

EWA on 13 October 2006 BRATISLAVA

Resolution

"WOMEN AND POVERTY IN the EU"

On the eve of the international day (17 Oct.) of the eradication of poverty (UN, 2001)

referring to:

- *the Reports:*
 - *Zàborskà, on Women and Poverty in the EU (2005, by the Committee on Women's rights and Gender Equality of the European Parliament);*
 - *Oomen, on the Agenda for Social Policy 2006-2010 (2005), and*
 - *Bauer, on Social Welfare and Social Inclusion (2006), of the Commission of Employment and of Social Affairs of the EP;*

 - *The report:«Les inégalités entre les hommes et les femmes: facteurs de précarité» French Documentation, official Reports collection, July 2005 ;*
- *the Vienna Resolution of the EPPW (Oct. 2005) unanimously adopted by the EPP Congress in Rome (30 March 2006);*
- *the AGE Programme ' Instruments of giving assistance to families of aged persons in the EU', as well as the Standpoint of The European Women's Lobby on the assumption of responsibility of dependent persons (May 2006);*

recalling that:

- a many more women than men are hit by poverty;
- b the inequality between men and women is the main cause of poverty among women;
- c single parent households (85% women) are on the increase, and that elderly women (2/3 of the population above 65 years old are women) and minority women (a double handicap) are most exposed to poverty;
- d deplorable living conditions evoke prostitution, violence against women, trafficking and abuse in general;
- e family structures have evolved, increasing women's vulnerability (divorces, single parent households, second marriages);
- f conventional patterns of thinking typecast men and women in the family and in society and thus maintain inequality by keeping women in economic dependence and men in the role of decision-maker and sole breadwinner;
- g women (mostly free of charge) take care of dependants in the family (children, elderly, needy adults) as well as in society; consequently, this noble and essential CARE (volunteer and professional aid) function is devalued and underpaid;

- h often it are underpaid illegal immigrant women that provide for paid care taking, not having any legal protection;
- j the absence of necessary professional services and institutions for the care taking of dependant persons impedes women's access to a professional career and is one of the principal causes of the declining birth rate;
- k an increase of professional care facilities would create new jobs;
- l employment is regarded as the best guarantee against poverty among women, considering their fundamental right to economic independence, social integration, decent housing, access to education and to health care, and their right to participation in decision-making processes on economic, social and political levels;
- m being employed is essential but not sufficient: job safety has to be ensured; a women's positions on the labour market are more insecure than men's positions, which often results in poverty, in particular to women at age;
- n this greater vulnerability (which is the result of the inequality between women and men, although there is no m / f difference any more in the level of education) results in: an inequality of salaries (15% on average in the EU); women's exclusion from the best jobs; part-time work (30% women compared to 6% men) which by 50% of the women is not deliberately chosen; interrupted professional careers (maternity and compassionate leave); limited working contracts; a higher unemployment level; incomplete Social Security coverage; and in uncertain job integration and difficult re-integration;
- o measures to facilitate the combination of professional and family life, largely being made use of by women, turn against them. (Consequences: difficult re-integration, diminished retirement and health benefits, and periods of interruption of work that are not considered being working time periods.);
- p not all working women are entitled to maternity leave (self-employed, contract for a limited duration...);
- q some fiscal or social policies discourage women from working, which later turns out to be detrimental to them; other fiscal policies are in favour of the 2nd and 3rd pillars for pensions, from which women benefit little, at the expense of pensions otherwise due to them by law;
- r indicators and statistics often remain gender neutral, distorting reality;
- s men have to take their share in the eradication of poverty of women, and also men have benefit of more equality between women and men.

In addition to an integrated approach of equality between men and women in all policies and at all levels, the EPP Women and the EUW recommend to the Member States:

1. *strict application* of the following European **Directives** by the member states:
 - the 1975 Directive on equal pay for male and female workers
 - the 1976 Directive on equal treatment of men and women regarding job opportunities, professional training, promotion and working conditions;
2. an *increase* in the number of accessible, available and qualified **professional services and care facilities** for children, the elderly and dependent adults;
3. a *reevaluation* of **CARE** (volunteer and professional aid) of dependants, including its public financing, in particular by the **European Structural Funds**;
4. an *evaluation* of **fiscal and social policies** that urge women not to engage themselves professionally by personalizing social tax legislations;
5. a *renewed combat* against **stereotype patterns of thinking** that confirm distinct roles of men and women in education, the media and advertising,
6. paid **maternity leave** for all working women and **maternity benefits for all mothers**;
7. a *review* of the Directive on **parental leave**, including a **paternity leave**, promoting equal sharing of parental obligations between the father and the mother;
8. the prevention of **indebtedness** by learning to budget a household, registration of loans and detection of debts in an early stage;
9. the development of **microcredits** in Europe for women without means who want to start their own enterprise;
10. an **immigration policy** taking into account the demands of the market in general (alphabetisation, individual legal permits to stay and work) and particularly the shortage of workers in CARE;
11. *mainstreaming* of all gendered **statistics and indicators**, including informal work;
12. objective information **for men on the positive impact** of gender equality.