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## Female poverty

P7\_TA(2011)0086

### European Parliament resolution of 8 March 2011 on the face of female poverty in the European Union (2010/2162(INI))

(2012/C 199 E/09)

*The European Parliament,*

- having regard to Articles 2 and 3(3), second subparagraph, of the Treaty on European Union,
- having regard to Articles 8, 151, 153 and 157 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union,
- having regard to the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, in particular its provisions on social rights and on equality between men and women,
- having regard to the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights,
- having regard to the 1966 United Nations International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights,
- having regard to the 1979 UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW),
- having regard to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action adopted by the Fourth World Conference on Women on 15 September 1995,
- having regard to the Millennium Development Goals defined by the United Nations in 2000, in particular Goal 1 (eradicate extreme poverty and hunger) and Goal 3 (promote gender equality),
- having regard to the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly Resolution 1558 (2007) on the feminisation of poverty,
- having regard to Directive 2006/54/EC of the European Parliament and 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 (recast) <sup>(1)</sup>,
- having regard to Decision No 1098/2008/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 22 October 2008 on the European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion (2010) <sup>(2)</sup>,
- having regard to Decision No 283/2010/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 March 2010 establishing a European Progress Microfinance Facility for employment and social inclusion <sup>(3)</sup>,
- having regard to draft Council conclusions of 30 October 2007 on the Review of the implementation by the Member States and the EU institutions of the Beijing Platform for Action - Indicators in respect of Women and Poverty (13947/07),

<sup>(1)</sup> OJ L 204, 26.7.2006, p. 23.

<sup>(2)</sup> OJ L 298, 7.11.2008, p. 20.

<sup>(3)</sup> OJ L 87, 7.4.2010, p. 1.

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- having regard to the Commission report of 3 October 2008 on the Implementation of the Barcelona objectives concerning childcare facilities for pre-school-age children (COM(2008)0638),
- having regard to Commission Report on equality between women and men 2010 (COM(2009)0694),
- having regard to the Commission Staff Working Document accompanying the Commission Report on equality between women and men 2010 (SEC(2009)1706),
- having regard to the Commission Communication on the Strategy for equality between women and men 2010-2015 (COM(2010)0491),
- having regard to the Commission Staff Working Documents accompanying the Commission Communication on the Strategy for equality between women and men 2010-2015 (SEC(2010)1079) and (SEC(2010)1080),
- having regard to the Commission Communication on Europe 2020: A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth (COM(2010)2020),
- having regard to the Eurofound report of 24 March 2010 'Second European Quality of Life Survey: Family life and work',
- having regard to its resolution of 13 October 2005 on women and poverty in the European Union <sup>(1)</sup>,
- having regard to its resolution of 18 November 2008 with recommendations to the Commission on the application of the principle of equal pay for men and women <sup>(2)</sup>,
- having regard to its resolution of 6 May 2009 on the active inclusion of people excluded from the labour market <sup>(3)</sup>,
- having regard to its resolution of 10 February 2010 on equality between women and men in the European Union – 2009 <sup>(4)</sup>,
- having regard to its resolution of 17 June 2010 on gender aspects of the economic downturn and financial crisis <sup>(5)</sup>,
- having regard to its resolution of 17 June 2010 on assessment of the results of the 2006-2010 Roadmap for Equality between women and men, and forward-looking recommendations <sup>(6)</sup>,
- having regard to its resolution of 7 September 2010 on the role of women in an ageing society <sup>(7)</sup>,
- having regard to its resolution of 19 October 2010 on precarious women workers <sup>(8)</sup>,

<sup>(1)</sup> OJ C 233 E, 28.9.2006, p. 130.

<sup>(2)</sup> OJ C 16 E, 22.1.2010, p. 21.

<sup>(3)</sup> OJ C 212 E, 5.8.2010, p. 23.

<sup>(4)</sup> OJ C 341 E, 16.12.2010, p. 35.

<sup>(5)</sup> Texts adopted, P7\_TA(2010)0231.

<sup>(6)</sup> Texts adopted, P7\_TA(2010)0232.

<sup>(7)</sup> Texts adopted, P7\_TA(2010)0306.

<sup>(8)</sup> Texts adopted, P7\_TA(2010)0365.

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- having regard to Rule 48 of its Rules of Procedure,
  - having regard to the report of the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality and the opinion of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs (A7-0031/2011),
- A. whereas, according to the abovementioned Decision 1098/2008/EC the activities in the framework of the European Year for combating poverty and social exclusion should have taken into account of the different risks and dimensions of poverty and social exclusion experienced by women and men; whereas 85 million Europeans live below the poverty line and 17 % of all women in the EU's 27 countries are classed as living in poverty; whereas, moreover, in the past 10 years the number of women living in poverty has risen disproportionately in relation to the number of men; whereas parental poverty often leads to child poverty and seriously affects children later in life,
- B. whereas the European Union is confronted with a major economic, financial and social crisis that particularly handicaps women in the labour market and in their personal lives, since they are more likely to be in insecure jobs, more liable to be made redundant and less likely to have social security cover; whereas, moreover, in times of economic recession, people who are already at risk of falling into poverty, the majority of whom are women, become even more vulnerable, especially groups that already face numerous disadvantages,
- C. whereas the austerity measures being implemented across the EU will have a particularly damaging impact on women, who dominate the public sector both as employees and as beneficiaries of services,
- D. whereas combating poverty is one of the Commission's five measurable targets proposed for EU 2020; whereas Integrated Guideline 10 of the Europe 2020 Strategy (Promoting social inclusion and combating poverty) would encourage the adoption of national policies to protect women, in particular, from the risk of poverty, ensuring income security for one-parent families or elderly women,
- E. whereas gender equality is a weapon for fighting poverty amongst women, as it has a positive impact on productivity and economic growth and leads to greater participation of women in the labour market, which in turn has many social and economic benefits,
- F. whereas the female employment rate is 59,1 % on average; whereas since 2000, the average gender pay gap has remained significant, reaching almost 18 % in the EU as a whole and up to more than 30 % in some Member States in 2010 and the principle of equal pay for men and women is one of the basic principles set out in the European treaties; whereas the gender-segregated labour market has direct consequences for women,
- G. whereas in 16 Member States the risk of extreme poverty amongst women greatly exceeds the risk of extreme poverty amongst men,
- H. whereas employment itself does not constitute adequate protection against extreme poverty; whereas, mainly as a consequence of occupational segregation, more women than men work in lower-paid jobs, whilst it is often the case that social security payments alone offer no protection against extreme poverty either,
- I. whereas the longer the period of living in poverty with a particularly low income, the greater the risk of falling into a state of permanent economic privation and social exclusion; whereas, therefore, measures to combat poverty should not simply aim to help those who are already living in extreme economic deprivation but should also seek promptly to prevent and tackle factors which lead citizens and in particular women into extreme economic and social deprivation,

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- J. whereas there are considerable age and gender disparities in the amount of time spent on unpaid work and daily involvement in caring activities; whereas women in particular experience the greatest unpaid workload;
- K. whereas universal access and affordable, high quality support services such as childcare facilities, facilities for the elderly and other dependants is important for equal participation of women and men in the labour market and as a means to prevent and reduce poverty,
- L. whereas elderly people face a higher risk of poverty than the general population, reaching a rate of around 19 % of those aged 65 years and over in 2008 in the EU-27; whereas older women are in a particularly precarious position as their right to a pension income is often derived from their marital status (spousal or survivor benefits) and they rarely have adequate pension rights of their own due to career breaks, pay gap and other factors and as a result, women are more affected than men by persistent and extreme poverty (22 % of women aged 65 and over are at risk of poverty compared to 16 % of men),
- M. whereas women, in particular in rural areas, are more often part of the informal economy than men, not being registered on the official labour market, or have short-term working contracts, which generates particular problems as regards women's social rights, including rights during pregnancy, maternity leave and breastfeeding, the acquisition of pension rights and access to social security,
- N. whereas poverty is a factor associated with an increased risk of gender-based violence, which is a major barrier to gender equality; whereas, since domestic violence frequently leads to job loss, poor health and homelessness, it can also push women into a cycle of poverty; whereas, in addition, trafficking in human beings is a modern form of slavery that affects women and girls on a large scale and constitutes a significant factor that is both driven by and contributes to poverty,
- O. whereas violence against women, in all its forms, is one of the most widespread human rights violations, knowing no geographical, economic, or social limits; whereas it is a severe problem in the Union, where some 20-25 % of women suffer physical violence, and more than 10 % sexual violence, in the course of their adult lives,
- P. whereas disabled women suffer discrimination within the family environment and in education, their employment opportunities are restricted and the social benefits they receive do not in most cases lift them out of poverty; whereas Member States should, therefore, provide disabled women with the specialised care they need in order to enjoy their rights and should propose measures to facilitate their integration through additional support programmes,
- Q. whereas women are increasingly bearing the burden of poverty, being at risk of poverty, in particular categories of women with special needs, such as disabled women, elderly women and parents bringing up a child without a partner (especially single mothers and widows with dependent children) and groups most vulnerable to exclusion, such as Roma women, under whose traditions domestic and care work are assigned exclusively to women, removing them prematurely from education and employment, and immigrant women; whereas there is a need for proper working conditions, including the protection of rights such as a decent wage, maternity leave and a working environment free from discrimination, which are essential for these women,
- R. whereas the Progress programme is intended to support the effective implementation of the principle of gender equality and promote gender mainstreaming in EU policies; whereas this programme is a tool of utmost importance in combating the feminisation of poverty,
- S. whereas the life expectancy for women is about six years longer than for men, with statistics for the EU-27 in 2007 showing men living to 76 years old and women to 82 years old; whereas this has important implications for female poverty, particularly as women have greater difficulty than men in accessing social security and pension systems,

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***Feminisation of poverty***

1. Considers that preventing and reducing women's poverty is an important component of the fundamental principle of social solidarity to which the European Union is committed as provided in Article 3 of the Treaty on European Union, implying equality between women and men, social justice and protection and combating social exclusion and discrimination;
2. Recognises that 'the feminisation of poverty' means that women have a higher incidence of poverty than men, that their poverty is more severe than that of men and that poverty among women is on the increase;
3. Points out that, according to the Eurostat 'at-risk-of poverty' indicator, nearly 85 million persons in the European Union were at risk of poverty in 2008, and that according to the 'material deprivation' indicator it is estimated that the figure would rise to 120 million; considers that the Council's decision on poverty indicators may give rise to ambiguities concerning the overall reduction target of lifting 20 million persons out of poverty and exclusion by 2020 (reduction of 23,5 % according to Eurostat's 'at-risk-of poverty indicator', but only 16,7 % according to the 'material deprivation' indicator); stresses that those living in poverty are for the most part women, a situation brought about by unemployment, casual labour, low wages, pensions below the minimum subsistence level, and the widespread difficulty of obtaining access to good public services;
4. Stresses that gender inequality hinders poverty reduction and endangers the prospects of economic and human development;
5. Calls on the Member States to mainstream the concept of gender equality in all employment policies and special measures so as to improve access to employment, avoid over-representation of women in precarious employment, increase sustainable participation and promote the progress of women in the employment sector, as well as to reduce gender segregation in the labour market by tackling the direct and indirect causes;
6. Indicates that female poverty is not only the result of the recent economic crisis but the consequence of various factors including stereotypes, existing gender pay gaps, barriers caused by the lack of reconciliation between family and work life, the longer life expectancy of women and, in general, the various types of gender discrimination, victimising mostly women;
7. Recalls that the Commission has designated 2010 as European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion, in order to reaffirm and strengthen the Union's political commitment to achieving a decisive advance in the fight against poverty and recognise the fundamental right of those living in poverty and social exclusion to live a decent life and participate fully in society;
8. Recalls that the European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion 2010 was supposed to be not only a media campaign, but an initiative to further stimulate multidimensional policies against poverty and more advanced poverty indicators; therefore asks the Commission to give a critical overview of new measures undertaken by Member States to overcome poverty and social exclusion in this context;
9. Suggests that it is necessary to maintain, at both European and national level, a firm commitment to making further progress towards gender equality, by means of strategies furthering the Commission's guidelines on parity between women and men, the European Pact for Gender Equality adopted by the Council of Europe, and the framework of action on gender equality concluded by the European social partners;

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10. Stresses that gender equality is one of the prerequisites for sustainable growth, employment, competitiveness and social cohesion;

11. Invites the Commission and the Council to take due account of Parliament's demands raised in its resolutions of 15 November 2007 on social reality stocktaking <sup>(1)</sup>, of 9 October 2008 on promoting social inclusion and combating poverty, including child poverty, in the EU <sup>(2)</sup>, of 6 May 2009 on the active inclusion of people excluded from the labour market and of 20 October 2010 on the role of minimum income in combating poverty and promoting an inclusive society in Europe <sup>(3)</sup> when designing policies and measures for the next stage of the OMC on Social Inclusion and Social Protection, the Social Inclusion Strategy and the 'Europe 2020' flagship initiative on combating poverty and social exclusion, involving all stakeholders in a participatory process;

12. Takes note of the Commission Communication on the Strategy for equality between women and men 2010-2015; calls on the European Commission and Member States to adopt a gender-specific perspective as a key component of all common policies and national programmes to eradicate poverty and combat social exclusion;

13. Welcomes the Commission initiative on a 'European platform against poverty'; calls on the Commission and Member States to promote the gender dimension in this platform;

14. Calls on the Commission to strengthen the European strategy on social inclusion and protection, in accordance with the abovementioned 'European platform against poverty' initiative, and to step up efforts to improve the situation of single parents in particular, to allow them to live with dignity;

15. Points out that, as a consequence of the economic crisis, unemployment and social hardship are still increasing in a number of Member States and affect young and old people, men and women and their families differently, and therefore calls on the European Union and Member States to reinforce their commitment and take specific measures to eradicate poverty and combat social exclusion, particularly poverty among women and its direct impact on family life, as poverty and social exclusion constitute a violation of human rights and affect at least one in six European citizens; calls on the Commission and the Member States to put specific emphasis on the most vulnerable groups (single-parent households, families with three or more children, disabled people, ethnic minorities, especially the Roma, people living in the most disadvantaged microregions, people with decreased work capacity and young people without work experience); believes that access to education and the labour market and participation in society are needed for a decent life; calls on the European Union and Member States to ensure that measures are taken to eradicate child poverty and that all children have equal opportunities in life;

16. Points out that women's integration into the labour market in recent decades indicates not only a greater direct impact of the recession on women themselves but also on households, where incomes will be significantly affected by female job losses; stresses that female unemployment can be expected to rise disproportionately as public sector budget cuts are announced, since women are disproportionately employed in education, health and social services;

17. Encourages the Commission and the Member States to implement the indicators in respect of women and poverty developed in connection with the Beijing Platform for Action as a tool to monitor the impact of broader social, economic and employment policies on reducing poverty; calls on the Member States to find more appropriate methods of measuring poverty among women;

18. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to provide systematic gender-disaggregated data and information in national reporting and in the annual Joint Report on Social Protection and Social Inclusion;

<sup>(1)</sup> OJ C 282 E, 6.11.2008, p. 463.

<sup>(2)</sup> OJ C 9 E, 15.1.2010, p. 11.

<sup>(3)</sup> Texts adopted, P7\_TA(2010)0375.

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19. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to introduce new individual indicators in respect of women and poverty as a tool to monitor the impact of broader social, economic and employment policies on women and poverty;
20. Stresses the necessity to agree upon a follow up to the Women's Charter, with the wide consultation of the European Parliament, and taking into account the views of the social partners and civil society, in order to promote mechanisms to achieve gender equality in all aspects of social, economic and political life;
21. Draws particular attention to the necessity to continue further with the researches and analyses regarding the phenomenon of 'feminisation of poverty'; calls on the Commission and Eurofound to cooperate with the European Institute for Gender Equality and to initiate targeted research in order to assess, inter alia, the effects of the global crisis on women;
22. Urges the Member States to ensure that all individuals, especially the young and the elderly, have access to basic care;
23. Urges the Member States to ensure that elderly women with diseases typical of their age have access to preventive and diagnostic medicine, as a tool for combating social exclusion and poverty;
24. Calls on the Member States to facilitate access to medical care for immigrant women for diseases resulting from different eating habits and ritual practices; calls on the Commission and the Member States, accordingly, to frame health policies with a view to combating and preventing practices that are hazardous to women's health and are also a cause of social exclusion and poverty;
25. Calls on the Member States to ensure that gender policies and EU principles are applied at all levels, locally and nationally;
26. Recalls that the fight against poverty and social exclusion is to be pursued both within the European Union and externally, in order to fulfil the commitment by the European Union and Member States to achieve the UN Millennium Development Goals by 2015;

#### ***Combating women's poverty through labour policies and social protection***

27. Calls on the Member States for specific programmes to promote the active inclusion or reintegration of women on the labour market and for specific opportunities for life-long training with a view to providing the skills and qualifications, such as empowerment, confidence building and capacity building, needed in the light of the EU 2020 Strategy which puts an emphasis on projects and programmes on ecological transformation, i.e. the renewable sector, science and technology-intensive green jobs for a new sustainable economy; calls, in the interests of not adding to the insecurity experienced by women on the employment market, for family responsibilities to be taken into account when selecting employees for dismissal, bearing in mind that in many situations women have custody of children;
28. Points to the considerable differences between residents in rural and urban areas as regards access to training, employment and quality of work; attaches considerable importance to the right of all these residents, particularly the youngest and most vulnerable, to receive a proper education, with vocational training and university studies, and therefore calls on the Member States and the Commission to support these groups through an effective system of active policies and appropriate training measures so as to enable them to adjust swiftly to job market requirements;
29. Points out that social protection, labour market policies and social policy make important contributions to lessening the depth and duration of the recession by stabilising labour markets and consumption, and that the social protection system is a stabiliser on both the revenue and the expenditure side;

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30. Considers active employment policy (e.g. in-work training, vocational education and training) very important in preventing poverty and a process in which social partners play an essential role; deems moreover that proactive employment policy (e.g. work experience for the young, sheltered workshops and workplaces) is also crucial in ensuring the balance of, and increasing accessibility to, the labour market, and maintaining employment for disadvantaged groups;

31. Stresses the need to establish a transparent regulatory framework for atypical forms of employment in order to ensure proper working conditions and decent pay, given that finding employment is a motor for combating poverty;

32. Considers that integration of women into the labour market is a key to fighting poverty and social exclusion; stresses the importance of supporting the creation of new jobs, facilitating additional training and education for women living at risk of poverty and strengthening job placement;

33. Recognises the direct link between economic inequality and female dependency, as well as the inequalities still existing between men and women in terms of access to education, family responsibilities and the general upkeep of a family, and expresses its regret that the pay gap between the two genders continue to be present and produce negative effects;

34. Stresses that in case of unemployment the risk of not being re-employed is higher for women, and that they are also more likely to be at a disadvantage in recruitment, since more women are employed on insecure or part-time contracts without having so chosen or because unequal pay continues to affect women;

35. Points out that according to the Eurobarometer Special Survey 'Gender equality in the EU in 2009' the need to reduce the pay gap between men and women is widely recognised in Europe;

36. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to take the necessary measures to eliminate gender inequalities in employment as part of the EU 2020 Strategy; strongly encourages establishing as an objective the reduction of the gender pay gap by 1 % each year, in order to achieve a target of 10 % reduction by 2020 and ensure full pay for women during statutory maternity leave as recommended by its position of 20 October 2010 <sup>(1)</sup> on this matter, as this will contribute to eliminating gender inequalities in employment; stresses, moreover, the need for positive action to increase female representation in political, economic and corporate decision-making bodies;

37. Notes that women entrepreneurs' access to credit is limited, which is a major obstacle to their professional development and economic independence, and which conflicts with the principle of equal treatment;

38. Calls on the policy makers, both at EU and national level, to build their policy responses aiming to limit the negative repercussions of the economic crisis on a gender-sensitive analysis of the labour market as well as systematic gender impact assessments and evaluations;

39. Calls on the Commission to continue with initiatives aimed at recognising the informal economy and quantifying the 'economics of life', using gender-specific approaches in accordance with the 'Beyond GDP' project launched by the Commission; calls on the Member States to provide appropriate social benefits for women and men who take care of elderly, sick or disabled relatives, and for elderly women, who receive particularly small pensions;

<sup>(1)</sup> European Parliament position of 20 October 2010 on the proposal for a directive of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Council Directive 92/85/EEC 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 (P7\_TA(2010)0373).

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40. Calls on the Commission to revise the existing legislation relating to the application of the principle of equal pay for men and women as requested by Parliament in its resolution of 18 November 2008 <sup>(1)</sup> (a legislative initiative requesting the Commission to submit an appropriate proposal by the end of 2009);
41. Stresses the crucial importance of reforming macroeconomic, social and labour-market policies in order to guarantee economic and social justice for women, to reconsider the methods used to determine the poverty rate and to develop strategies to promote the fair distribution of wealth, to guarantee a minimum income and decent wages and pensions, to create more high-quality jobs for women, coupled with rights, to enable women and girls to benefit from public services of a high standard, and to improve welfare provision and neighbourhood services, including crèches, kindergartens and other forms of pre-school education, day centres, community leisure and family support centres and intergenerational centres, which should be made affordable and accessible to women and men and younger and older people alike and should be compatible with full-time working hours;
42. Calls on the Member States to set up counselling centres to identify and combat the exploitation of women workers, which is one of the main causes of poverty and social exclusion;
43. Calls on the Member States to consider reviewing social protection systems with a view to individualising rights in pensions and social security schemes in order to eliminate the 'breadwinner advantage', guaranteeing equal pension rights;
44. Emphasises the positive effect which equality between men and women has on economic growth; points out that various studies estimate that if employment, part-time employment and productivity rates for women were similar to those for men, GDP would increase by 30 %, which would not only benefit the economy as a whole but also reduce the risk run by many women of falling into poverty;
45. Calls on the Commission and Council to develop and implement as a matter of urgency a strategy to halve child poverty by 2012 and break the spiral of poverty in general, given the high risk that persistent poverty is transmitted from parents to their children, which might considerably disadvantage their children's chances of a better life; thus emphasises the need to mainstream individual children's rights in all EU policies and measures to monitor and evaluate steps undertaken to end child poverty, to identify and develop priority actions, to enhance data collection and to further develop common indicators at EU level; believes that in this context it is essential to facilitate single parents' entry into and return to the labour market, as well as welfare arrangements for single-parent families in the light of the problems faced by them, while also ensuring concrete support for large families; considers that children from poor households in which no one works must receive special attention and support, in order to prevent poverty in future;
46. Asks the relevant national authorities to review their immigration policies in order to dismantle structural obstacles to full labour market participation by migrants, to compile data on progress in relation to discrimination against vulnerable groups and to assess the impact of expenditure cuts related to access to health, education and social protection;
47. Takes note of the Council's decision of 17 June 2010 to leave it up to Member States to set, in cooperation with the regions, their national targets for reducing the number of people at risk of poverty and exclusion on the basis of one or several of the three indicators agreed upon by the Council; considers that Member States using only the 'jobless household' indicator may systematically neglect problems such as in-work poverty, energy poverty, the poverty of single parents, child poverty and social exclusion; urges Member States not to abuse the freedom to choose their indicator to achieve less ambitious anti-poverty targets; draws attention to the problems faced by millions of European pensioners whose pensions are inadequate in making ends meet and covering the particular needs associated with age, owing especially to the high cost of medicines and medical treatment; stresses that school and university education for the most vulnerable groups must be a priority target in connection with which each Member State must set targets;

<sup>(1)</sup> OJ C 16 E, 22.1.2010, p. 21.

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48. Points out that, since equal and full participation in economic, political and social life should be considered an individual right, active social inclusion policies should use a holistic approach to eradicating poverty and social exclusion, especially by ensuring full access to quality social services and services of general (economic) interest for all;
49. Stresses the need to develop appropriate employment integration and training policies at national level, together with special tax arrangements for one-parent families, as part of the fight against poverty, child poverty and social exclusion;
50. Stresses the need for measures to be taken at national and European level to combat discrimination as regards job market opportunities and wages policies;
51. Calls on the Commission to closely examine obstacles to social participation such as energy poverty, financial exclusion and obstacles to accessing information and communication technology (ICT);
52. Stresses the importance of coordinating policies to fight unemployment and social exclusion at all levels of government in order to combat poverty effectively;
53. Calls on the Member States to facilitate access to education and training programmes for immigrants and ethnic minorities, which will facilitate their participation in the labour market;

***Reconciliation of family life and work by women who live in poverty or are exposed to the risk of poverty***

54. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to take the necessary measures to promote the reconciliation of work and private life, in order to enable women who are exposed to the risk of poverty to pursue their careers in full time work, or to provide access to part time work and other flexible work arrangements, including by means of reversible part-time work arrangements during periods spent as carers.
55. Stresses that one-third of single-parent families in Europe are living in poverty;
56. Calls on the Member States, in the context of the abovementioned procedure of amending Council Directive 92/85/EEC, to take the measures necessary to prevent the dismissal of workers during pregnancy and motherhood; calls on the Member States to take active measures to prevent discrimination against pregnant women on the labour market, as well as measures to ensure that motherhood does not affect the right of women workers to pensions and that the scale of those pensions is not affected by the fact they have taken maternity leave;
57. Reminds the Member States that the provision of adequate childcare is a fundamental part of gender equality on the labour market; regrets that the 2002 Barcelona European Council targets on pre-school childcare provision for at least 90 % of children between 3 years old and the mandatory school age and at least 33 % of children under 3 years, which set objectives up to 2010, are far from being met; calls on the Council and the Member States to renew and fulfil their commitments related to the Barcelona targets for the provision of accessible, affordable and high quality child care and to develop new targets for the care of dependent persons; calls therefore on the Member States to improve accessibility, in particular through financial support for childcare, and to improve public childcare facilities and provide firms with incentives to set up in-house facilities;
58. Calls on the Member States to take targeted action to ensure that women in a disadvantaged environment have fair access to public health systems - in particular to primary health care (including the protection of mothers and children) as defined by the World Health Organisation - and also to gynaecological and obstetric health care, decent housing, justice, education, training, life-long learning, sport and culture, to prevent the premature abandonment of schooling and facilitate a smooth transition from school to the labour market;

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59. Calls on the Member States to develop appropriate measures to support teenage mothers, who often have difficulty finding jobs and live in poverty owing to their frequently low level of education and to social prejudices;

#### ***Combating poverty among older women***

60. Stresses that the risk of falling into poverty is greater for women than for men, particularly in old age, where social security systems are based on the principle of continuous remunerated employment; points out that, in some cases, women do not fulfil this requirement because of interruptions to their work and that they are penalised because of discrimination on the labour market, in particular because of the wage gap, maternity leave and part-time work, or as a result of taking a break from or stopping work to take on family responsibilities, or of having worked in their husband's business, particularly in the commercial and agriculture sectors, without remuneration and without social security affiliation; calls on the Member State governments to give recognition to the bringing up of children and ensure that this period counts towards a pension, thereby enabling women to benefit from full pensions; recommends that Member States ensure the provision of adequate pensions for women;

61. Calls on the Member States to take action to ensure fair access for women to social security and pension systems, taking into account the higher life expectancy of women, and to ensure that the principle of equal treatment between women and men is applied consistently in pension insurance schemes in order to reduce the gender pensions gap;

62. Calls on the Member States to provide adequate social security for the women responsible for the care of sick, elderly or disabled members of their families, and for elderly women who receive a particularly low pension;

#### ***Impact of gender based violence on the risk of poverty***

63. Points out that violence against women, which affects victims and perpetrators irrespective of age, education, income or social position, is still a major problem at European Union level, has an increasing impact on the risk of marginalisation, poverty and social exclusion and can be an obstacle to women's financial independence, health and access to the labour market and education; once again calls on the Commission to establish a European Year for combating violence against women;

64. Calls on the Member States to take the necessary measures to ensure the due recording, analysis and study of the factors which lead to domestic violence so that policies can be developed immediately to prevent and deal with the consequences of such violence, such as providing shelter for homeless women who are victims of domestic violence;

65. Stresses the necessity to step up European efforts to eradicate human trafficking and sexual exploitation through closer judicial and police cooperation; urges the Member States to take the necessary measures to eliminate customary or traditional harmful attitudes and practices, including female genital mutilation, early and forced marriages, and honour crimes;

66. Calls on the Member States to establish national plans to combat all forms of violence against women where such plans are not already in existence, to ensure ongoing and systematic monitoring to measure progress, to ensure the highest standards of legislation with regard to combating male violence against women and to provide adequate funding for the support and protection of victims of violence, as a way to prevent and reduce poverty;

67. Recognises, in addition, that finding meaningful solutions to tackling female poverty may be one way of reducing gender-based violence, since women in poverty are at greater risk of abuse;

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68. Emphasises the importance of the Member States and regional and local authorities taking action to aid reintegration into the labour market for women who have suffered gender based violence, using instruments such as the European Social Fund (ESF) or the PROGRESS programme;

69. Calls on Member States to take gender-specific measures to address issues which are not only linked to income poverty, but which relate to culture, social and political participation and social networks;

#### ***Social dialogue and civil society in fighting women's poverty***

70. Stresses the importance of a structured social dialogue in fighting women's poverty; points, in this regard, to the need to improve systems for taking part in, and collaborating with, women's organisations, other NGOs and relevant stakeholders and civil society in general;

71. Considers that a genuine dialogue should aim to enable the members of the most disadvantaged groups, together with the national and EU administration, to share viewpoints and to contribute to overcoming extreme poverty, providing a concrete example of the very best practice at European level in this area;

72. Calls on the Commission to maintain the financial allocation that may be used among civil society organisations in fighting and curbing the effects of women's poverty;

#### ***Ensuring funding as a means to combat poverty***

73. Emphasises the importance of the structural funds, in particular the European Social Fund, as a key tool for assisting Member States to combat poverty and social exclusion; calls on the Member States for more co-funded actions to give greater support to services such as care facilities for children and for elderly and dependent persons, including by testing new forms of public-private organisational and financial cooperation and new arrangements for such cooperation; calls on the Member States to ensure that the resources allocated are used fairly and properly;

74. Emphasises the importance of developing the legal construct of shared ownership with the aim of ensuring that women's rights in the agricultural sector are fully recognised, that they receive appropriate social security protection and that their work is recognised; stresses, moreover, the need for the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) Regulation <sup>(1)</sup> to be amended to enable, as with the European Social Fund (ESF), proactive measures to be taken in support of women in the 2014-2020 programming period, which was feasible in previous periods but not in the current one, and which will have very beneficial effects on female employment in rural areas;

75. Welcomes the establishment of a European microfinance facility for employment and social inclusion; calls in this framework for specifically tailored actions, in particular technical assistance and back-up measures, oriented towards ensuring increased access and availability of microfinance for women who face difficulties entering the labour market or want to establish themselves as self-employed workers or launch their own micro-enterprises;

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76. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission and the parliaments and governments of the Member States.

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<sup>(1)</sup> Council Regulation (EC) No 1698/2005 of 20 September 2005 on support for rural development by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) (OJ L 277, 21.10.2005, p. 1).