

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 downturn 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 across different stages in a person's life and considers how EU targets and funds build on each other to support each individual stage.

EU policies acknowledge the impact that turbulence in markets has on older women's risk of poverty and economic independence. The European Commission has taken important steps to reduce the gender pay gap. It has also invited Member States to address women's higher probability of part-time work and identify the earnings gap, gender, as these can have a detrimental effect on pension entitlements. These policy initiatives show that reaching a life-long and gender parity in all stages of job-earning is essential for making equality between women and men a reality in the EU area.

What does it mean to be poor in the EU?

Poverty among women and men goes beyond a basic level of income for physical and material needs. It encompasses the ability to participate in society as well as 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

Over half of young people in the EU today are at risk of poverty (10 % of all children below the age of 18). This is considered to be one of the most serious social policy challenges.

Young economies and men 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 18 to 24 were at risk of poverty or social exclusion, with women slightly more at risk.

© The content of all the data presented in this document is based on the Eurostat 2014 survey data on income and social conditions.

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Metadata

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