

The European Institute for Gender Equality's first-ever Gender Equality Forum on 24 and 25 October 2022 left us with a wealth of new knowledge, content, and inspiration.

This repository of knowledge – which is now available in full on EIGE's website and YouTube channel – captured a moment in time that will have enduring impact on the future of gender equality. This will help us pave the way for our next #3StepsForward.

Nevertheless, conversations on gender equality go beyond the Forum. The day that we stop having these conversations, we will know that we have reached full gender equality. Until then, there is still work to do.

With voices from the youth, EU and national policy makers, academia, social media giants, civil society members, the media, together we can cut through the noise and offer fresh and on the ground perspectives, establishing where we stand now, and where we need to go in the future. This Chair Statement captures some of the key highlights of the Forum. It is not an exhaustive summary.

In the run up to the next Gender Equality Forum in 2024, EIGE's activities and indeed we hope all of our key stakeholders' activities will be inspired by the wide-ranging contributions from our participants during the Forum as a matter of strategic priority.

We look forward to continuing our collective work on reaching a gender equal Europe.

**Carlien Scheele, Chair of the Forum**



## Key facts about the forum



16 engaging sessions

70+ speakers

500 in-person and virtual participants

2000 viewers on the days of the event

## The importance of data collection and intersectionality

The [Gender Equality Index 2022](#) revealed that gender equality is under threat with specific groups hardest hit in the fallout of the pandemic. That is why gender sensitive data is key to closing gender gaps. However, in practice, limited data availability is a huge challenge, and in some policy areas, quality data does not exist. Even when gender statistics is available, often it does not allow intersections beyond two categories, such as age, migrant background, and disability. This means we are not able to make the variety of lived realities of women and men, girls and boys visible. Many intersecting inequalities remain unrecognised.

Without data, inequalities remain invisible and are not addressed in policymaking. We need reliable, robust, and comprehensive data to guide and direct our resources to those who need it most – those who fall through the cracks, those that can't be easily categorised by traditional systems, and those who have historically been underrepresented in our societies.

Our panel on the role of data and evidence for inclusive policymaking left us with three clear steps forward.

1. We must standardise and systematise data collection at Member State and EU level.
2. We must join forces to bring intersectionality into quantitative data, qualitative data, and research design.
3. We must include civil society organisations as part of the process.

EIGE will continue to strengthen its collection of high quality and comparable data to capture the extent of gender inequalities as a necessary step to understand all lived realities.

## Where crisis and gender-based violence meet

When conflict breaks out, women's agency over their bodies and mind almost becomes the first frontier of this conflict. This isn't a new discovery. Throughout history, we see a thread linking crisis, in whatever form it takes, and an increase in gender-based violence. In a world seemingly stuck in an endless cycle of crises, women have been left behind to bear this load alone. Despite this knowledge, EIGE's study on Covid-19 and intimate partner violence against women found that when the crisis hit, none of the EU Member States had a strategy in place to address the inevitable spikes in gender-based violence.

But we have the tools to put a stop to this vicious circle. We have the information. We continue to build indicators and monitor the situation of gender-based violence. It is a matter of priority in EIGE's work. Harmonised data is a crucial foundation for preparation in ending gender-based violence.



Our panel during the Forum stressed that we can act now to prevent the harm, to lessen the burden. We can harmonise all policies and legislation across Europe. We can make sure that all EU countries ratify and implement the Istanbul Convention, the gold standard for protecting victims, for integrating laws, and for preventing, prosecuting, and monitoring gender-based violence. We can bring a gendered perspective into decision-making roles so that gender-based violence policies are adopted therefore giving women a voice. We also need men to support gender equality. Only with their active engagement against gender stereotypes can we eliminate gender-based violence.

“Collect the data, build the indicators on GBV, monitor the situation closely – not only during the crisis, but also before and after it. Reflect on how we understand “preparedness”. From my perspective, preparedness is a strong focus on meaningful protection for victims”.

*Cristina Fabre Rosell, EIGE*

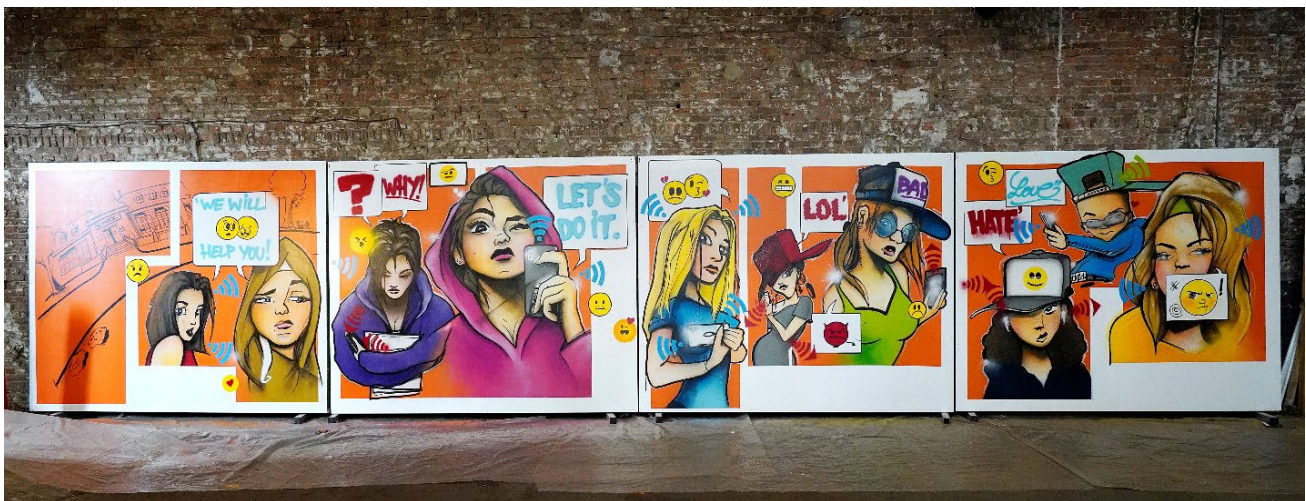
## Cyber violence against women and girls is a unique form of violence

Cyber violence against women and girls (CVAWG) is not a novel issue. However, it is evolving alongside advancements in technology. EIGE's report on 'Combating cyber violence against women and girls' pivots on the importance of making the distinction between online and offline gender-based violence as well as the continuum between the two.

Our panel at the Forum revealed that the challenges facing CVAWG are unique. Digital technology tools – such as Bluetooth, Wi-Fi, GPS - lead to different impacts and harm compared to violence against women in the offline world. We must acknowledge however, that there is a continuum of violence from the digital world to the physical world and vice versa. Comparable data is still diluted and scarce when it comes to CVAWG. Available data point to the reality that more women and girls are likely to experience repeated forms of abuse online and sustain more severe physical, psychological, and emotional consequences.

CVAWG plays an important role in worsening an existing problem: the gender digital gap. It has an impact on women's confidence and access to digital technologies and hinders the development of digital skills.

EIGE's report stresses the need for harmonised definitions on the various forms of CVAWG and for a gender dimension in data collection and crime statistics for CVAWG. Understanding CVAWG as a distinctive form of violence, characterised by the use of ICT means, enables specific policies, measures and legislation to combat it.



The evolving nature of CVAWG lends much scope for further monitoring and evaluation and EIGE is planning to continue its work in this area and to engage with partners.

- “Remaining silent or neutral about cyber violence is not a viable option”.  
*Thordis Elva, Nordic Digital Rights and Equality Foundation*
- “What we notice is that women politicians are especially subject to violence online. [...] And that also the word lesbian is often de-prioritized on social media. [...] The fact that the word lesbian is often associated with pornography makes our voice less impactful”.  
*Audience member*

## The cost of care

The data is clear. From an economic perspective, EU countries need to attract more women into the labour market. And one of the ways they can unlock this potential is the unsolved question of care. Women in the EU and across the world shoulder a disproportionate care burden. This prevents them from choosing to work a full-time job, hindering their career options, settling for stereotypical choices and resulting in wider gender pay and pension gaps.

But there is a way forward. We need to start valuing care. We need to make massive investments in the formal care system, through EU funding mechanisms or through the guidance of the European Care Strategy. We need to make working in the care sector attractive to all women and men by improving working conditions and wages. We need to balance the share of informal care women take up at home and strengthen formal care services by making quality care affordable and accessible. Massive investments in the formal care system are needed.

At the Forum, our discussion on care crystallised three steps forward to equally balance the informal care load.

1. We need to earmark parental leave so both parents can take equal leave for childcare. This will help close the gender pay gap and tackle unfair treatment in the workplace.
2. We need to consider paying carers who take up informal care such as long-term care for frail family members.
3. We need to pay special attention to children's emotional and social skills - especially boys - from kindergarten on helping develop their caring skills both in their private life and in their career choices.

## The green and digital transition

The European Green Deal is a primary focus for EIGE's strategic priorities in 2023. Gender equality remains a marginalised part of the wider efforts in successful transitioning into a green and digital Europe. We know that women and girls are left out of key transformations – due to engrained gender stereotypes, gender gaps in the science, technology, engineering, and maths (STEM) fields as well as in decision making roles.

How can everyone be better represented and benefit from the twin challenges and opportunities of the green and digital transitions? Gender mainstreaming. This means integrating a gender equality perspective at all stages of the policy cycle.

Women – in all their skills, innovation and diversity – can help shape a modern reality. That is why we need to include women during the green and digital transitions.

The future is in the hands of the youth. That's why we owe it to young people to offer a world worth living in.

EIGE's work for 2023 is clear-cut in this regard. We will focus on the European Green Deal with a strong emphasis on its intersection with gender equality.

“We need to make the mobility structure more sustainable, but also make the mobility transport more gender-sensitive to make it a better sector for women to work”.  
*Katharina Wiese – Policy Officer European Environmental Bureau*

“The green perspective will be benefitting from women builders because they see different problems that might be missed out. That is the beauty of diversity”.  
*Monika Katkute Gelzine – CEO Teachers Lead Tech*

“We need a rights-based approach in policies, which includes gender-mainstreaming”.  
*Panagiotis Chatzimichail – Board Member European Youth Forum*

## Conclusions

Learning is grounded in knowledge exchange and experience sharing. Achieving gender equality is a movement – not a moment. We have to communicate gender equality with a hope-based approach to maintain the momentum. Leading through the right language, using effective platforms and creating coalitions – as explored throughout the sessions with multiplate organisations – is how we will activate and mobilise people to move to our common goal.

With our path paved during the Forum, we will now take the next #3StepsForward into the next year.

As Chair of the Gender Equality Forum, these are my commitments for EIGE's future work:



1. We are stronger when we work together. We need to continue to reach out beyond our echo chambers, to combine our forces, to share new ideas and perspectives with each other. We are all working towards the same goal, but each of us has something unique and important to contribute. By looking through the eyes of others, and combining forces with sometimes 'unexpected allies', we can find new ways to develop powerful policies for a gender-equal Europe.
2. We need to fill information gaps. We need evidence to draw attention to problems, to find solutions, and to make sure nobody is overlooked. We need to support further standardisation and systematisation of gender-sensitive data. We need to work with partners beyond our individual fields to gather data on intersecting inequalities. By doing this, we can ensure that no one is left behind in our fight for gender equality for all.
3. It's not women who need to be fixed. It's not people that need to be fixed. We need to fix the systems that perpetuate gender inequalities throughout our societies. We cannot lose sight of this bigger picture.

### European Institute for Gender Equality

The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) is the EU knowledge centre on gender equality. EIGE supports policymakers and all relevant institutions in their efforts to make equality between women and men a reality for all Europeans by providing them with specific expertise and comparable and reliable data on gender equality in Europe.

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