

# Stakeholders

## Social Partners

European social partners – the [European Trade Union Confederation \(ETUC\)](#), [BusinessEurope](#), the [European Association of Craft, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises \(UEAPME\)](#) and the [European Centre of Employers and Enterprises Providing Public Services \(CEEP\)](#) – are key stakeholders in European social dialogue, working in a number of specific policy areas at European level. They are strongly committed to enhancing gender equality in the labour market and workplace.

The [Framework of Actions on Gender Equality](#) is a prime example of the type of actions put forward by the European social partners. The framework sets out four priority areas for action: addressing gender roles; promoting women in decision-making; supporting work–life balance; and tackling the gender pay gap. In 2014 the Social Partners launched an online '[Toolkit for gender equality in practice](#)', to promote a selection of successful initiatives showing how the organisations' members aim to achieve their common goals.

The ETUC has its Women's Committee, established in 1975, which comprises experts working in the field of gender equality from all of the national affiliates. The committee adopts positions on issues relating to equality between women and men and monitors the implementation of gender mainstreaming in the policies of the ETUC.

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## Civil society

Among the conditions for the effective implementation of gender mainstreaming, the BPfA identifies the involvement of civil society such as centres for women's studies and research, academic and educational institutions, the private sector, the media, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) – especially women's organisations – and all other actors of civil society.

There are already institutionalised advisory bodies established especially to assist the Commission, the Parliament and the Council, namely the [European Economic and Social Committee \(EESC\)](#) and the [Committee of the Regions \(CoR\)](#). The EESC contributes to strengthening the democratic legitimacy and effectiveness of the EU by enabling civil society organisations from the Member States to express their views at European level. It helps to ensure that European policies and legislation tie in better with economic, social and civic circumstances on the ground, by assisting the European Parliament, Council and Commission and making use of EESC members' experience and representativeness, dialogue and efforts to secure consensus serving the general interest.

Besides the institutionalised advisory bodies of the EU, the European Commission interacts with civil society through less formalised direct contacts with interested parties.

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## **EU Consultation mechanisms**

The Commission has a long tradition of consulting interested parties from outside when formulating its policies. It incorporates external consultation into the development of almost all its policy areas. [Consultation mechanisms](#) form part of the activities of all EU institutions throughout the whole legislative process, from policy-shaping prior to a Commission proposal to final adoption of a measure by the legislature and implementation. According to the Commission, 'civil society plays an important role in giving voice to the concerns of the citizens and delivering services that meet people's needs. ... Civil society increasingly sees Europe as offering a good platform to change policy orientations and society. ... It is a real chance to get citizens more actively involved in achieving the Union's objectives and to offer them a structured channel for feedback, criticism and protest.'

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EUROPEAN WOMEN'S  
**LOBBY**  
EUROPEEN DES FEMMES

The [European Women's Lobby \(EWL\)](#) is the

largest umbrella organisation of women's associations in the EU working to promote women's rights and equality between women and men. EWL membership extends to organisations in all 28 EU Member States and the three candidate countries, as well as to 20 European-wide bodies, representing a total of more than 2,000 organisations. EWL was founded in 1990 with 12 national members' organisations and it has become one of the oldest and best established European-level civil society organisations.