



Brussels, XXX  
[...] (2020) XXX draft

**COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN  
PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL  
COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS**

**A Union of Equality: Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2024**

## TOWARDS A GENDER-EQUAL EUROPE

*“In all its activities, the Union shall aim to eliminate inequalities, and to promote equality, between men and women.”*

Article 8 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union

*“We should not be shy about being proud of where we are or ambitious about where we want to go”.*

- President Ursula von der Leyen  
Political Guidelines

**The European Union is a global leader in gender equality:** 14 of the worldwide top 20 countries on gender equality are EU Member States.<sup>1</sup> The promotion of equality between women and men is a task for the Union, in all its activities, as required by the Treaties. Thanks to robust equal treatment legislation and jurisprudence<sup>2</sup>, efforts to mainstream the gender<sup>3</sup> perspective into different policy areas, and laws to address particular inequalities, the EU has made significant progress in gender equality in the last decades.

**Yet, no Member State has achieved full gender equality and progress is slower than is hoped.** Member States on average scored 67.4 out of 100 in the EU Gender Equality Index 2019<sup>4</sup>, which score has improved by just 5.4 points since 2005.

**There is no time for complacency.** Gender equality is a core value of the EU and a fundamental right<sup>5</sup>. While the gender gap in education is being closed, the gender gaps in employment, pay, care, power and pensions persist. Gender-based violence and harassment continue at alarming levels. The *#MeToo* movement has demonstrated the extent of sexism and abuse that women and girls continue to face. Still too many actors question the principle of equality through sexist and racist hate speech, and rejecting initiatives tackling gender-based violence.

**In business, politics and society as a whole, we can only reach our full potential if we use all of our talent and diversity.** Gender equality has strong, positive impacts on GDP, which

<sup>1</sup> 2019 EM2030 SDG Gender Index: <https://data.em2030.org/em2030-sdg-gender-index/>

<sup>2</sup> The EU has adopted six Directives covering equality between women and men in the workplace, in self-employment, in access to goods and services, in social security, in pregnancy and maternity and on family-related leave and flexible working arrangements for parents and carers. Together they have progressively set a legal standard across Europe ensuring a broad protection from discrimination. Numerous cases brought to the European Court of Justice have further strengthened the principle of equality and delivered justice for victims of discrimination (landmark cases include case C-43/75 Defrenne v. Sabena, case C-262/88 Barber v. Guardian Royal Exchange Assurance Group, and case C-236/09 Association Belge des Consommateurs Test-Achats and Others).

<sup>3</sup> “‘Gender’ shall mean the socially constructed roles, behaviours, activities and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for women and men.” Article 3(d) of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence.

<sup>4</sup> See European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE): <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index/2019>

<sup>5</sup> See Articles 2 and 3(3) TEU, Articles 8, 10, 19 and 157 TFEU and Articles 21 and 23 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights.

grow over time<sup>6</sup>. It fosters higher levels of employment and productivity, which will be beneficial for embracing the **climate and digital transitions** and facing our demographic challenges.

**This Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2024** aims at achieving a gender equal Europe by 2025 where gender-based violence, sex discrimination and structural inequality between women and men are a thing of the past. A Europe where women and men, girls and boys, in all their diversity<sup>7</sup>, are equal. Where they are *free* to pursue their chosen path in life, where they have equal opportunities to *thrive*, and where they can equally participate in and *lead* our European society.

This strategy frames the Commission's work on gender equality and **sets out the policy objectives and key actions for the 2020-2024 period**<sup>8</sup>. The implementation of this strategy will be based on a **dual approach** of targeted measures to achieve gender equality, combined with strengthened gender mainstreaming. The Commission will **systematically include a gender perspective at the early stages of policy design in all EU policy areas**. The strategy will be implemented **using intersectionality as a cross-cutting principle**<sup>9</sup>.

In this year of 2020, which marks the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action<sup>10</sup>, **the strategy is the EU's contribution to shaping a better world for women and men, girls and boys**. It delivers on the stand-alone gender equality Sustainable Development Goal (SDG5) and as a cross-cutting priority to all Sustainable Development Goals<sup>11</sup> and on the EU's commitment to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

## **1. Freedom from gender-based violence and gender stereotypes**

*Everyone should be safe in their homes, in their close relationships, in their workplaces, in public spaces, and online. Women and men, girls and boys, in all their diversity, should be free to express their ideas and emotions, and pursue their chosen educational and professional paths without the constraints of stereotypical gender norms.*

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<sup>6</sup> By 2050, improving gender equality would lead to an increase in the EU's GDP per capita by 6.1% to 9.6%, which amounts to €1.95 to €3.15 trillion: <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/policy-areas/economic-and-financial-affairs/economic-benefits-gender-equality>

<sup>7</sup> The expression 'in all their diversity' is used throughout this Strategy to express that, where women or men are mentioned, these are a heterogeneous categories including in relation to their sex, sex characteristics, gender identity or gender expression. It affirms the commitment to leave no-one behind and achieve a gender equal Europe for everyone, regardless of their sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation.

<sup>8</sup> Following the Commission's 2016-2019 strategic engagement for gender equality.

<sup>9</sup> According to Article 10 TFEU, when "defining and implementing its policies and activities, the Union shall aim to combat discrimination on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation".

<sup>10</sup> <https://beijing20.unwomen.org/en/about>

<sup>11</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/policies/sustainable-development-goals\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/policies/sustainable-development-goals_en)

### Ending gender-based violence

Gender-based violence<sup>12</sup> remains one of our society's biggest challenges and is deeply rooted in gender inequality. Gender-based violence, in all its forms, remains under-reported and overlooked, both inside and outside the EU. **The EU will do all it can to prevent and combat gender-based violence, support and protect victims of such crimes, and hold perpetrators accountable** for their abusive behaviour.



**1 in 3 women** in the EU has experienced physical and/or sexual violence.



**1 in 5 women** in the EU have experienced violence by an intimate partner.



**55% of women** in the EU have been sexually harassed<sup>13</sup>.

The **Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence** – the 'Istanbul Convention' – is the benchmark for international standards in this field. The EU signed the Convention in 2017, and concluding EU accession to it is a key priority for the Commission.

To accelerate the conclusion of EU's accession, in 2019 the European Parliament requested an opinion from the European Court of Justice on this issue<sup>14</sup>. Should the EU's accession to the Istanbul Convention remain blocked in the Council, the Commission intends to propose in 2021 measures within the limits of EU competence to achieve the same objectives as the Istanbul Convention.

The Commission intends in particular to present an initiative with a view to extending the areas of crime where harmonisation is possible to specific forms of **gender-based violence** in accordance with Article 83(1) TFEU, the so-called **Eurocrimes**.

To the extent that they are already apprehended by the existing Eurocrimes within the meaning of Article 83(1) TFEU the Commission will consider **additional measures** to prevent and combat specific forms of gender-based violence, including sexual harassment, abuse of women and female genital mutilation.



An estimated **600,000 women and girls** have been subjected to FGM in Europe and **180,000 girls** are at risk<sup>15</sup>.

<sup>12</sup> Article 3(d) of the Istanbul Convention defines gender-based violence against women as 'violence that is directed against a woman because she is a woman or that affects women disproportionately'.

<sup>13</sup> European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), Violence against women: an EU-wide survey, 2014.

<sup>14</sup> Request for an opinion submitted by the European Parliament pursuant to Article 218(11) TFEU (Opinion 1/19)

<sup>15</sup> According to recent studies by the End FGM European Network. See: <https://www.endfgm.eu/female-genital-mutilation/fgm-in-europe>

Female genital mutilation, forced abortion and forced sterilisation, early and forced marriage, so-called ‘honour-related violence’ and other **harmful practices against women and girls are forms of gender-based violence and serious violations of women and children’s rights** within the EU and around the world. In addition to possible legislation, the EU will table a **Recommendation on the prevention of harmful practices**, including the need for effective pre-emptive measures and education programmes. In this, it will address the strengthening of public services, prevention and support measures, capacity-building of professionals and victim-centred access to justice.

The Commission will also present a **victims’ rights strategy** by early 2021, which will address the specific needs of victims of gender-based violence, including domestic violence, building on the Victims’ Rights Directive<sup>16</sup>.

Women who have a health problem or disability are more likely to experience various forms of violence.<sup>17</sup> The Commission will develop and finance measures<sup>18</sup> to tackle abuse, violence as well as forced sterilisation and forced abortion, such as capacity-building and awareness-raising campaigns on rights and access to justice.

**Effective prevention of violence is key.** It involves educating boys and girls from an early age about gender equality, supporting the development of non-violent relationships. It also requires a multi-disciplinary approach among professionals and services including the criminal justice system, victim support and social and health services. The Commission will launch an **EU network on the prevention of gender-based violence and domestic violence**, bringing together Member States and stakeholders to exchange good practice, and will provide funding for training, capacity-building and support services. Violence prevention focusing on men, boys and masculinities<sup>19</sup> will be of central importance.

To address violence and harassment in work contexts, the Commission will continue to encourage Member States to ratify the **International Labour Organisation (ILO)’s Convention on combating violence and harassment in the world of work**<sup>20</sup>, implement the existing EU rules<sup>21</sup> on protecting workers from sexual harassment, and raise people’s awareness of them.

**Online violence is a barrier to women’s participation in public life**, and bullying, harassment and abuse on social media have far-reaching effects on women’s and girls’ daily lives. The Commission will propose the **Digital Services Act**<sup>22</sup> to clarify online platforms’ responsibilities with regard to user-disseminated content. The Digital Services Act will clarify

<sup>16</sup> Directive 2012/29/EU establishing minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime.

<sup>17</sup> For instance, 34% of women with a health problem or disability have experienced physical or sexual partner violence, compared with 19% of women who do not have a health problem or disability. FRA, Violence against women: an EU-wide survey, 2014.

<sup>18</sup> To implement the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities recommendations for the EU, in particular concerning Articles 6 (Women with disabilities) and 16 (Freedom from exploitation, violence and abuse).

<sup>19</sup> According to the European Institute for Gender Equality, ‘masculinities’ refers to the “different notions of what it means to be a man, including patterns of conduct linked to men’s place in a given set of gender roles and relations”. See: <https://eige.europa.eu/thesaurus/terms/1285>

<sup>20</sup> ILO, Violence and Harassment Convention (No. 190) and Recommendation (No. 206).

<sup>21</sup> Directive 2006/54 on the implementation of the principle of equal opportunities and equal treatment of men and women in matters of employment and occupation (recast).

<sup>22</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/new-eu-rules-e-commerce>

what measures are expected from platforms in addressing illegal activities online, while protecting fundamental rights. Users also need to be empowered to counter other types of harmful and abusive content, which is not always considered illegal but can have devastating effects. To protect women's safety online, the Commission will facilitate the development of a **new framework for cooperation between internet platforms**<sup>23</sup>.

**Women and girls form the vast majority of victims of trafficking in human beings**, both in and outside the EU, and are mostly trafficked for the purposes of sexual exploitation.<sup>24</sup> Women's concerns has to be at the centre when shaping the policies to address it. The EU addresses trafficking in human beings comprehensively through coordination in all relevant areas<sup>25</sup>. Countering impunity of users, exploiters and profit-makers is a priority. As part of the Security Union, the Commission will present a new **EU strategy on the eradication of trafficking in human beings** and an **EU strategy on a more effective fight against child sexual abuse**.

**The EU needs comprehensive, updated and comparable data** for policies on combating gender-based violence to be effective. To get a complete picture of gender-based violence, data should be disaggregated by relevant intersectional aspects and indicators such as age, disability status, migrant status and rural-urban residence. An **EU-wide survey**, coordinated by Eurostat, will provide data on the prevalence and dynamics of gender-based violence against women and other forms of interpersonal violence, with results presented in 2023.

#### *Challenging gender stereotypes*

**Gender stereotypes are a root cause of gender inequality and affect all areas of society.** Stereotypical expectations based on norms for women and men, girls and boys, in all their diversity, limit their aspirations, choices and freedom, and therefore need to be challenged. Gender stereotypes are often combined with other stereotypes such as those based on race or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation and it can reinforce stereotypes' negative impacts.

The Commission will launch an **EU-wide communication campaign on gender stereotypes** in all spheres of life with an intersectional approach and a focus on youth engagement, in collaboration with the Member States.



**44%** of Europeans think that the most important role of a woman is to take care of her home and family.



**43%** think the most important role of a man is to earn money<sup>26</sup>.

<sup>23</sup> Based on cooperation under the EU Internet Forum, which led to the adoption of the EU Code of Conduct on countering illegal hate speech online.

<sup>24</sup> Trafficking in human beings is recognised as violence against women and girls, in line with Article 6 of the Convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women.

<sup>25</sup> Emanating from the Anti-Trafficking Directive 2011/36/EU on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings and protecting its victims.

<sup>26</sup> Special Eurobarometer 465, June 2017.

**Artificial Intelligence (AI) has become an area of strategic importance** and a key driver of economic progress, hence women have to be part of its development as researchers, programmers and users. While AI can bring solutions to many societal challenges, it risks intensifying gender inequalities. Algorithms and related machine-learning risk repeating, amplifying or contributing to gender biases that programmers may not be aware of. The new Commission White Paper on AI is setting out the European approach grounded in EU values and fundamental rights, including non-discrimination and gender equality<sup>27</sup>. The next framework programme for research and innovation, **Horizon Europe**<sup>28</sup>, will also provide insights and solutions on addressing potential gender biases in AI, as well as on debunking gender stereotypes in all social, economic and cultural domains, helping develop unbiased evidence-based policies.

The media and the cultural sectors have considerable say in shaping people's beliefs, values and perception of reality, and are thus another key channel for changing attitudes and challenging stereotypes.<sup>29</sup> The Commission will continue supporting projects promoting gender equality under **Creative Europe**<sup>30</sup>, including under **Music Moves Europe**, and will present a **gender equality strategy in the audio-visual industry** as part of the next **MEDIA** sub-programme<sup>31</sup>, including financial support, structured dialogue, mentoring and training for female film-makers, producers and screenwriters.

***Commission calls on the Council and the European Parliament to:***

- Conclude the EU's accession to the Istanbul Convention and ensure swift EU ratification.

***Commission calls on the Member States to:***

- Ratify and implement the Istanbul Convention.
- Ratify and implement the ILO Convention to combat violence and harassment in the world of work.
- Implement the Victims' Rights Directive and other relevant EU law protecting victims of gender-based violence.
- Systematically collect and report data on gender-based violence.
- Support civil society and public services in preventing and combating gender-based violence, including with the help of EU funding available under the 'citizens, equality, rights and values' programme (2021-2027).

<sup>27</sup> European Commission, White paper on Artificial Intelligence - A European approach to excellence and trust, COM(2020) 65 final: [https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/commission-white-paper-artificial-intelligence-feb2020\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/commission-white-paper-artificial-intelligence-feb2020_en.pdf)

<sup>28</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/info/horizon-europe-next-research-and-innovation-framework-programme\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/horizon-europe-next-research-and-innovation-framework-programme_en)

<sup>29</sup> See, for example, 'Gender equality in the media sector', a study carried out for the FEMM Committee on women's rights and gender equality, European Parliament, 2018.

<sup>30</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/creative-europe/node\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/creative-europe/node_en)

<sup>31</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/media-sub-programme-creative-europe>

## 2. Thriving in a gender-equal economy

*A prosperous and social Europe depends on us all. Women and men in all their diversity should have equal opportunities to thrive and be economically independent, be paid equally for their work of equal value, have equal access to finance and receive fair pensions. Women and men should equally share caring responsibilities.*

### **Closing gender gaps in the labour market**

**Increasing women's participation in the labour market has a strong, positive impact on the economy, notably in the context of a shrinking workforce and skill shortages.**

**Women's employment rate in the EU is higher today than ever before<sup>32</sup>**, yet many women still experience barriers to join and remain on the labour market. Some women are structurally underrepresented in the labour market, often resulting from the intersection of gender with additional conditions of vulnerability or marginalisation such as belonging to an ethnic or religious minority<sup>33</sup>.



Improving the work-life balance of workers is one of the ways of addressing the gender gaps in the labour market. The **Work-Life-Balance Directive<sup>39</sup>** introduces minimum standards for family leave and flexible working arrangements for workers, and promotes equal sharing of caring responsibilities between parents. The Commission will ensure that Member States correctly **transpose<sup>40</sup> and implement** this directive to enable men and women to equally thrive both personally and professionally, and calls upon the Member States to go beyond these

<sup>32</sup> Eurostat, 2019, see [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-datasets/product?code=sdg\\_05\\_30](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-datasets/product?code=sdg_05_30)

<sup>33</sup> See for example the Growth, Equal Opportunities, Migration and Markets Study (GEMM), <https://gemm2020.eu/>

<sup>34</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-datasets/product?code=sdg\\_05\\_30](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-datasets/product?code=sdg_05_30)

<sup>35</sup> [https://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=lfsi\\_emp\\_a&lang=en](https://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=lfsi_emp_a&lang=en)

<sup>36</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/pdfscache/35409.pdf>

<sup>37</sup> Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA), Roma Women in nine EU Member States, 2019.

<sup>38</sup> Eurostat, Labour Forced Survey, calculations done based on *lfsa\_eegan2*

<sup>39</sup> Directive (EU) 2019/1158 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 June 2019 on work-life balance for parents and carers and repealing Council Directive 2010/18/EU.

<sup>40</sup> The Work-Life Balance Directive has a two phase transposition period, one ending in 2022 and the other in 2024.



minimum standards in reviewing their policies. They should also ensure quality solutions, for instance for childcare, to reach less populated areas in Europe.

Gender equality challenges in the Member States will continue to be monitored through the **European Semester**<sup>41</sup>. As of the 2019-2020 Semester cycle, the Semester country reports contribute to the monitoring of the SDGs, including on gender equality (SDG5), and the way in which economic and employment policies can help deliver them. The European Semester also integrates the monitoring of the European Pillar of Social Rights<sup>42</sup>.

The **structural reform support programme** will support Member States in mainstreaming gender in public administration, state budgeting and financial management. In addition, it will contribute to national structural reforms in Member States to **close the employment gender gap** and to address the higher proportion of women in poverty, particularly in older age.

**Social and economic policies, taxation and social protection systems** should not perpetuate structural gender inequalities based on traditional gender roles in the realms of work and private life. The Commission will develop guidance for Member States on how national tax and benefits systems can impact **financial incentives or disincentives for second earners**.



Empowering women in the labour market also means giving them the possibility to **thrive as investors and entrepreneurs**. The EU cohesion policy supports women's entrepreneurship, their (re)integration into the labour market and gender equality in specific, traditionally male, sectors. Targeted measures promoting the participation of women in innovation will be developed under the Horizon Europe **European Innovation Council** (EIC), including a pilot to promote women led start-ups and innovative SMEs in 2020<sup>46</sup>. The Commission will also promote the presence of women in decision-making positions in private equity and venture capital funds and support funds investing with gender diversified portfolios through the **InvestEU programme** to mobilise private and public investment in Europe for more sustainable, inclusive and innovative growth.

<sup>41</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/info/business-economy-euro/economic-and-fiscal-policy-coordination/eu-economic-governance-monitoring-prevention-correction/european-semester\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/business-economy-euro/economic-and-fiscal-policy-coordination/eu-economic-governance-monitoring-prevention-correction/european-semester_en)

<sup>42</sup> In particular on the labour market, but also with regard to social inclusion and education.

<sup>43</sup> International Finance Corporation, Moving toward gender balance in private equity and venture capital, 2019.

<sup>44</sup> Biegel, S., Hunt, S. M., Kuhlman, S., Project Sage 2.0 Tracking venture capital with a gender lens, 2019.

<sup>45</sup> Atomico, State of European Tech 2019 Report. See: <https://2019.stateofeuropeantech.com/chapter/state-european-tech-2019/article/executive-summary>.

<sup>46</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/research/eic/index.cfm>

### *Achieving equal participation across different sectors of the economy*

While there are **more female university graduates in Europe than male graduates**, women remain underrepresented in certain higher paid professions. More women than men work in low-paid jobs and sectors, and in lower positions.<sup>47</sup> Discriminatory social norms and stereotypes about women's and men's skills, and the undervaluation of women's work are some of the contributing factors.



Out of high-performing students in maths or science in OECD countries, **1 in 4** boys expect a career as an engineer or scientist, compared to **1 in 6** girls; **1 in 3** girls expect to work as health professionals, compared to **1 in 8** boys<sup>48</sup>.



The share of men working in the digital sector is **3.1 times** greater than the share of women<sup>49</sup>.



Only around **22%** of AI programmers are women<sup>50</sup>.

The **digital transition** is of utmost importance in this context. With rapid transformation and digitalisation of the economy and the labour market, today 90% of jobs require basic digital skills<sup>51</sup>. Women only represent 17% of people in ICT<sup>52</sup> studies and careers in the EU<sup>53</sup> and only 36% of STEM<sup>54</sup> graduates<sup>55</sup>. The gender gap in ICT and STEM education, skills and access to digitalised jobs will be addressed in the **digital education action plan** and implemented through the **Ministerial declaration of commitment on 'women in digital'**<sup>56</sup>. The use of the '**women in digital**' scoreboard for benchmarking will be further improved. The **Updated Skills Agenda for Europe** will address horizontal segregation, stereotyping and gender gaps in education and training. The Commission proposal for a **Council recommendation on vocational education and training** will support improving gender balance in traditionally male- or female-dominated professions and address gender stereotypes.

In the Commission's **communication on the universities of the future**, gender equality will be put forward as one of the key constituting elements. The renewed **strategic framework for gender equality in sport** will to promote women's and girls' participation in sport and physical activity and gender balance in leadership positions within sport organisations.

<sup>47</sup> Eurostat (2018), 'A decomposition of the unadjusted gender pay gap using Structure of Earnings Survey data', Statistical working paper

<sup>48</sup> <http://www.oecd.org/pisa/PISA%202018%20Insights%20and%20Interpretations%20FINAL%20PDF.pdf>

<sup>49</sup> European Commission, Women in the Digital Age – Final Report, 2018.

<sup>50</sup> World Economic Forum Global Gender Gap Report 2020, 2020.

<sup>51</sup> European Commission, ICT for Work: Digital Skills in the Workplace, 2017.

<sup>52</sup> Information and communications technology (ICT)

<sup>53</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/-/EDN-20180425-1>

<sup>54</sup> Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM)

<sup>55</sup> <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/9540ffa1-4478-11e9-a8ed-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>

<sup>56</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/news/eu-countries-commit-boost-participation-women-digital>

### *Addressing the gender pay and pension gap*

The principle of equal pay for equal work or work of equal value has been enshrined in the Treaties since 1957 and translated in EU law. Yet, women earn on average less than men<sup>57</sup>. Accumulated lifetime gender employment and pay gaps result in an even wider pension gap and consequently older women are more at risk of poverty than men.



16% gender pay gap in the EU<sup>58</sup>.



30% gender pension gap in the EU<sup>59</sup>.

**Eliminating the gender pay gap** requires addressing all of its root causes, including women's lower participation in the labour market, invisible and unpaid work, their higher use of part-time work and career breaks, as well as vertical and horizontal segregation based on gender stereotypes and discrimination.

When information about pay levels is available it is easier to detect gaps and discrimination. Because of a lack of transparency, many women do not know or cannot prove that they are being underpaid. The Commission will table **binding measures on pay transparency by the end of 2020**.

Such an initiative will strengthen the rights of employees to get more information about pay levels, while it may add an administrative burden for employers. To find the right balance for such EU action, it is of utmost importance to consult and listen to social partners and national administrations. Together with the adoption of this strategy, the Commission is launching a **wide-ranging and inclusive consultation process**<sup>60</sup> with the public, the Member States and the social partners. More broadly the Commission will re-launch the discussion with the social partners on how to improve gender equality in the world of work and encourage them to intensify efforts in addressing the gender employment and pay gap including within their structures.

Reduced earnings, higher concentration in part-time work and career gaps linked to women's caring responsibilities contribute substantially to the **gender pension gap**. In the 2021 edition of the **Pension Adequacy Report**, the Commission together with the Council's Social Protection Committee will assess how risks and resources are shared in pension systems between women and men. To protect pension rights and encourage equal sharing of care responsibilities between women and men, the Commission will explore with Member States and stakeholders the provision of **pension credits for care-related career breaks in occupational pension schemes**, as recommended by the High-level group on pensions<sup>61</sup>.

<sup>57</sup> One of the reasons is the fact that on average women spend fewer hours in paid work than men: whereas only 8.7% of men in the EU work in part-time, almost a third of women across the EU (31.3 %) does so.

<sup>58</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-datasets/-/sdg\\_05\\_20](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-datasets/-/sdg_05_20)

<sup>59</sup> Eurostat, 2018.

<sup>60</sup> [reference when available]

<sup>61</sup> Final report of the High-level group of experts on pensions, December 2019,

<https://ec.europa.eu/transparency/regexpert/index.cfm?do=groupDetail.groupDetail&groupID=3589>

### *Closing the gender care gap*

**Thriving at work while managing caring responsibilities at home is a challenge, especially for women.** Women often align their decision to work, and how to work, with their caring responsibilities and with whether and how these duties are shared with a partner. This is a particular challenge for single parents, most of which are women<sup>62</sup>, and for people living in remote rural areas for whom support solutions are often lacking. Women also carry a disproportionate burden of unpaid work, which makes out a significant share of economic activity.<sup>63</sup>

**The availability of childcare, social care and household services is crucial, together with an equal sharing of care responsibilities at home.** Insufficient access to quality and affordable formal care services is one of the key drivers of gender inequality on the labour market. Investing in care services is therefore important to support women's participation in paid work and has potential for job creation for both women and men.



Women in the EU spend **22 hours** per week on care and household work, while men spend only **9 hours**<sup>64</sup>.



**80%** of care in the EU is provided by informal carers, **75%** of whom are women. Many of them have a migrant background<sup>65</sup>.

The **Barcelona target for the provision of early childhood education and care arrangements** for children are mostly met, but some Member States are significantly lagging behind. The Commission will therefore propose to revise the Barcelona targets to ensure further upwards convergence among Member States of early childhood education and care. Moreover, the Commission's proposal for a **European Child Guarantee** in 2021 will focus on the most significant barriers preventing children from accessing the necessary services for their wellbeing and personal development.

The Commission will continue supporting **Member States' work on improving the availability and affordability of quality care services** for children and other dependents by investments through the European Social Fund Plus, the European Regional Development Fund, the InvestEU programme and the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development.

At the end of 2020, the Commission will launch the consultation process for a **Green Paper on Ageing** with a focus on long-term care, pensions and active ageing.

<sup>62</sup> Maldonado, L. C., & Nieuwenhuis, R., Family policies and single parent poverty in 18 OECD countries, 1978–2008. Community, Work & Family, 18(4): 395–415.

<sup>63</sup> [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---cabinet/documents/publication/wcms\\_713376.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---cabinet/documents/publication/wcms_713376.pdf)

<sup>64</sup> Eurofound, Striking a balance: Reconciling work and life in the EU, 2018.

<sup>65</sup> Hoffmann, F., & Rodrigues, R. (2010). Informal carers: who takes care of them? Policy brief April 2010 European Centre for Social Welfare Policy and Research, Vienna.

**Commission calls on the European Parliament and the Council to:**

- Ensure swift adoption of the proposed legislative initiative on pay transparency.

**Commission calls on Member States to:**

- Transpose the Work-Life Balance Directive and properly implement EU gender equality and labour law<sup>66</sup>.
- Ensure adequate investments in early childhood education and care services care and long-term care services from available EU funding.
- Implement the Ministerial declaration of commitment on 'women in digital'.

### 3. Leading equally throughout society

*Companies, communities and countries should be led by both women and men, in all their diversity. Whether you are a woman or a man should not influence the career you pursue.*

***Achieving gender balance in decision-making and politics***

**Inclusive and diverse leadership is needed to solve the complex challenges that decision-makers face today.** More inclusion and more diversity is essential to bring forward new ideas and innovative approaches that better serve a dynamic and flourishing EU society. Allowing citizens from all backgrounds to meaningfully participate in society is a necessary pre-condition for a well-functioning democracy and leads to more effective policy-making.



Women are only **7.5%** of board chairs and **7.7%** of CEOs in the EU's largest listed companies<sup>67</sup>.



Only **32.2%** of members of national parliaments in the EU are women<sup>68</sup>.

**A broad range of talents and skills contributes to better decision-making and corporate governance, and drive economic growth.**<sup>69</sup> Despite some progress in recent years, women's underrepresentation in decision-making positions in Europe's businesses and industry persists.

To help to break the glass ceiling, the Commission will push for the adoption of the 2012 proposal for a **Directive on improving the gender balance on corporate boards**<sup>70</sup> which set the aim of a minimum of 40% of non-executive members of the under-represented sex on company boards.<sup>71</sup>

<sup>66</sup> This includes the recast Directive on gender equality in employment and occupation, the Directives on gender equality in self-employment, in access to goods and services, in social security, in pregnancy and maternity, the Directive on part-time work, the Directive on transparent and predictable working conditions, the Recommendation on access to social protection, and the Recommendation on equality bodies.

<sup>67</sup> EIGE, 2019.

<sup>68</sup> Single/lower house. EIGE, 2019.

<sup>69</sup> ILO, The business case for change, 2019; McKinsey, Women Matter report, 2017; Catalyst, Why Diversity and Inclusion Matter, 2018; Rohini Anand, Gender-Balanced Teams Linked to Better Business Performance: A Sodexo Study, 2016; etc.

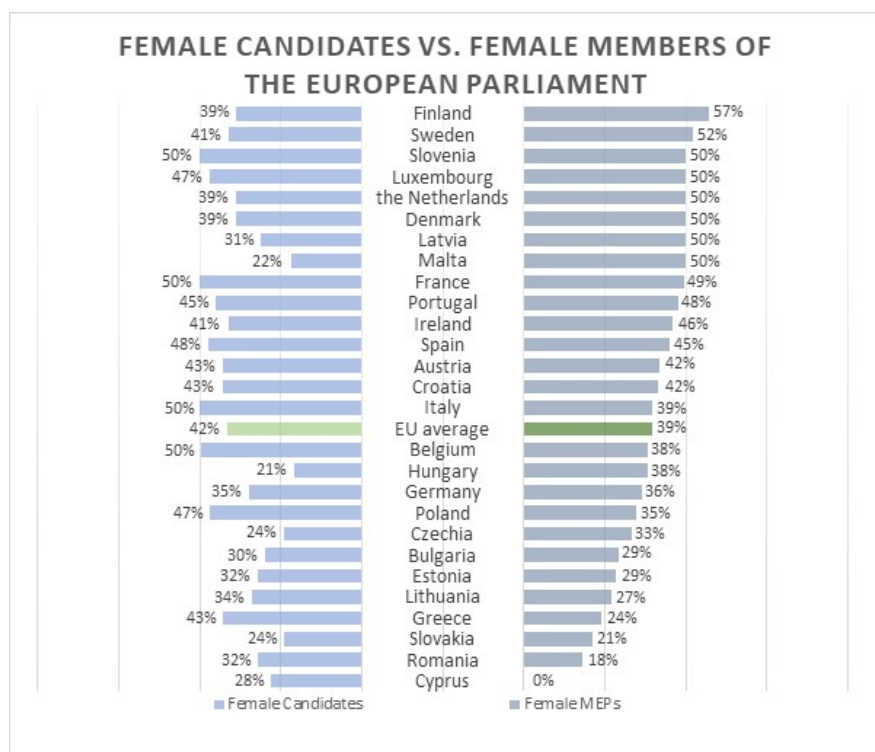
<sup>70</sup> COM/2012/0614 final

<sup>71</sup> Positive results shown by several countries introducing relevant legislative measures France, Italy, Belgium, Germany and more recently Austria and Portugal have all introduced legislative targets. See

In parallel, the Commission will facilitate the exchange of good practice addressing gender balance including in executive boards and managerial positions, bringing in the examples of national or regional projects run by governments, civil society or private sector. The **EU platform of diversity charters**<sup>72</sup> will serve as a platform for exchange. The Commission will continue to support EU wide projects such as European Gender Diversity Index<sup>73</sup>.

**Equal opportunity in participation is essential for representative democracy.** The Commission will promote the participation of women as voters and candidates in the **2024 European Parliament elections**, in collaboration with the European Parliament, national parliaments, Member States and civil society, including through funding and promoting best practice. Commission will further encourage European political parties asking for EU funding to be transparent about the gender balance of their members<sup>74</sup>.

*Figure from 2019 European elections:*



<https://eige.europa.eu/publications/gender-equality-index-2019-report/more-gender-equality-corporate-boards-only-few-member-states>

<sup>72</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/combating-discrimination/tackling-discrimination/diversity-management/eu-platform-diversity-charters\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/combating-discrimination/tackling-discrimination/diversity-management/eu-platform-diversity-charters_en)

<sup>73</sup> Relevant projects include European Women on Boards: <https://europeanwomenonboards.eu/>

<sup>74</sup> Regulation 2018/673 of 3 May 2018 amending Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 1141/2014 on the statute and funding of European political parties and European political foundations, recital 6.

**Kommenterad [IBT1]:** I would caution about this: this is a REC project and if we say in the strategy that we will continue funding it, we are bypassing the financial rules of competitive grant procedures. Suggest to rephrase in some way.

**Kommenterad [IBT2]:** OPTION for infographic: either the chart showing candidates and MEPs in 2019 elections (from Election Report 2019) or infographic in same style as others.

**Kommenterad [RL(3):** Is there another graph that shows evolution over time?

Ändrad fältkod

The Commission will support Member States in developing and implementing more effective **strategies to increase the number of women in decision-making positions** including through the Mutual Learning Programme in Gender Equality<sup>75</sup>. The Commission will also **disseminate data and analysis of trends on the representation of women and men in decision-making positions** in cooperation with the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE).

**EU institutions and bodies should not be exempt** from ensuring gender balance in leadership positions. 44% of the current Commissioners are women and the next Commission should aim for 50% gender parity.

The Commission will lead by example and aims to reach **gender balance of 50%** at all levels of its management by the end of 2024<sup>76</sup>. It will also introduce measures to increase the share of female managers in the agencies.<sup>77</sup> The Commission will also ensure gender balanced representation among speakers and panellists in the conferences it organises.

***Commission calls on the European Parliament and the Council:***

- Adopt the proposal for a Directive on improving the gender balance on corporate boards.
- Adopt measures to improve gender balance at all levels of their management and in leadership positions.

***Commission calls on the Member States:***

- Transpose and implement the Directive on improving the gender balance on corporate boards, once adopted.
- Develop and implement strategies to increase the number of women in decision-making positions in politics and policy making.

#### **4. Gender mainstreaming and an intersectional perspective in EU policies**

**Mainstreaming gender is relevant in all policy fields that affect people's lives, both inside and outside the EU** including the **climate and digital transitions and demographic** change. The inclusion of a gender perspective in all of the Commission's activities and processes is essential for achieving gender equality. Gender mainstreaming ensures that policies and programmes adequately respond to the different interests and needs of women and men, girls and boys, in all their diversity. The aim is to redistribute power, influence and resources in a fair and gender-equal way, eliminate inequality and promote fairness.

The Commission will **integrate a gender perspective in all major Commission initiatives during the current mandate**, facilitated by the appointment of the first Commissioner for

<sup>75</sup>[https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/gender-equality/who-we-work-gender-equality/mutual-learning-programme-gender-equality\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/gender-equality/who-we-work-gender-equality/mutual-learning-programme-gender-equality_en)

<sup>76</sup> In 2019, 41% of managers in the Commission were women (up from 30% in 2014). This included 37% of senior managers (up from 27%) and 42% of middle managers (up from 31%). Compare to the current state of play with 41% at Director General level, xx % at Directors level, xx% at HoU level PLEASE CHECK THIS WITH HR (HR sent data to CAB DALLI)

<sup>77</sup> TBD

equality, as a stand-alone portfolio, and creating a **Task Force for Equality**<sup>78</sup> composed of representatives of all Commission services and of the European External Action Service to ensure the implementation of equality mainstreaming, including gender equality, at operational and technical level.

Addressing the gender dimension of climate change, the clean energy transition, environmental issues, and emission-free transport can have a key role in leveraging the full potential of adaptation. For example, investments in the **Building Renovation Wave**, in the **Offshore Renewable Energy Strategy** under the **European Green Deal** can impact women differently than men. The same is true for the **Climate Pact** and the **EU strategy on climate adaptation**.

Women and men experience gender-specific health risks and as part of its **EU health policy** the Commission will, among other things, integrate a gender dimension on EU Beating Cancer Plan to be launched in 2020 and facilitate regular exchange of good practices between Member States and stakeholders on the gender aspects of health, including sexual and reproductive health rights. The EU Drugs Agenda 2021-2025 will be adopted in 2020, and will address also gender-specific challenges faced by women and girls in substance abuse.

The Commission will continue to actively promote gender equality through its **trade policy**, including through gathering gender-disaggregated data and ensuring that trade-related aspects of gender are adequately addressed in trade agreements.

The **intersectionality of gender with other grounds of discrimination will be addressed across EU policies**. Women are a heterogeneous group and may face intersectional discrimination based on several personal characteristics. For instance, a migrant woman with a disability may face discrimination on three grounds. EU law, policies and their implementation should therefore respond to the specific needs and circumstances of women in different groups. Forthcoming EU strategic frameworks<sup>79</sup> on disability, LGBTI+, migrant integration and Roma inclusion will be linked to this strategy and each other. Moreover, the intersectional perspective will always inform gender equality policies.

## 5. Funding actions to promote gender equality in the EU

The Commission's proposals for the MFF ensure the integration of a gender dimension throughout the financial framework, and more specifically in various EU funding and budgetary guarantee instruments, in particular the **European Social Fund Plus**, the **European Regional Development Fund**, **Creative Europe**, the **Cohesion Fund**, and the **InvestEU Programme**. Funding will support actions to promote women's labour market participation and work-life balance, invest in care facilities, support female entrepreneurship, combat gender segregation in certain professions and address the imbalanced representation of girls and boys in some sectors of education and training.

The proposed Common Provisions Regulation<sup>80</sup> includes a horizontal principle on gender equality in EU funds, as well as a specific 'enabling conditions', requiring a Member State to have in place a **national gender equality strategic framework** as a precondition to make use of the funds when investing in improving gender balance in the labour market, work-life

<sup>78</sup> The Task Force will facilitate the mainstreaming of equality relating to six grounds of discrimination: sex, race or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation.

<sup>80</sup> COM/2018/375 final



balance or childcare infrastructure. Another **horizontal enabling condition** on effective implementation of the **Charter of Fundamental Rights** includes gender equality as one of its key principles and applies to all the investments under this Regulation.

Dedicated funding for projects benefiting civil society organisations and public institutions that implement specific actions, including preventing and combating gender-based violence, will be available through the **Citizens, equality, rights and values programme**. Through the **Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund**, the Commission will encourage Member States to step up protection of vulnerable groups, including women victims of gender based violence in asylum and migration contexts.

In the field of research and innovation, the Commission will introduce a commitment to the implementation of **gender equality plans as a legal requirement for Horizon Europe applicants** and launch an initiative to increase the number of women-led technology start-ups. Funding for gender and intersectional research will also be made available.



There will also be funding opportunities to increase women's entrepreneurship knowledge and participation in decision-making and to invest in basic services development in rural areas under the **Common Agricultural Policy**, and a new call dedicated to women in the 'blue economy'<sup>81</sup> to be launched as part of the next **European Maritime and Fisheries Fund** for 2021-2027.

An Inclusion and Diversity Strategy for the future **Erasmus+ programme** will provide guidance on how the programme can help addressing gender inequalities in all education and training, youth and sport sectors.

The Commission's guidance on **socially responsible public procurement** will fight discrimination and promote gender equality in public tenders.

In line with repeated calls by several Member States and the European Parliament<sup>82</sup>, the Commission will look at the ex-ante gender impact of its activities and at how to measure expenditure related to gender equality at programme level in the **2021-2027 multi-annual financial framework (MFF)**. The outcome of the recently launched audit by the European Court of Auditors **on gender mainstreaming in the EU budget** to promote equality will contribute to this process. This will improve gender mainstreaming in the Commission's budget process, thereby further increasing the contribution made by policy design and resource allocation to gender equality objectives.

## 6. Addressing gender equality and women's empowerment across the world

Gender inequality is a **global problem**. It negatively impacts diverse areas such as peace, security and sustainable development. **Gender equality and women's empowerment is a core objective of EU external action**. It is important that the EU's internal and external actions in this field are coherent and mutually reinforce each other. The EU promotes gender equality and women's empowerment in its international partnerships, humanitarian aid, political and human

<sup>81</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/jrc/en/news/how-big-eus-blue-economy-eu-report-potential-coasts-and-oceans-provide-sustainable-economic-growth>

<sup>82</sup> [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2014\\_2019/plmrep/COMMITTEES/FEMM/DV/2018/09-03/20180828DraftResolutionGenderBudgetingIntheEUBudget-thewayforward\\_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2014_2019/plmrep/COMMITTEES/FEMM/DV/2018/09-03/20180828DraftResolutionGenderBudgetingIntheEUBudget-thewayforward_EN.pdf)

Ändrad fältkod

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rights dialogues with third countries, and in its trade policy around the world. Gender equality is also a priority in the EU's enlargement policy, including in the context of accession negotiations and the Stabilisation and Association Process, and in the European Neighbourhood Policy.

The **action plan on gender equality and women's empowerment in external relations (2016-2020)** (GAPII)<sup>83</sup> focuses on ending violence against women and girls, promoting women's economic and social empowerment and ensuring the fulfilment of their human, political and civil rights. Building on the achievements and lessons learned, **GAP III will be launched in 2020**, with a comprehensive approach, and will be coherent with the priorities of this strategy through integrating all its relevant elements to the EU's external action.

The EU will continue supporting women's human rights defenders, sexual and reproductive health and rights, and efforts to curb sexual and gender-based violence throughout the world, including in fragile, conflict and emergency situations. The EU initiated the **Spotlight Initiative**, a joint EU-UN global programme with an overall EU allocation of EUR 500 million to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls. The EU will launch a **campaign #WithHer** in 2020, designed to challenge harmful gender norms and stereotypes, which perpetuate violence against women worldwide. The EU will adopt the **EU Action plan on human rights and democracy (2020-2024)**. It will also continue to implement the **EU Strategic Approach and Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security 2019-2024**.

In developing, enlargement and neighbourhood countries, the EU will make use of the **External Investment Plan** to promote women's entrepreneurship and labour market participation. For instance, the Women's Financial Inclusion Facility alone aims to leverage EUR 100 million for women's access to finance. The **EU Strategy with Africa** in 2020 will also focus on gender equality and women's empowerment.

**In the EU's external policies, gender mainstreaming is used in the budget process** through the commitment of ensuring that 85% of all new programmes contribute to gender equality and women's empowerment<sup>84</sup>.

## WORKING TOGETHER FOR A GENDER-EQUAL EUROPE

**Achieving gender equality by 2025 is a joint undertaking.** It requires teaming up and acting by all EU institutions, Member States and EU agencies, in partnership with civil society and women's organisations, social partners and the private sector.

The key actions presented in this strategy will be regularly updated and supplemented, their implementation will be monitored and progress, including examples of practice in the Member States, will be reported on an annual basis. The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) will continue to release the EU Gender Equality Index, on an annual basis. EIGE will provide data and research to feed into the evidence-based policy-making of EU institutions and Member States.

**Kommenterad [RL(4)]:** Also to reference to Future of Europe is completely out?  
Indeed lack of monitoring/indicators might raise concern with MS, who have been calling for this.

<sup>83</sup> <https://europa.eu/capacity4dev/articles/eu-gender-action-plan-ii-how-eu-delegations-contribute-gender-equality-worldwide>

<sup>84</sup> The measurement is done according to the OECD Gender Equality Policy Marker. Specifically for humanitarian aid, the Commission applies its own humanitarian Gender-Age marker.

Working together, the EU and Member States need to deepen their engagement with civil society, including women's movements and organisations, international organisations, and governments, and continue being global leaders and partners on gender equality.

The Commission calls on the European Parliament<sup>85</sup> and the Council<sup>86</sup> to take forward their work on the existing and forthcoming Commission proposals in a timely manner. Member States should use all the tools at their disposal, in particular the possibilities offered for EU financial support and ensure the improvement in gender equality.

**Working together, we can make real progress towards gender equality by 2025**

Kommenterad [RL(5): Need for punchy ending

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<sup>85</sup> Recent resolutions of the European Parliament on gender equality include: European Parliament resolution [2019/2870\(RSP\)](#) of 30 January 2020 on the gender pay gap; European Parliament resolution [2019/2855\(RSP\)](#) of 28 November 2019 on the EU's accession to the Istanbul Convention and other measures to combat gender-based violence; European Parliament resolution [2016/2249\(INI\)](#) of 14 March 2017 on equality between women and men in the European Union in 2014-2015.

<sup>86</sup> Recent Council Conclusions on gender equality include: Council Conclusions of 24 October 2019 on The Economy of Wellbeing; Council Conclusions of 29 June 2019 on Closing the Gender Pay Gap: Key Policies and Measures.