

# 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.).