

# Gender Equality Index 2019. Work-life balance

## Foreword

With a freshly elected European Parliament and a new term for the European Commission, the time is ripe to take stock of progress and consolidate gender equality priorities for the years ahead. The European Union (EU) cannot afford to stall now. Gender equality must be placed at the heart of the next multiannual financial framework to foster a more inclusive and cohesive EU.

EIGE's Gender Equality Index shows that advances in gender equality are still moving at a snail's pace, but we are heading in the right direction. There are big improvements in the domain of power, as more women are taking on decision-making positions, especially in company boardrooms across Europe.

In the private sphere, the unequal sharing of cleaning, cooking and caring responsibilities has hardly changed. The bulk of this unpaid work continues to fall on women. That makes it harder for them to juggle work and personal life, which impacts on their earning potential and the well-being of the women themselves and the people closest to them.

The topic of work–life balance affects both women and men and is a top priority for the EU. This is why we chose it as this year's thematic focus of the Index. It is a new feature that we are introducing, and each year the Index will take an in-depth look at an emerging policy issue that matters for gender equality. We are happy to announce that from now on, the Index will be updated on an annual basis, making it even more up to date and responsive to emerging challenges.

As always, the Gender Equality Index sets a benchmark for gender equality in the EU. It shows which Member State is the closest to gender equality, which has improved the most and which has the furthest way to go. The Index measures the success of policy measures and initiatives, designed to create more gender-equal societies. Its value lies in its capacity to guide decision-makers towards their goal for a more balanced and inclusive society that improves the lives of everyone in the EU.

On behalf of the Institute, I would like to thank all the institutions and experts who contributed to this edition of the Gender Equality Index.

I would like to especially thank EIGE's working group on the Gender Equality Index and all researchers who supported our work on work–life balance; the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound); the European Commission, in particular the Gender Equality Unit at the Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers, and Eurostat; and my colleagues at EIGE.

Virginija Langbakk  
Director  
European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE)