

Poverty and gender over the life cycle: Review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action



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Almost one in four people in the EU live at risk of poverty or social exclusion. Living conditions, poverty levels and pathways into and out of poverty are different for women and men and also vary across the span of a person's life. Young people (18-24) make up 10 % of all poor in the EU. While the risk of poverty or social exclusion does not differ much for women and men at this stage of life, women are clearly paying the price of gender inequalities at an older age. They are at a much higher risk of poverty or social exclusion than older men.

Tackling poverty over the life course

The eradication of poverty and social exclusion is an integral part of the Europe 2020 strategy. The commitment with 2020 has been 20 million people out of poverty by 2020. However, Member States face challenges in meeting this target. The number of people living in poverty has in fact increased since 2010.

Women in general are at a higher risk of poverty in all age groups. Due to the longer of their lives they receive lower income than men, are more likely to work in low paid and insecure jobs and take care of more family and social responsibilities. These risks are multiplied (especially for women) by economic stagnation and a higher risk of poverty, which is more prevalent in old age. This is particularly concerning, as women make up most of the ageing population across the EU.

The life course perspective recognises the link ages between different stages in a person's life and considers how life events and trends build on each other to influence each individual stage.

EU policies acknowledge the impact that cumulative inequalities have on older women's risk of poverty and economic independence. The European Commission has taken important steps to reduce gender pay gaps, also targeted Member States for actions, promote higher standards of part-time work and identify the earnings gap, gender, as these continue to be important policy intervention points. These policy initiatives show that reaching a life course and gender perspective in all stages of policymaking is essential for making quality between women and men existing in the EU more equitable.

What does it mean to be poor in the EU?

Poverty among women and men goes beyond a simple lack of resources for individual and family life. It includes lack of full social protection and other social support, limited opportunities for political engagement and social mobility. Within the Europe 2020 framework, the concept of risk of poverty or social exclusion (RPSE) refers to living in a household where at least one of these situations:

- Being at risk of becoming homeless
- Being severely materially deprived
- Living in households with very low work intensity

Young people in the EU face the highest risk of poverty

Overlooking young people can have striking impacts in the EU today, around one fifth of young people (16 to 24) are children below the age of 16. This is considered to be a critical period for young people to gain financial stability.

Young economies have been particularly affected by the economic crisis, and consequently face the highest risk of poverty in the EU in 2014. About a third of youth aged 16 to 24 were at risk of poverty or social exclusion, with women slightly more at risk.

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Metadata

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