

# Press release – Still many challenges ahead to achieve gender equality



More than twenty-five years after the [Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action](#) (BPfA) was adopted, MEPs regret that, although some progress have been made, no EU member states have fully attained the targets set in the text, as the [5th review of the BPfA](#) published by the European Institute for Gender Equality in 2020 shows.

In the resolution adopted by 505 votes in favour, 109 against and 76 abstentions, MEPs also express deep concern regarding the current pandemic, which exacerbates existing gender inequalities, threatens to reverse the progress made until now, and could push [47 million more women and girls](#) below the poverty line worldwide.

## **Eradicating gender-based violence**

In order to tackle violence against women, MEPs reiterate their call to ratify the [Istanbul Convention](#) and urge the Commission to come up with an EU Directive to prevent and combat all forms of gender-based violence. The increase in domestic violence during the COVID-19 pandemic must be urgently addressed, they add, by providing protection services for victims, such as helplines, safe accommodation and health services.

Specific measures are also needed to eradicate cyber violence, including online harassment, cyberbullying and hate speech, which disproportionately affect women and girls.

## **Towards a more balanced gender representation in the economy**

Parliament reiterates its call on EU member states to unblock the [Women on Boards Directive](#), and pushes for EU targets, action plans, timelines and temporary special measures to move towards a balanced representation in all executive, legislative and administrative positions.

Adopting EU legislation to increase pay transparency would help to close the gender gap, MEPs stress, who regret that the Commission proposal on that issue has not yet been presented as planned.

## **Universal access to healthcare is a human right**

MEPs are particularly worried by some retrogressive tendencies regarding access to health services in some EU countries. They notably [condemn the recent de facto ban on abortion](#) in Poland.

Access to family planning, maternal health services and safe and legal abortion services are key elements that guarantee women's rights and save lives, they underline. Finally, MEPs also call for the universal respect for, and access to, sexual and reproductive health and rights services, as agreed in the Beijing Declaration.

## **Background**

The Beijing Declaration was adopted by the UN at the end of the 4th World Conference on Women on 15 September 1995 to promulgate a set of principles on gender equality. The Platform for Action called for strategic actions in a variety of areas (economy, education, health, violence, decision-making, etc.).

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## **[Conference on legal aid for children in criminal proceedings](#)**

FRA attended the EU-funded LA-Child project's online conference 'Legal aid for children in criminal proceedings'. The project aims to strengthen the procedural rights of children in conflict with laws enshrined in the EU's Procedural Safeguards Directive.

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## [Media advisory – Press briefing ahead of the informal video conference of economic and finance ministers of 16 February 2021](#)



The press briefing ahead of the informal video conference of economic and finance ministers will take place on **Monday, 15 February 2021 at 11.00**. This briefing will be “off the record”.

Please note that this press briefing will take place remotely.

In order to participate and ask questions, EU accredited journalists should register using [this link](#).

Those who already registered for previous press briefings or press conferences of informal video conferences of economic and finance ministers do not need to do it again.

- **Deadline for registration: 15 February at 10:00**

Further instructions will be sent to all registered participants shortly after the deadline.

[Visit the meeting page](#)

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## [Article – Stopping human trafficking: MEPs call for more action](#)



Often seen as a modern form of slavery, human trafficking is one of the fastest growing crimes, with new technologies, migration flows and the Covid-19 crisis creating new risks and challenges across the EU.

## Human trafficking in the EU

EU countries reported 14,145 victims of human trafficking between 2017 and 2018, of which 72% were women and girls, [according to a European Commission report](#). Children accounted for nearly a quarter (22%) of all registered victims. However, the actual number of victims could be far higher due to the lack of consistent and comparable data.

More than half (60%) of registered victims were trafficked for sexual exploitation; 15% for other types of forced labour and 15% for other reasons, such as begging, organ removal or domestic servitude. Nearly half (49%) are from an EU country.

Almost three quarters of the traffickers registered were male, with the majority of them EU citizens.

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## FRA addresses national event marking 20 years of the EU Charter

FRA introduced the Charter, including its legal effects, novelties and potential. It also spoke about the Agency's role in promoting the Charter and contributing to its respect by the EU and Member States. The online event took place on 29 January. It was broadcast from Budapest, with some 100 people in attendance. Questions touched upon the current key fundamental rights challenges in the EU, the role and the power of the Charter to leave its mark in other parts of the world.