclusion; whereas women’s poverty is a complex, multidimensional problem, with origins in both the national and international domains; whereas for this reason, combating all root causes and manifestations of women’s poverty is key; whereas these limit their ability to realise their full potential and enjoy their rights in society in order to lead sustainable livelihoods;
 - F. whereas women and girls continue to be disproportionately affected by poverty and the risk of social exclusion compared to men, in particular women and girls who experience intersectional forms of discrimination, based on sex, race, colour, ethnic or social origin, genetic features, language, religion or belief, political or any other opinion, membership of a national minority, property, birth, disability, age, sexual orientation,¹ gender, gender identity and expression, and sex characteristics; whereas, globally, 383 million

¹ EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, Article 21.

women and girls are estimated to live on less than USD 1,90 a day, compared with 368 million men and boys¹; whereas the female poverty rate is higher than that of men (12,8 vs 12,3 %)²;

- G. whereas women's poverty and the pay and pension gaps are the results of the accumulation of systemic and structural inequalities and discrimination; whereas harmful gender stereotypes and social norms still influence the division of labour at home, in education, in the workplace and in society and access to power, resources including access to finance or credit through various sources such as venture capital including women's investment networks, land ownership and inheritance, and decision-making; whereas unpaid care and domestic work impose a disproportionate burden on women and girls, and those domestic and care responsibilities are not appropriately recognised;
- H. whereas access to services, including childcare and long-term care services, affect women and girls in particular as they often fill the gaps in caregiving and family support, perpetuating women's disproportionate responsibility for unpaid care;
- I. whereas globally, women make up over 70 % of workers in the health and care sector³; whereas these kinds of jobs have systematically been undervalued because they have been, and still are, performed for free by women within households; whereas women are employed more on part-time contracts due to their disproportionate burden of unpaid care; whereas women are suffering in-work poverty that leads to social exclusion; whereas social, gender equality and economic impacts of those with care responsibilities should be urgently addressed;
- J. whereas female-dominated sectors such as health and care are systemically underpaid and undervalued; whereas the promotion of economic independence requires recognising and implementing appropriate measures to ensure women's equal participation in labour markets, equal pay for equal work or work of equal value, access to decent work opportunities as well as recognising the link between undervalued and underpaid work in female-dominated sectors;
- K. whereas poverty exacerbates the impacts of gender-based violence on women and girls as increased economic difficulties make it harder for women in abusive relationships to leave their partner; whereas gender-based violence is a structural and societal problem that can be found across all socio-economic groups and is independent of origin or belief; whereas gender-based violence also contributes to poverty and social exclusion as violence dramatically affects health and can lead to the loss of one's job and homelessness;
- L. whereas poverty puts women at greater risk of trafficking and sexual exploitation as it makes them and their families economically dependent on their abusers;

¹ Azcona, G., and Bhatt, A., *Poverty is not gender neutral*, UN Women, March 2023.

² *Gender differences in poverty and household composition through the life cycle*, UN Women and the World Bank.

³ Resolution of 5 July 2022 on women's poverty in Europe, texts adopted, P9_TA(2022)0274.

- M. whereas it is important to understand the links between poverty and access to Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR); whereas poverty together with other practical, legal, financial, cultural and social barriers can both lead to and be a result of inaccessibility of SRHR services for women, including safe and legal abortion and modern contraception; whereas delaying and denying access to safe and legal abortion care constitutes a form of violence against women and girls; whereas several human rights bodies have asserted that the denial of safe and legal abortion may amount to torture or cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment;
- N. whereas prevention, early detection, and treatment of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs), reproductive cancers, including cervical cancer, and fertility care and treatment are essential for saving lives;
- O. whereas access to sanitary and period products is hindered by gender-biased taxation of period products deepening the issue of period poverty; whereas shame, untreated menstrual pain and discriminatory traditions and lack of water and sanitation facilities for menstrual hygiene management lead to school drop outs and lower attendance rates of girls at school and women at work;
- P. whereas women's economic independence and empowerment, ensuring equal pay for equal work and work of equal value, and the ability to participate equally in the labour market and in economic decision-making, are not only central to achieving gender equality, guaranteeing the realisation of women's rights and ending poverty, but also beneficial to the economy and society as a whole; whereas equal pay for equal work and work of equal value, and the ability to participate equally in the labour market and in economic decision-making are prerequisites for equal economies and societies; whereas the promotion of economic independence requires, among other things, boosting women's entrepreneurship and self-employment and should be accompanied by appropriate measures;
- Q. whereas gender equality in the labour market is an important instrument in eliminating women's poverty that benefits not only women but the economy as a whole, with a positive impact on GDP, employment levels and productivity; whereas improving gender equality would lead to an increase in the EU's GDP per capita between 6,1 and 9,6 % and an additional 10,5 million jobs, by 2050;
- R. whereas crises, including climate change and all associated consequences including biodiversity loss, natural disasters, pandemics and armed conflicts, disproportionately affect women; whereas women and girls in vulnerable situations have less access to or control over resources needed to cope with and overcome crises; whereas crises are not-gender neutral and worsen social and gender inequalities; whereas parental and, in particular, maternal poverty often leads to child poverty;
- S. whereas, since 2021, inflation has increased sharply, driven primarily by high energy and food costs; whereas wages are not projected to increase as fast as inflation, thus creating a cost of living crisis; whereas this crisis acutely threatens women's livelihoods, health, well-being, economic independence, while limiting their ability to purchase basic necessities including food, housing and exacerbating energy poverty;
- T. whereas the progress made in recent years in the EU in empowering women and fostering an equal society, with initiatives such as transparent recruitment procedures in

companies or pay transparency, must be enhanced as they are essential to achieve gender equality, which is particularly important during times of crisis;

- U. whereas investing in policies that empower women also improves the living conditions of their families, and in particular of their children; whereas single-parent families, the majority of which are headed by mothers, are at greater risk of poverty and bear a higher probability of transmission of generational poverty;
1. Addresses the following recommendations to the Council:
- (a) to reconfirm the EU's unwavering commitment to the Beijing Platform for Action and subsequent review conferences and to the range of actions for gender equality outlined therein;
 - (b) to ensure the full involvement of Parliament and its Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality in the decision-making process on the EU's position at the 68th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women, to ensure that Parliament has adequate and timely information and access to the EU position document ahead of the negotiations, and to improve further interinstitutional cooperation and informal consultation, including prior to and during the negotiations, so that Parliament's priorities are properly incorporated;
 - (c) to underline the importance of a positive outcome of the 68th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women, to be held from 11 to 22 March 2024, including through the adoption of a set of forward-looking and ambitious commitments outlined in the political declaration;
 - (d) to pledge its strong support for the work of UN Women, which is a central actor in the UN system for advancing the rights of women and girls in all their diversity and bringing together all relevant stakeholders in order to generate policy change and coordinate actions; to call on all UN member states, together with the EU, to ensure adequate funding for UN Women;
 - (e) to ensure that the EU leads by example and shows strong leadership, while taking a unified position on the importance of empowering women and girls in all their diversity and achieving gender equality worldwide;
 - (f) to ensure equal opportunities in education, in the labour market, as well as in political and economic decision-making, with equal access to economic and financial services;
 - (g) to advocate for women's and girl's leadership and their full, equal and meaningful participation at all levels of decision-making, as the involvement of women in public and political life and decision-making is essential to good governance and policy making;
 - (h) to apply gender mainstreaming as well as gender budgeting in all EU and Member State policy areas as these are globally acknowledged tools to implement women's rights and reach gender equality;
 - (i) to create and adjust the EU's internal and external policies and programmes to better empower women and girls in all their diversity, and to respect, protect and

fulfil their rights and ensure gender equality;

- (j) to address the multiple systemic root causes of women's poverty globally, such as women's over-representation in low-paid, precarious and part-time jobs, women's career breaks to care for children and other family members, lack of access to labour markets and employment, the gender pay and pension gap, as well as under-representation of women in political and economic decision-making;
- (k) to point out the importance of promoting women's and girl's empowerment through education, training and lifelong learning, which are vital to fight harmful stereotypes and combat persisting inequalities that lead to poverty together with addressing women's employment rate and under-representation in certain sectors like science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) and artificial intelligence (AI);
- (l) to support and promote women's entrepreneurship at all levels, by increasing their participation in the labour market, improving their financial independence, and recognising and promoting women as role models, mentors and job creators;
- (m) to ensure that concrete actions and adequate budget commitments are included in future EU strategies, programmes and policy initiatives to address the various aspects and causes of women's poverty as flagged within the EU Gender Equality Strategy;
- (n) to stress and raise awareness of the devastating consequences of gender-based violence in society and in armed conflicts on women's social exclusion and poverty and to underline the need for strong legislative national and international frameworks and for accountability of the perpetrators of such violence to be brought to justice and the right of victims to effective remedies and reparation;
- (o) to tackle and combat harmful traditional practices such as child and forced marriages and female genital mutilation;
- (p) to ensure measures to prevent girls from missing school during their periods by improving water sanitation, hygiene services and menstrual hygiene facilities on school premises and by tackling period poverty and combating stigmatisation in this area, including education and training for all; to ensure greater synergies between programmes addressing health, SRHR and water, sanitation and hygiene services in schools and personal support for girls;
- (q) to apply the principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights through the implementation of a rights-based approach to guarantee fundamental social protection;
- (r) to ensure that Member States implement strong social security schemes, including the exploration of a minimum income, to ensure a safety net for all women, particularly for the most at risk of poverty and social exclusion, following the demands expressed by the EU citizens in the Conference on the Future of Europe;
- (s) to ensure that Member States prioritise the investment in social infrastructures and green jobs in order to assure the well-being and empowerment of women;

- (t) enhance public services including health services, quality and affordable public education and public transport and to recognise the vital role of accessible and reliable public transportation in enabling women's participation in work and society;
- (u) to promote green jobs and invest in women's full participation in the green transition as it is essential to advance towards a sustainable economy while ensuring gender equality in new and emerging sectors;
- (v) to recognise that energy poverty affects women disproportionately and put forward specific measures to support those in vulnerable situations while ensuring everyone has access to electricity, heating and cooling in the green energy transition;
- (w) to ensure access to SRHR, including age-appropriate comprehensive sexuality and relationship education for all, affordable modern contraception, safe and legal abortion care and other SRHR services as quality maternal health services;
- (x) to advocate, support and take concrete measures to realise the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, including by ensuring universal access to SRHR;
- (y) to take strong action to unequivocally denounce the current backlash and attacks against gender equality and SRHR, including from extreme right organisations and anti-democratic movements, to undermine women's fundamental rights, their autonomy and emancipation in every field;
- (z) to strengthen and support civil society organisations and NGOs that are supporting women's rights and their empowerment;
- (aa) to accelerate the implementation of international commitments already made, such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Istanbul Convention, ILO Convention 190 and UNSCR 1325; to support new measures to empower women and girls and thus combat their poverty and social exclusion;
- (ab) to work to promote the concept of combating multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, throughout all UN bodies and the EU and its Member States;
- (ac) to reiterate the need for the EU to play a leading role at multilateral level in promoting feminist diplomacy in order to implement international agreements pertaining to the rights and empowerment of women and girls; calls for the EU, its Member States, the Commission and the European External Action Service (EEAS) to commit to advancing towards a feminist foreign, security and development policy that entails a gender-transformative vision and to make gender equality a core part of their external actions and priorities;
- (ad) to take into account the need to strengthen gender mainstreaming and to utilise the principles of gender budgeting more effectively, also in EU external policies, to address gender inequality worldwide;
- (ae) to fully implement the EU Gender Action Plan III and ensure that 85 % of all new

actions throughout external relations by 2025 will contribute to gender equality and women's empowerment; to apply the holistic and sustainable approach of a feminist foreign policy in all its external actions and policies;

- (af) to ensure comparable and age, sex, gender disaggregated data capturing of the situation of people facing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination so as to improve data analysis and to inform the design and implementation of policies since less than half of the data required to monitor SDG 5 is currently available;
2. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and the EU Special Representative for Human Rights.