

Improving gender equality during and after the COVID-19 crisis

- New services essential to protect victims of domestic violence
- Need for targeted actions to advance gender equality in national recovery and resilience plans
- The most vulnerable groups of women must be supported

MEPs examined the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on women and proposed measures to protect women's rights and enhance gender equality during and after the crisis.

In a report adopted by 485 votes in favour, 86 against and 108 abstentions on Thursday, MEPs stress the need for a gender-sensitive response to all aspects of the COVID-19 crisis in order to enhance gender equality and to protect women's rights during the pandemic and post-pandemic period.

New services needed to protect victims of domestic violence

MEPs acknowledge that the public response has been insufficient in addressing violence against women during the pandemic. They ask member states to establish safe and flexible emergency warning systems and to offer new services to assist women in contacting the police directly by phone, email and text message.

In addition, MEPs urge the Commission to develop an EU protocol for violence against women in times of crises, which would include services to protect victims. They reiterate their call that all member states must ratify the [Istanbul Convention](#) and ask the Council to add violence against women to the list of EU criminal offences. They urge the Commission to propose a directive to tackle all forms of gender-based violence.

Women hit harder by the economic crisis

Since this economic crisis affects women disproportionately, and will lead to even greater inequalities between men and women, MEPs call on EU countries to incorporate a chapter with targeted actions to improve gender equality in their national recovery and resilience plans.

MEPs repeat that working from home is not a substitute for childcare and that access to childcare services is essential. EU countries should encourage men, through incentive measures, to take up flexible working, as a disproportionate number of women are now making use of these arrangements, they say, adding that member states should fully transpose and implement the [Work-Life Balance Directive](#) without delay.

Furthermore, MEPs call on the Commission to support women entrepreneurs, including through entrepreneurship opportunities for mothers or single parents, and to improve access to loans, equity finance and microfinancing through EU programmes and funds.

COVID-19 and intersectionality

Intersecting and structural discrimination creates additional barriers and challenges, as well as having a negative socio-economic impact on more vulnerable groups of women. Appropriate measures must be developed to reflect the varying circumstances in which women find themselves. These include older women in care homes that are now virus hotspots, women with disabilities unable to access their usual support networks or maintain physical distancing, migrant women that are more vulnerable to gender-based violence, but also rural, homeless and Roma women as well as members of the LGBTQI+ community, MEPs add.

Quote

The rapporteur, [Frances Fitzgerald](#) (EPP, IE), said: “COVID-19 has undoubtedly had a differential impact on women, from the increase in domestic violence and care responsibilities to job losses. Yet men have also been significantly affected; for example, initial figures show that older men are more vulnerable to the effects of the virus. The post-virus recovery must take account of this differential impact if we are to build back better, reshaping our society to ensure that it is fully inclusive of all.”

Further information

[Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality](#)
[Adopted text \(21.01.2021\)](#)

[Procedure file](#)

[EP press release - COVID-19: stopping the rise in domestic violence during lockdown \(07.04.2020\)](#)

[EP Research Service - Achieving gender equality in the face of the pandemic and existing challenges \(January 2021\)](#)

[EP Study - The gendered impact of the COVID-19 crisis and post-crisis period \(September 2020\)](#)

[EIGE - COVID-19 and gender equality](#)

[Free photos, video and audio material - Gender balance](#)

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