2020

Breaking the Poverty Cycle
Recommendations

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EQUINET
European Network of Equality Bodies
EU Member States provide some form of minimum income scheme. However, most fail to guarantee dignified standards of living to women. Proposing an EU directive on minimum income schemes would be a clear opportunity to deliver a legally binding document that would lay the foundation for a basic social safety net to fight poverty and inequalities. To guarantee the improvement of the lives of working women in poverty in Europe, the minimum income scheme should be compatible with a certain level of income, coming either from work or from other state benefits.

The advance towards an EU legal instrument to ensure an adequate level of minimum wages to implement principle 6 of the European Pillar of Social Rights, could mean a very tangible, transformative change for women workers, as they are a majority
amongst the lowest paid workers. Both initiatives are gaining momentum at the EU in a pandemic context, so it is important to make sure that these include women’s specific needs and demands – especially as regards women from migrant background, living with disabilities, etc.

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The **national recovery and resilience plans and associated budgets** under the EU’s Recovery and Resilience Facility designed to address the current crisis are a unique opportunity to mainstream key measures to advance on dignified working conditions, living wages and access to sufficient social protection schemes to address women in poverty, also at the national level.

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**Ensuring wide ratification of the ILO convention 189 on Domestic Workers and 190 on Violence and Harassment at Work by all EU Member States** is also crucial to guarantee dignified working conditions for all women, including the most vulnerable ones.

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**Call for the revision of and a more ambitious Gender Pay Gap Action Plan.** The new plan should set a clear target for Member States with a systematic monitoring through the European Semester process. It should ensure an intersectional perspective by putting a special policy focus on the pay gap that women in more precarious situations face (there is still a lack of data on the gender pay gap for diverse women, i.e. women from migrant background, with a minority ethnic origin, women with
disabilities, disaggregated by different age periods, etc). Furthermore, it should include more detailed and clear definitions at EU level of legal concepts such as ‘equal work’ and ‘work of equal value’.

Regarding care work, it is essential to promote an EU framework to regulate affordable, quality long term care services for elderly and dependent persons, as well as dignified and professionalised work for care workers (similar to the existing Barcelona Targets to the EU Member States set by the European Council) – which allows to advance towards a solid EU framework on care economy. These Frameworks must be in line with the Beijing Targets.

In order to encourage female empowerment and increase women’s access to education, states should invest in providing more assistance programmes for family care. This is an obligation, which tends to fall on women mostly and consume a large portion of their time, prohibiting them from being able to dedicate time to obtaining any form of education.

State legislators should pay more attention to tackling religious dress restrictions. For example, Muslim women face additional restrictions to accessing education and employment by wearing a headscarf, which increases poverty and precariousness for them.
The causes of poverty, stemming from discrimination, need to be better addressed. As poverty intersects with different forms of discrimination, more attention needs to be paid to the barriers that specific vulnerable groups face in accessing education. For example, women with disabilities face particularly strong challenges in accessing inclusive education.

To avoid long-term discrimination, greater emphasis needs to be put on tackling perceptions and social attitudes about women and gender at an early stage of life, starting with young girls in schools. There needs to be more ambition in fighting stereotypes in education and training to tackle harmful social norms.
More consideration needs to be given to providing digital education. Older women, Roma women and migrant women are at a particular risk of facing discrimination due to the lack of access to the internet and/or latest technology.

National equality bodies could monitor the impact of COVID-19 on older persons in nursing homes and older persons, especially older women, receiving long-term care at home. Equinet could work with its members to develop and implement a methodology to monitor older persons’ right to health and long-term care including in very old age.

It is important to identify new, disaggregated gender-specific indicators, including income-related poverty, which concerns many women who are considered as “working poor”: they are in employment but with wages so low that they are still kept under the poverty threshold.