



YUSTE FOUNDATION
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EnEnWomen

Encouraging Women Participation in Times of Pandemic

The European Union and Gender Equality

Equality between women and men is one of the European Union's founding values. It goes back to 1957 when the principle of equal pay for work of equal value became part of the Treaty of Rome. Over the past few decades, the EU has notably worked for:

- Equal treatment legislation;
- Gender mainstreaming (integration of a gender perspective into all policies);
- Specific measures for the advancement of women.

Achievements in gender equality

Although inequalities still exist, the EU has made significant progress in gender equality over the last decades. This is the result of

- **equal treatment legislation**
- **gender mainstreaming, integration of the gender perspective into all other policies**
- **specific measures for the advancement of women**

Encouraging trends are the higher number of women in the labour market and their progress in securing better education and training.

However, gender gaps remain and in the labour market women are still over-represented in lower paid sectors and under-represented in decision-making positions.

2020-2025

With the renewal of the EU institutions following the European elections in 2019, the issue of gender equality made it back on to the political agenda with strong support from the **first-ever female Commission President, Ursula von der Leyen**, and the creation of a dedicated Commissioner for Equality, Helena Dalli. In her political guidelines for the European Union, Von der Leyen indicated **that “equality for all and equality in all its senses” was one of the major priorities of her Commission.**

On 5 March 2020, the European Commission published “A Union of Equality: Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025”, as one of a series of EU initiatives and strategies concerning equality, diversity and inclusion that the Commission will adopt and enact as part of delivering on its headline ambitions “A stronger Europe in the world” and “A new push for European democracy”.

President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, said:

“Gender equality is a core principle of the European Union, but it is not yet a reality. In business, politics and society as a whole, we can only reach our full potential if we use all of our talent and diversity. Using only half of the population, half of the ideas or half of the energy is not good enough. With the Gender Equality Strategy, we are pushing for more and faster progress to promote equality between men and women.”

The European Commission's proposed 2020-2025 Gender Equality Strategy aims at "achieving a gender equal Europe 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, are equal." It is structured around six themes:

- *Being free from violence and stereotypes*
- *Thriving in a gender-equal economy*
- *Leading equally throughout society*
- *Gender mainstreaming and an intersectional perspective in EU policies*
- *Funding actions to make progress in gender equality in the EU*
- *Addressing gender equality and women's empowerment across the world*

A dual approach will be taken in implementing the Strategy that combines gender mainstreaming with specific targeted actions to achieve gender equality. It is also the first time that an EU Strategy aims to integrate an intersectional perspective in its implementation.

Gender Equality Strategy Factsheet – Striving for a Union of Equality: The Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025

CONCRETE ACTIONS FOR EQUALITY 2020-2025

No EU Member State has so far achieved equality between women and men. The progress is slow while gender gaps persist in employment, pay, care and pensions. To bridge those gaps and allow Europe to reach its full potential in business, politics and society, the strategy outlines a set of key actions including: ending gender-based violence and stereotypes; ensuring equal participation and opportunities in the labour market, including equal pay; and achieving gender-balance in decision-making and politics.

1. In the EU 33% of women were subjected to physical and/or sexual violence, while 55% were sexually harassed.

Women in Europe must be **free** from violence and harmful stereotypes. To achieve this, the Strategy calls for **legal measures to criminalise violence against women**. The Commission intends in particular to extend the areas of crime where harmonisation is possible across Europe to specific forms of violence against women, including sexual harassment, abuse of women and female genital mutilation. In addition, the Commission will propose the Digital Services Act to clarify what measures are expected from platforms to address illegal activities online, including online violence targeting women.

2. Women in the EU earn on average 16% less than men and they still experience barriers to access and remain at the labour market.

Gender equality is an essential condition for an innovative, competitive and thriving European economy. Given demographic challenges and green and digital transitions, supporting women to find jobs in sectors with skills shortages, in particular technology and AI sectors, will have a positive impact on Europe's economy.

To address the unequal pay the Commission launches today a **public consultation on pay transparency** and will table binding measures by the end of 2020. To allow women to thrive in the labour market, the Commission will also redouble efforts to enforce EU standards on work-life balance to enable real choice for women and men to develop equally both personally and professionally. Gender equality in context of labour market, social inclusion and education dimensions, will continue to be monitored through the European Semester.

3. Women remain underrepresented in leading positions, including EU's largest companies where only 8% of CEOs are women.

To let women **lead** in business, among others, the Commission will push for the adoption of the 2012 proposal for gender balance on corporate boards. The Commission will also promote women's participation in politics, including in the 2024 European Parliament elections, including through funding and sharing best practice. To lead by example, the Commission will strive to reach gender balance of 50% at all levels of its management by the end of 2024.

4. Integrating a gender perspective in all EU policies

Under the lead of Commissioner for Equality, Helena Dalli, and with support of the newly created Task-Force on Equality, the Commission will also integrate a gender perspective in all EU policies and major initiatives, also known as gender mainstreaming. The core challenges affecting the EU today, including the climate and digital transformations, have a gender dimension. The Gender Equality Strategy objectives will also be reflected in EU's actions around the world, promoting women empowerment and tackling gender-based violence.

For More Information

Communication – A Union of Equality: Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025

Factsheet – Striving for a Union of Equality

Public consultation on pay transparency

Open call for proposals on closing gender gaps - deadline 1 April 2020

Open call for proposals to prevent and combat all forms of violence against children, young people and women - deadline 1 April 2020

European Institute for Gender Equality