

Gender Budgeting

Ensuring gender relevance in EU Funds

Equality between women and men is recognised by the EU as a fundamental principle, a core value of the EU and a necessary condition for the achievement of the EU objectives of growth, employment and social cohesion.

Since 1996, the Commission has committed itself to a **'dual approach'** towards achieving gender equality. This approach involves mainstreaming a gender perspective in all policies, while also implementing specific measures to eliminate, prevent or remedy gender inequalities. Both approaches go hand in hand and one cannot replace the other. Gender mainstreaming is not a policy goal in itself, but a means to achieve gender equality. Gender equality is enshrined in overarching EU legal and policy documents (see Annex 2) and in the SDGs.

In addition to the overall legal and policy documents, the communication **'A Union of Equality: EU gender equality strategy 2020–2025'**^[1] sets out the policy objectives and key actions for 2020–2025. The strategy highlights that the EU cohesion policy supports women's entrepreneurship, their (re)integration into the labour market and gender equality in specific, traditionally male, sectors. The **European Pillar of Social Rights**^[2] is structured around the three categories of equal opportunities and access to the labour market (including 'key principle 2: gender equality'), fair working conditions, social protection and inclusion.

The pillar sets out three specific EU-level targets to be reached by 2030 in the areas of employment, skills and social protection, and defines specific actions in its action plan. Linking these elements to the implementation of the 2021–2027 EU Funds, especially the ESF+, is meant to support the implementation of the EU gender equality strategy and the European Pillar of Social Rights. Furthermore, with its gender equality strategy, the Commission is committed to looking 'at the gender impact of its activities and **at how to measure expenditures related to gender equality at programme level in the 2021–2027 MFF [multiannual financial framework]**^[3].

To further support the policy direction of the EU funding programmes under the 2021–2027 MFF, the CPR^[4] sets out common rules for EU shared management funds, including **horizontal principles**. These include gender equality as ‘Member States and the Commission shall ensure that equality between men and women, gender mainstreaming and the integration of a gender perspective are taken into account and promoted throughout the preparation, implementation, monitoring, reporting and evaluation of programmes’ (Regulation (EU) 2021/1060, Article 9(2)).

In addition, for the ESF+^[5], **specific programme objectives** have been set to support actions to promote women’s labour market participation and work-life balance, invest in care facilities, support female entrepreneurship, combat gender segregation in certain professions and address the imbalanced representation of girls and boys in some sectors of education and training (Regulation (EU) 2021/1057, Article 4(1)(c) and (f)). Moreover, under the ESF+, Member States shall support specific targeted actions to promote this principle (Regulation (EU) 2021/1057, Article 6)^[6].

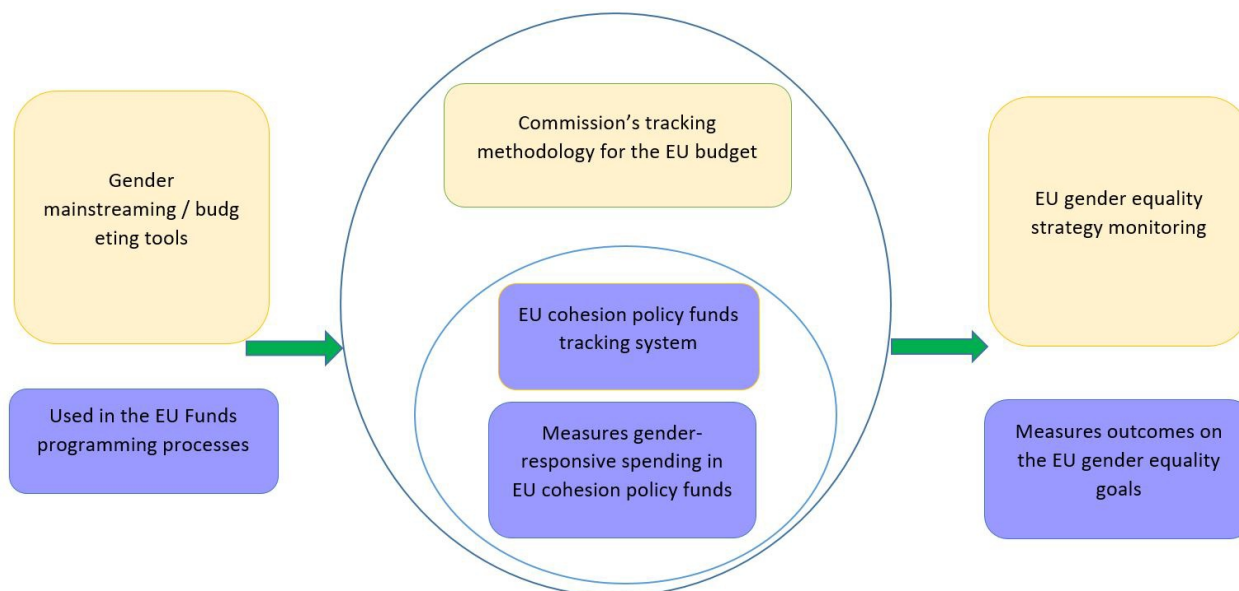
In the programming under the EU cohesion policy Member States are to select interventions and develop programmes that will address key EU gender policy objectives and key actions for the funding period. This is facilitated by the use of the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) gender budgeting toolkit and its 11 tools^[7] for the EU Funds.

It is essential to select interventions and develop operations that have gender equality as their main target, while also gender mainstreaming all other programmes. The use of commonly agreed gender mainstreaming tools^[8] in project design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation would facilitate this process. The dual approach is necessary to effectively promote gender equality and combat discrimination as set out in the EU gender equality strategy and the SDGs.

As the tracking system’s ultimate goal is to contribute to effective gender equality across the EU cohesion policy programmes, it will track the application of gender mainstreaming tools at programme level and the selection of interventions and operations that will address the EU’s thematic gender equality priorities. Outcomes towards the gender equality strategy objectives will be measured at EU level through the gender equality strategy monitoring portal^[9] and the annual report on equality between women and men.

Other monitoring instruments such as EIGE's Gender Equality Index^[10] or Gender Statistics Database^[11] will also help to serve this purpose. The role of the tracking system is illustrated below. It is put in place to ensure the rigorous use of gender mainstreaming tools and to follow the application of the dual approach with the aim of implementing the EU's thematic gender equality priorities.

Figure 1. Role of the EU cohesion policy funds tracking system



Footnotes

[1] <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52020DC0152> and https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/aid_development_cooperation_fundamental_rights/gender_equality_strategy_factsheet_en.pdf

[2] https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/economy-works-people/jobs-growth-and-investment/european-pillar-social-rights/european-pillar-social-rights-action-plan_en

[3] <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52020DC0152> p. 17 and https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/aid_development_cooperation_fundamental_rights/gender_equality_strategy_factsheet_en.pdf

[4] <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32021R1060&from=EN>

[5] <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32021R1057&q...>

[6] See note 11.

[7] <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/toolkits/gender-budgeting>

[8] <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/what-is-gender-mainstreaming>

[9] <https://composite-indicators.jrc.ec.europa.eu/ges-monitor>

[10] <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index/2021>

[11] <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-statistics/dgs>