



Gender Equality Backlash

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Gender Equality Backlash

Visible drive across continents

Concern that gender equality has moved too fast, aided by “gender fatigue”

Seeing further advances in gender equality as a “non-issue”

Tired of hearing about it and want it to be “done”



Gender Equality Backlash

#Metoo has been blamed for men being afraid to mentor women

Women are told to “lean in” – to focus on empowering individuals rather than women in general



Gender Equality Backlash

- In recent decades, we have seen remarkable progress on women's rights and leadership in some areas. But these gains are far from complete or consistent – and they have already sparked a troubling backlash from an entrenched patriarchy.
- Gender equality is fundamentally a question of power. We live in a male-dominated world with a male-dominated culture. Only when we see women's rights as our common objective, a route to change that benefits everyone, will we begin to shift the balance. A. Guterres, UN Secretary-General

Gender Equality Backlash

At EU level

- **Gender Equality Index** shows:
Marginal progress in the last decade (2005-2015), persistent inequalities: 2/3 of EU countries are below EU average
- **“Women’s rights in Turbulent Times”**, on the agenda of the 2017 Annual Colloquium of Fundamental Rights organized by the EC

Gender Equality Backlash, FRA

- **More subtle forms of sexism** increasingly question gender equality
- **Modern antifeminism, masculinism,** is more organized, predominantly on the internet (dominant on comment section of newspaper, preventing and blocking open debate)

FRA, contribution to Colloquium

Gender Equality Backlash, FRA

Masculinism :

- Movement stating that women use their femininity to control man and that they are to the same extent perpetrators of violence against man
- Radical anti-feminist opponent of gender equality policy
- Advocates for restoration of presumed *natural order, gender balance*

FRA, contribution to Colloquium

Gender Equality Backlash, FRA

“I demand the immediate excuses from the stupid hens that because of personal frustrations generalize man...You deserve to be all fired you feminists who wrote such sewage” (anonymous reaction to 9 female authors describing gender and sexual violence and denouncing perceived return of “masculinism”)

L'Espresso 2017

FRA, contribution to Colloquium

Gender Equality Backlash, EP

Study commissioned by the European Parliament's Policy Department for Citizens' Rights and Constitutional Affairs at the request of the FEMM Committee

Published in June 2018. (Austria, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Romania, and Slovakia) shows:

- GEB has occurred in the last few years
- GEB main areas and fields are common across countries

Gender Equality Backlash, EP

GEP common area:

- the key areas of institutional and policy framework for gender equality: gender mainstreaming etc.
- certain policy fields: education, sexual and reproductive health and rights, preventing and combating VAW etc.
- the operating space for women's human rights NGOs

Gender Equality Backlash

GEB penetration, intensity and effects varied among countries and areas:

- at rhetoric and discourse level: gender ideology discourse claims biological differences between women and man
- turning into the concrete measures and initiatives
- as a part of a wider, strategic approach



Gender Equality Backlash, EP

- GEB has taken place in a context where state action as regards to promoting gender equality and women's rights experienced persistent and fundamental problems
- in the absence of any meaningful progress steps have been taken backwards



Gender Equality Backlash, EP

- Connected to a significant degree to the creation of the concept “gender ideology” that undermines families and cultures and campaigning against it
- Connected to the misinterpretation of the word “gender”

Gender Equality Backlash, EP

Under attack:

- feminists, gender studies scholars, gender equality experts and civil servants who worked with gender mainstreaming
- the Council of Europe's Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (the Istanbul Convention)
- women's security and rights

Gender Equality Backlash, EP

The origins of the “gender ideology” and the causes of its **popularity**:

- could not be explained by referring to “outside” influences
- the concept has become “symbolic glue,” uniting many groups and their critiques of numerous issues: the identity politics that they identify with gender equality, same-sex marriage, some women’s rights issues (such as sexual and reproductive rights), sex education, challenging restrictive traditional gender roles, the instability of the post-2008 crisis world

Gender Equality Backlash, EP

- **Countries with a stronger democratic governance, women's movement and living traditions of civil organising** have been able to balance the forces behind the "gender ideology" debate
- **Others** experienced anti-gender ideology **rising to state policy level** in the form of demography policy (doctors prescription for emergency contraception, *conscious clause*), weakening of women's sexual and reproductive health and rights, dismantling of GEM etc.

Gender Equality Backlash, EP

- Progress has been made due to international & EU normative frameworks
- **As for legislation,** general anti-discrimination frameworks do not appear to properly address discrimination based on sex, or issues of gender equality



Gender Equality Backlash, EP

- **As for policies**, in some countries a **family mainstreaming approach** has been awarded prominence and appears to be overwriting adherence to the principles of gender mainstreaming and gender equality
- Moreover, **the adequate monitoring and evaluation** of policies has not been widespread

Gender Equality Backlash, EP

- Progress has been made due to **EU funding** schemes at a national level
- However, **no strong gender-equality based mechanisms for the distribution, monitoring and evaluation,** and gender impact assessment is identifiable
- cases of the **improper use of resources** from a gender equality point of view have been reported in recent years

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Gender Equality Backlash, EP

- **Women's rights NGOs** have acted as catalysts and progress leaders in legislative and policy developments
- **Challenges to their sustainable operation** further heightened by measures and initiatives that are creating unfavourable and hostile environment. (e.g. difficulties in accessing funding due to restrictive criteria and administrative burdens)

Gender Equality Backlash, EP

- These have been of varying in depth and have taken numerous forms: smear campaigns, legislative measures or centralization of funding **for NGO sector**
- In some countries, the backlash affect a wider group of NGOs with a progressive democracy-development and human-rights agenda
- GONG, government organized non governmental organization, supported or favored

Gender Equality Backlash, EP

Public education systems have been affected by the backlash in two substantive fields:

- successfully blocked or prevented reforms
- rolling back of achievements

Comprehensive sex education has also been affected

Gender Equality Backlash, EP

- **In the field of VAW** new phenomena have emerged, **such as sexist hate speech, misogyny and online violence**
- **Men's/fathers groups have become increasingly visible**, along with the promotion of the shared custody of children, regardless of history of domestic violence

Gender Equality Backlash, EP

- **Increase in racism and xenophobia** has been determinant, in addition to persistent problem of multiple discriminated women
- The **specific situation of migrant and refugee women has not been given due attention** in policy and practice, despite increased migration and refugee flows affecting Europe
- The EU Framework **Strategy for Social Inclusion** implementation, is still a challenge, while gender impact assessments are lacking

Gender Equality Backlash, EP

- **Poverty and insecurity** are prone to embracing concepts of community that appear to offer **more traditional forms of security**: family, nation and religion.
- In the face of perceived poverty, the weakening or dismantling of family and social policies and weak workers' rights, **have undermined the focus on individual human rights and European values** – such as equality between women and men

Gender Equality Backlash, EP

Effects of GEB:

- puts women in a more disadvantageous position
- decreases the level of protection and reduces access to women's rights
- blocks progress



Recommendations

- Maintain strong commitment to gender equality and women's rights as one of the values of the European Union.
- Monitor the promotion of and situation with gender equality and women's rights
- Monitor whether existing EU legislative and other measures are applied and implemented accordingly



Recommendations

- Closely monitor distribution and utilization of resources derived from EU funding schemes
- Assess the share of women's rights NGOs from EU funding, as well as the gaps and difficulties in accessing it

Recommendations

- Help guarantee a safe and enabling space for civil society organizations and the recognition of the work
- Continue to support the accession/ratification and proper implementation of the Istanbul Convention
- Put effort into raising public and professional awareness about the value and benefits of gender equality and the need to eliminate gender stereotypes



Recommendations

- Promote the acceptance of the European Pillar of Social Rights
- Promote the introduction of paternity leave (which is lost if not taken)
- Adopt /properly evaluate legislative, policy and other measures aiming at the protection of different groups of women who are victims of/vulnerable to multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination



Recommendations

- Promote the introduction of national anti-poverty strategies that use gender as a key indicator and make women a significant target group

European Parliament GEB resolution

European Parliament adopted resolution of 13 February 2019 **on experiencing a backlash in women's rights and gender equality in the EU** (2018/2684(RSP) with the aim of improving gender equality in the EU

- adopted by 395 votes in favor, 157 against and 62 abstentions



European Parliament GEB resolution

- declares that 'significant improvements are still needed in order to create gender-equal societies in which women and men can enjoy equal levels of well-being in all areas of life and work
- notes that the present decade has witnessed a visible and organized offensive against gender equality and women's rights across continents, including in the EU



European Parliament GEB resolution

- **the main targets of this backlash appear to be common across countries and include the key areas of the institutional and policy framework for gender equality** (such as gender mainstreaming, social and labour protection, education, sexual and reproductive health and rights, preventing and combating violence against women, and working space for women's organisations)

European Parliament GEB resolution

- **GEB defines as resistance to progressive social change, regression on acquired rights or maintenance of a non-egalitarian status quo**

European Parliament GEB resolution

Recognises that GEB:

- is particularly worrying
- such resistance can be exercised regardless of one's social background or age
- can be of both a formal or informal
- can involve passive or active strategies to counter further progress by trying to change laws or policies which would ultimately limit citizens' acquired rights

European Parliament GEB resolution

- has been accompanied by the dissemination of fake news and harmful stereotypical beliefs
- level of gender equality in a given society is often indicative, serves as a first warning of the deteriorating situation of fundamental rights and values, including democracy and rule of law



European Parliament GEB resolution

- Concerns cover a large number of areas, notably :gender-based and domestic violence, access to justice, women's health and reproductive rights, NGO access to funding and parallel landscape, hate speech
- calls for the development of a coherent and comprehensive roadmap to achieve gender equality and protect equal rights for women, including the elimination of all forms of VAW

European Parliament GEB resolution

Concludes that :

- **equality between men and women is a fundamental value of the EU**
- **everybody benefits** from the effects of gender equality policies, which have a positive impact on the whole of society

European Parliament GEB resolution

- **if we stop making progress on women's rights issues, we will go backwards**
- **progress in gender equality and in advancing women's rights is not automatic or linear**
- **protecting and advancing gender equality requires constant efforts**

Gender Equality Backlash

Conclusons:

- Novelty or not, not to give ground
- Join forces of all the GEM
- Being more visible

PUSH BACK TO PUSH BACK

CSW General Assembly, March 2019
A.G, UN Secretary General

Thank you

Gender Equality Backlash

