



European Institute for
Gender Equality

EIGE's Contribution to the Call for Evidence

Union of Equality: 2026-2030 Gender Equality Strategy



An EU Agency

Contents

Background.....	3
Gender equality in the EU – State of play.....	4
I. Thriving in a gender-equal and inclusive economy	4
II. Providing gender-responsive social protection and services.....	6
III. Eradicating Gender-Based Violence, stigma and stereotypes.....	8
IV. Fostering parity democracy, accountability and gender-responsive institutions.....	10
V. Shaping a digital transformation that promotes gender equality.....	12
VI. Advancing a socially fair green transition that leaves no woman or girl behind	15
VII. Achieving peaceful and inclusive societies and advancing gender equality across the world	17
VIII. Gender mainstreaming	18
Framework of the next Gender Equality Strategy.....	20



Background

The European Institute for Gender Equality (hereafter referred to as 'EIGE') is a decentralised agency of the European Union, established to contribute to and strengthen the promotion of gender equality, including gender mainstreaming in EU policies and the resulting national policies by providing technical assistance to EU institutions, in particular the Commission, and the authorities of the Member States. The Agency also aims to raise EU citizens' awareness of gender equality. EIGE has become the knowledge centre and the primary source for information on gender equality in the European Union. EIGE contributes to making the European Union become a Union of Equality, where women and men, girls and boys in all their diversity are free to pursue their chosen path in life, have equal opportunities to thrive, and can equally participate in and lead our societies.



EIGE's gender equality work and gender mainstreaming approach recognise the differences between women and men ('lived realities') and how lived realities due to gender inequalities are affected by other characteristics such as age, socioeconomic situation, disability, race, ethnicity, religion, country of origin, urban or rural location, family situation, sexual orientation or gender identity ('in their diversity'). EIGE's approach and work reflects the complexity of gender inequalities across multiple and intersecting experiences. Among other tasks, the Agency collects and analyses data on gender equality from an intersectional perspective and develops methods to improve gender statistics and data collections, amongst other main objectives.

Building a 'Union of Equality' was confirmed as a priority in President von der Leyen's [Political Guidelines 2024-2029](#) and the [Mission letter to the Commissioner for equality, preparedness and crisis management](#). Even though gender equality is at the heart of just and democratic societies, gender inequalities persist across the EU and backlash against women's rights is increasing globally. In March 2025, the Commission set out its long-term vision and key principles for the full realisation of women's rights in a [Roadmap for women's rights](#). The future gender equality strategy, announced in the Political Guidelines, aims to make further progress towards a gender-equal Europe and promote gender equality globally, thereby taking key steps at the EU level to turn the Roadmap's long-term vision into reality. Building on the progress achieved under the [2020-2025 gender equality strategy](#), the new strategy will also align with other relevant EU initiatives, strategies and action plans being developed in this mandate. EIGE is providing expertise and evidence to inform [the key EU policies from a gender perspective](#).

EIGE's contribution to this call for evidence builds on findings from several of its reports, most notably the recently published [Beijing Platform for Action +30: Impact Driver – Marking Milestones and Opportunities for Gender Equality in the EU](#), as well as insights from a consultation workshop with the Commission, DG JUST held in early May 2025. It also incorporates input gathered through consultations EIGE had with a range of stakeholders, including civil society organisations and social partners. Additionally, it reflects priorities identified through [EIGE's strategic foresight work](#) on emerging gender equality challenges.

Gender equality in the EU – State of play

I. Thriving in a gender-equal and inclusive economy

a. Main challenges

Investing in gender equality across different economic sectors is essential for unlocking the EU's full growth potential and building a more resilient, future-ready economy. Closing gender gaps in employment and pay, improving access to affordable and quality care, and ensuring equal opportunities in leadership could unlock significant untapped potential in the EU labour market.

Despite ongoing efforts, gender equality in the economy remains far from reality. While women's formal employment has reached record highs, a 10-percentage point gap persisted in 2024 between women and men aged 20–64. This gap is even wider among groups in disadvantaged situations: Roma women, for example, had an employment rate of just 28%, compared to 58% for Roma men⁽¹⁾. Women are also more likely to work part-time across Member States, often due to lack of services and gendered expectations around caregiving and domestic responsibilities. These roles and insufficient institutional support lead to time poverty, forcing many women to reduce working hours, leave paid work, or drop out of education which limit their financial independence, career growth, and contributes to the gender pay and pension gaps. Accessing care services remains challenging for many caregivers. For example, every third long term care (LTC) carer is unable to afford formal care services or services are not available. Evidence shows that of various work-life balance measures, the provision of subsidised care services has the most significant impact on reducing gender inequalities in employment⁽²⁾.

Stereotypes shape not only time use but also study and career choices. This contributes to labour market segregation. Once employed, women often face unwelcoming workplace cultures ("chilly climate")⁽³⁾, limited advancement opportunities ("sticky floor"), and barriers to leadership roles ("glass ceiling")⁽⁴⁾. These challenges are particularly visible in key sectors like ICT and the green economy, with women specialists making up only 20% and 30% of workers respectively. Gaps in entrepreneurship, leadership, and decision-making persist, especially in economic and political spheres.

These issues are compounded by structural challenges including declining birth rates, ageing populations, shrinking workforces, and pension pressures, all of which disproportionately impact women. Public spending cuts further strain care systems, pushing more unpaid care work onto women.



⁽¹⁾ EIGE (2025), Beijing Platform for Action +30: Impact driver – Marking milestones and opportunities for gender equality in the EU, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, [Beijing Platform for Action +30: Impact driver – Marking milestones and opportunities for gender equality in the EU | European Institute for Gender Equality](#)

⁽²⁾ Olivetti, C., & Petrongolo, B. (2017). The economic consequences of family policies: lessons from a century of legislation in high-income countries. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 31(1), 205-230.

⁽³⁾ EIGE (2022), Gender Equality in Academia and Research: GEAR tool step-by-step guide, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, [Gender Equality in Academia and Research \(GEAR tool step-by-step guide\) | European Institute for Gender Equality](#)

⁽⁴⁾ EIGE (n.d.), Gender mainstreaming, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, [Gender mainstreaming | European Institute for Gender Equality](#)

Additionally, shift of political priorities to defence and security, especially due to Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, may lead to negative impacts on social policies, with potential cuts in social spending⁽⁵⁾. Meanwhile, political backlash and growing polarisation threaten gender equality progress - particularly worrying as younger men appear to embrace more traditional views⁽⁶⁾, for example the idea that men should be given priority when jobs are scarce, still exists⁽⁷⁾.

To address these interconnected challenges, the EU must prioritise strategic investments such as in care, education, and social infrastructure. Such investments are not only socially necessary but economically smart. For example, improving access to care services enables more women to participate fully in the labour market, reducing gender gaps in employment and pay. Advancing gender equality could increase EU GDP per capita by up to 9.6% by 2050⁽⁸⁾. Moreover, social investments and reforms - particularly in care - can enhance competitiveness, support sustainable growth, and foster social inclusion across Member States⁽⁹⁾. These investments also contribute to fiscal sustainability by broadening the tax base and reducing reliance on social protection systems⁽¹⁰⁾. Given the care sector's high potential for job creation, especially for women, targeted investment can play a pivotal role in addressing labour shortages and strengthening the EU's social and economic resilience, in line with the European Pillar of Social Rights and the twin green and digital transitions.

b. Recommendations

- **Ensure gender is mainstreamed within all the EU's strategies that support a gender-equal and inclusive economy**
 - Establish clear targets and a well-rounded focus on reducing women's poverty, especially for those in disadvantaged situations (e.g. older women, lone mothers, Roma women) in the EU Anti-Poverty Strategy. Recognise gender differences across multiple dimensions of poverty (income poverty, energy poverty, transport poverty, housing poverty, time poverty, period poverty, etc). Recognise that gender inequalities in access to financial resources (e.g. pay, income, wealth accumulation) limit women's financial independence and increase the risk of poverty and social exclusion. Complement data on income and poverty at household level with individual level data in order to better grasp women's poverty and financial dependence.
 - Recognise and address gender imbalances across key sectors of the green and digital transition as a source of untapped potential in the Quality Jobs Roadmap. Recognise that good working conditions in the care sector are vital to a strong economy and resilient society. Promote inclusive workplace cultures in male-dominated sectors by addressing gender bias in recruitment, advancement, and workplace norms, ensuring equal opportunities for women's participation and career progression.
 - Provide direct funding from Horizon Europe and the new European Competitiveness Fund to support women entrepreneurs, women-led SMEs and women researchers and innovators. Place a focus on providing tailored guidance on debt, investments and digital financial literacy, as well as sponsoring networking and coaching initiatives. Collect comparable and sex-disaggregated data on levels of financial literacy across the EU.

⁽⁵⁾ [Defence is also about defending Europe's Social Values: Call for action - Social Economy Europe](#)

⁽⁶⁾ European Commission (2024), 'Eurobarometer 545. Gender stereotypes', Eurobarometer

⁽⁷⁾ Barkhuizen, E.N., Masakane, G., van der Sluis, L., 2022. In search of factors that hinder the career advancement of women to senior leadership positions

⁽⁸⁾ EIGE (2024), Economic benefits of gender equality in the EU: the economic case for gender equality in the EU, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, <https://eige.europa.eu/newsroom/economic-benefits-gender-equality>

⁽⁹⁾ European Commission (2023), Report on social investments and reforms supporting competitiveness, economic growth and inclusion, Brussels

⁽¹⁰⁾ EIGE (2024), Economic benefits of gender equality in the EU: the economic case for gender equality in the EU, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, <https://eige.europa.eu/newsroom/economic-benefits-gender-equality>

- **Reinforce care systems**
 - Promote collective bargaining to improve the working conditions and attractiveness of the care sector, tackle staff shortages. Increase funding for training programmes and support services for care workers.
 - Ensure the care sector and infrastructure remains adequately funded, not subject to budgetary cuts or reduced availability.
- **Ensure gender equality in fiscal policies and pension reforms**
 - Explore individual taxation options to eliminate disincentives for secondary earners. Address the pay and pension gaps associated with an unequal share of care accumulated over the life-course.
- **Extend policies on work–life balance and promote gender-equal workplace cultures**
 - Promote further work-life balance measures, focusing on teleworking and flexible and predictable work arrangements and right to disconnect. Encourage the adoption of gender equality plans by companies and promote the advancement of women into senior positions and leadership. Implement initiatives to counter unconscious biases in the workplace. Encourage men's involvement in caregiving roles and men's access to the education, health and welfare sectors. Strengthen the retention of women in traditionally male-dominated fields.
 - Ensure women are represented in social dialogue, including those in non-standard and informal work. Facilitate and encourage stronger social dialogue that is focused on empowerment and sharing of good practices through the Quality Jobs Roadmap and the new Pact for European Social Dialogue⁽¹¹⁾.

II. Providing gender-responsive social protection and services

a. Main challenges

Despite encouraging developments in recent years, the EU faces significant shortfalls in its provision of gender-responsive social protection and services. Many struggle to access timely, good-quality and affordable healthcare, especially women living rurally. Sexual and reproductive health and rights are patchy across Member States, while receiving comprehensive sexuality education is far from guaranteed, depending on the political and educational landscapes of each Member State. Safe, legal and affordable abortion is unattainable for many women, and precarious for many others.

An ageing Europe, a growing demand for care and an overall decrease in funding to the care sector have resulted in a bottleneck in the availability of high-quality, affordable early childhood and long-term care services. This supply/demand disparity is forecast to worsen significantly in oncoming years⁽¹²⁾. Simultaneously, gender pay gaps, pension gaps and unequal distribution of unpaid responsibilities heighten the pressure and perpetuate inequalities.

Horizontal and vertical career segregation are exacerbated by educational inequalities such as gendered learning materials and gender stereotypes upheld (even unintentionally) by families and teachers. These can dissuade

⁽¹¹⁾ European Commission (2025), [Commission and social partners sign joint Pact to strengthen social dialogue in Europe - European Commission](#)

⁽¹²⁾ EIGE (2025), Beijing Platform for Action +30: Impact driver – Marking milestones and opportunities for gender equality in the EU, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, [Beijing Platform for Action +30: Impact driver – Marking milestones and opportunities for gender equality in the EU | European Institute for Gender Equality](#)

young people from pursuing an educational or career path dominated by the opposite gender, such as STEM for girls and education and care for boys. Career sectors primarily occupied by women are more likely to be underpaid and undervalued, while women face barriers to accessing masculinised, high-growth sectors such as ICT⁽¹³⁾. Barriers to accessing formal education remain for many young people, with Roma girls particularly affected.

Underscoring all these issues is the enduring prevalence of poverty and social exclusion, to which some sub-groups of the EU's population are especially vulnerable. The worsening housing crisis has disproportionate and specific impacts on lone parents, older women, and Roma women. Members of the LGBTIQ community and those at risk of gender-based violence in the home are also affected. Over a quarter of young adults live in overcrowded households, while rent and house price increases significantly outpace inflation and average wage growth.

The climate crisis is already exacerbating women's vulnerabilities in areas such as energy poverty, gender-based violence and health. Without preventive and responsive action, this situation will deteriorate as global temperatures continue to rise.

b. Recommendations

- **Integrate a gender-sensitive approach across all areas of EU health (access to healthcare, health workforce's conditions, and health research and services)**
 - Make a sex and gender approach integral to health research by incorporating these perspectives into all EU-funded health research, increasing research on women's health and gender-specific data collection. Establish an expert advisory group on women's health and gender equality in health.
 - Promote gender equality in the healthcare workforce by addressing the gender pay gap, dismantling stereotypes. Encourage men and boys to enter care sectors.
 - Ensure universal and equitable access to healthcare and services, including mental health, and sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), also by tackling misinformation and disinformation related to SRHR. Increase investment in rural healthcare, and remove financial and language barriers.
- **Reinforce gender equality considerations in social policies**
 - Invest in gender responsive social protection for informal and formal caregivers and in the formal recognition of informal care. Provide an adequate and universal system of child-related income support. Ensure adequate, flexible and inclusive parental leave policies. Invest in affordable high quality early childhood education and care services and long-term care services. Ensure funding for the establishment of a network of universal, accessible family support (general and specialised) services.
 - Support gender-responsive implementation and monitoring of the European Care Strategy⁽¹⁴⁾ and European Child Guarantee⁽¹⁵⁾ including by regularly collecting sex- and age-disaggregated data.

⁽¹³⁾ EIGE (2018), Women and men in ICT: a chance for better work–life balance, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, https://eige.europa.eu/publications-resources/publications/women-and-men-ict-chance-better-work-life-balance-research-note?language_content_entity=en.

⁽¹⁴⁾ European Commission (2022), European Care Strategy, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, [A European Care Strategy](#)

⁽¹⁵⁾ European Commission (2021), European Child Guarantee, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, [European Child Guarantee - European Commission](#)

- **Embed a gender-responsive approach in the European affordable housing plan⁽¹⁶⁾**
 - Develop gender specific housing exclusion indicators in the European semester and gather sex-disaggregated data.
 - Support and invest in social housing and enforce stronger tenant protection and rent control measures. Pay particular attention to more vulnerable groups such as young people, lone parents, older women, and those at risk of violence.

III. Eradicating Gender-Based Violence, stigma and stereotypes

a. Main challenges

Combating gender-based violence (GBV) has been a priority area of the 2020-2025 EU Gender Equality Strategy and in recent years a number of landmark legislative and policy frameworks have been passed and adopted (EU Ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, (2023), Directive EU 2024/1385 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 May 2024 on combating violence against women and domestic violence). Despite these legislative advances, several challenges persist. The main issues are related to definitions and criminalisation of different GBV offences, emerging forms of GBV such as cyberviolence and data collection on gender-based violence.

The persistence of gender stereotypes continues to impact negatively on women and men, girls and boys. These stereotypes exist at every level of society, limiting possibilities, choices and experiences in a broad array of domains. Stereotypes related to gender-based violence perpetuate harmful norms that increase risk for women and girls, while discouraging male victims from seeking help. New online avenues for misogynistic cultures put young men at risk of radicalisation and hinder progress for gender equality.

The results of the latest EU-GBV survey⁽¹⁷⁾ carried out by Eurostat, the Fundamental Rights Agency and EIGE report that one in three women in the EU have experienced physical or sexual violence since the age of 15. This violence often occurs within intimate relationships, with 18% of women experiencing physical or sexual violence from a partner. In addition, it was found that 8.3% of women experienced rape when they were unable to refuse or under coercion, with 4.8% experiencing rape involving force and threats (FRA-EIGE, 2025 forthcoming). This demonstrates that rape as violation of consent is more common than rape involving physical force and threats, advocating for a need to redefine rape as a violation of consent. Results further show that women face more risks of rape from their intimate-partner, underscoring the need to focus on GBV within intimate-partner relationships, both in research, advocacy and policy making.

Driven by the extended use of digital technologies and amplified online presence, cyberviolence against women and girls is increasing. It is estimated that one in ten women have already experienced a form of cyber violence since the age of 15. A major challenge is the complex and shifting nature of cyber violence against women and girls (CVWAG) both online and offline – for example, some of the acts of stalking experienced by women consist predominantly of cyberstalking (80.2% of unwanted repeated messages happen now online). Other persisting challenges are due to the multiple forms of cyberviolence, lack of common definitions, inconsistent criminalisation across Member States but also persistent barriers in reporting, prosecution, access to justice, data collection and measuring prevalence.

⁽¹⁶⁾ European affordable housing plan consultation, [European affordable housing plan](#)

⁽¹⁷⁾ EIGE (2024), EU gender-based violence survey: Key results, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, [EU gender-based violence survey: Key results | European Institute for Gender Equality](#)

b. Recommendations

- **Strengthen data collection and evidence-based policy**
 - Carry-out regular prevalence surveys and support long-term and systematic administrative data collection on gender-based violence, including emerging forms, with disaggregated, intersectional data by age, sex, gender identity, victim-perpetrator relationship, ethnicity, migration status, disability, religion, and sexual orientation⁽¹⁸⁾. Ensure collaboration between the Commission, the Joint Research Centre, EUROSTAT, EIGE and other EU agencies.
 - Promote and mandate evidence-based policymaking and advocacy through dedicated research, including on the economic and social costs of GBV at EU and national levels.
- **Focus on prevention, awareness and training, and invest in research on root causes of GBV and gender stereotypes**
 - Develop and implement standards on gender-sensitive and victim-centred reporting on GBV for media and journalists. Enhance media literacy skills and challenge harmful gender stereotypes and norms.
 - Conduct regular Eurobarometer surveys on gender stereotypes and GBV tolerance to monitor changes and developments of public opinion and beliefs.
 - Develop EU-wide long-term prevention strategy and curriculum standards for education on gender equality, gender stereotypes and gender roles, GBV and consent-based relationship. Enact a review of curricula to ensure inclusive content and provide publishers with anti-bias guidelines. Support training programmes for educators.
 - Support national evaluations of primary prevention initiatives and build a repository of evaluated prevention models on GBV.
- **Strengthen policy and cross-sectoral cooperation**
 - Provide clear guidance for Member States on designing and implementing National Action Plans (NAPs) against GBV that are intersectional, victim-centred, include specific and measurable targets, and include prevention strategies engaging men and boys. Ensure NAPs are supported by adequate human, financial, and technical resources. Engage civil society organisations throughout the policy cycle.
 - Institutionalise and sustainably fund the European Network on gender-based violence and domestic violence, ensuring cooperation with educational institutions and implementing targeted prevention strategies involving men and boys.
- **Address gaps in GBV legislation and policy**
 - Adopt and implement the Recommendation on the prevention of harmful practices against women and girls. Develop EU-wide standards on gynaecological and obstetric practices with the aim of preventing obstetric violence.

⁽¹⁸⁾ In accordance with Article 44 of Directive (EU) 2024/1385, EIGE serves as the coordination body for establishing a standardised methodology and supporting Member States in collecting administrative data on the forms of violence against women and support services specified in the Directive.

- Accelerate revisions to the Victims' Rights Directive to address existing gaps in protection and support for victims. Integrate a gender and intersectional perspective into these revisions, acknowledging the increased vulnerability of groups of people in disadvantaged situations.
- Promote workplace safety by ratifying the ILO Convention 190 on Violence and Harassment in the World of Work. Encourage employers, through work with social partners and the European Economic and Social Committee, to adopt clear reporting and investigation mechanisms, enforce sanctions, designate and train contact persons and include sexual harassment bans in collective agreements and professional codes of conduct.

IV. Fostering parity democracy, accountability and gender-responsive institutions

a. Main challenges

In recent years, the EU progressed in institutionalising gender equality, affirming it as a core priority in EU governance and policymaking. However, to promote inclusive governance that ensures equal representation, transparency, and fairness, it is essential to ensure parity democracy, establish gender-responsive institutions and make sure these institutions are actively accountable for the implementation of policies and practices that promote equitable outcomes for all.

The implementation of a just, equitable, and democratic society is being challenged by the lack of gender parity in institutions. After the 2024 elections, women made up 39% of the European Parliament, a decrease from 41% in the previous political term⁽¹⁹⁾. At the national level, although the representation of women in parliaments has increased by 2 pp since 2018,⁽²⁰⁾ women still account for one in three MPs⁽²¹⁾. As of April 2025, five Member States have achieved gender balance (BE, DK, ES, FI and SE), while in five Member States (EL, CY, HU, RO and SK), women constitute fewer than 25% of members of parliament⁽²²⁾. In both the European and national parliaments, women remain under-represented in leadership roles. In the EP, 29% of committee chairs were women, compared to 40% of MEPs — an 11-point deficit. Similar patterns were found in 15 national parliaments.⁽²³⁾

The European Commission is gender-balanced with 41% women Commissioners and is presided over by a woman⁽²⁴⁾. In national governments in the EU, senior ministers with a seat in the cabinet are predominantly men, representing 67% of the positions⁽²⁵⁾. EIGE's 2023 data shows that women make up only 33% of senior ministers responsible for environment and climate portfolios across the EU. At subnational level, the share drops to 25%.⁽²⁶⁾ The levels of resources, effort and governmental structures dedicated to ensuring the effective promotion of

⁽¹⁹⁾ EIGE (2024), Gender balance in politics, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, [Gender balance in politics: November 2024 | European Institute for Gender Equality](#)

⁽²⁰⁾ EIGE (2025), Beijing platform for action +30: impact driver, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, [Beijing Platform for Action +30: Impact driver - Marking milestones and opportunities for gender equality in the EU | European Institute for Gender Equality](#)

⁽²¹⁾ EIGE (2025), Women and men in decision-making - Politics - Parliaments and assemblies, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, [Indicator: National parliaments: presidents and members | Gender Statistics Database | European Institute for Gender Equality](#)

⁽²²⁾ EIGE (2025), Women and men in decision-making - Politics - Parliaments and assemblies, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, [Indicator: National parliaments: presidents and members | Gender Statistics Database | European Institute for Gender Equality](#)

⁽²³⁾ EIGE (2024), Gender equality in the European and national parliaments in the European Union ahead of the 2024 election year, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, [Gender equality in the European and national parliaments ahead of the 2024 election year | European Institute for Gender Equality](#)

⁽²⁴⁾ EIGE (2025), Women and men in decision-making - Politics - Governments and other political executives, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, [Indicator: European Commission: president and commissioners | Gender Statistics Database | European Institute for Gender Equality](#)

⁽²⁵⁾ EIGE (2024), Gender balance in politics, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, [Gender balance in politics: November 2024 | European Institute for Gender Equality](#)

⁽²⁶⁾ EIGE (2012), Decision-making in environment and climate change: women woefully under-represented in the EU Member States, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, [Decision-making in environment and climate change: women woefully under-represented in the EU Member States | European Institute for Gender Equality](#)

gender equality and gender mainstreaming across all governmental work vary between Member States⁽²⁷⁾. Key areas for improvement include the availability of human resources (average score: 47%) and the use of gender mainstreaming tools (average score: 34%)⁽²⁸⁾. While most governments have committed to gender equality, only a few translate this into concrete, costed action plans with measurable targets and regular reporting to parliament⁽²⁹⁾. Furthermore, the lack of regular systems for collecting sex-disaggregated data and standardized indicators limits the transparency and the capacity to assess the actual effectiveness of measures aimed at promoting gender equality.

Finally, anti-gender movements have grown in visibility and influence since 2019, particularly in the transnational digital space. Such movements are attempting to roll back women's rights in the EU and globally. This pushback is often intertwined with the rise of authoritarian movements that embrace a blend of anti-democracy, climate denial, racism and misogyny. As an outcome, women in politics and public figures face high levels of violence, including cyber-violence, aimed at limiting their participation in decision-making and in the public sphere. Women's rights organisations, rights-based non-governmental organisations and activists face increasing attacks, hate speech and funding cuts. This situation creates a chilling effect on civil society and reduces policymakers' ambition to tackle gender equality issues.

b. Recommendations

- **Ensure funding for specialised institutional infrastructure for gender equality and gender mainstreaming, and independent gender equality bodies**
 - Reinforce EIGE's funding and capacity: with reiterated EU's commitment to gender equality in recently adopted directives, the Roadmap on women's rights and the future gender equality strategy, the Agency stands ready to support the Commission and the Member States in the implementation and monitoring of these commitments; necessary human and budgetary resources are needed to fulfil these expanding tasks. Hence, the Commission and the budgetary authority shall strengthen EIGE's internal governance and operational capacity. A well-resourced and structurally robust EU Agency is essential to ensure evidence-based policymaking, monitor progress, and foster coherent and coordinated action on gender equality and gender mainstreaming throughout the EU and beyond.
 - Strengthen gender equality mechanisms (dedicated structures, units or focal points focused on gender equality) within EU institutions and bodies to ensure that gender perspectives are integrated into all policy areas. Increasing their resources and influence will enable these structures to ensure that gender equality remains a priority and is effectively mainstreamed across all EU policies and programmes.
 - Increase targeted funding to independent gender equality bodies to ensure they can recruit and retain qualified personnel with expertise in gender equality issues, thereby preventing the dilution of focus caused by broader mandates.
 - Ensure that institutional frameworks are robust and aligned with international standards, such as those set out in the European Commission's Equality Bodies Directives, which mandate that equality bodies be granted adequate resources, autonomy, and independence to function effectively.

⁽²⁷⁾ EIGE (2025), Institutional mechanisms for gender equality in the EU: Present realities, future priorities, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, [Institutional mechanisms for gender equality in the EU: Present realities, future priorities | European Institute for Gender Equality](#)

⁽²⁸⁾ EIGE (2025), EU Member States need to strengthen institutional mechanisms for the promotion of gender equality, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, [EU Member States need to strengthen institutional mechanisms for the promotion of gender equality | European Institute for Gender Equality](#)

⁽²⁹⁾ EIGE (2025), Institutional mechanisms for gender equality in the EU: Present realities, future priorities, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, [Institutional mechanisms for gender equality in the EU: Present realities, future priorities | European Institute for Gender Equality](#)

- **Strengthen the accountability of institutions to promote gender equality**
 - Introduce a gender equality action plans at the European Commission level to drive institutional change using EIGE tools⁽³⁰⁾ and guidance⁽³¹⁾ on supporting gender-responsive institutional transformation.
 - Reinforce systems for sex- and gender-disaggregated data collection and standardised indicators to strengthen accountability and enable evidence-based tracking of gender equality commitments.
 - Reinforce the institutional cooperation at the EU and Member States levels.
- **Foster parity democracy and strengthen CSOs involvement**
 - Enforce parity for the European elections and in political parties through the introduction and enforcement of sanctions, as well as through public procurement exercises. For example, in the countries where political parties receive public funding, certain share of that funding could be subject to comply with quotas.
 - Leverage the European Democracy Shield to promote youth-focused training on the importance of political participation. Implement measures to ensure the safety of women in public life – particularly in politics – both online and off-line.
 - Ensure sustainable and adequate funding mechanisms for women's rights organisations and organisations working on gender equality. Ensure regular and structured dialogue to ensure their meaningful role in gender equality policymaking, including through the upcoming Civil Society Strategy. Promote civil society networking and the development of collaborative strategies to counter the influence of anti-gender movements.

V. Shaping a digital transformation that promotes gender equality

a. Main challenges

Several challenges hinder a gender-equal digital transition. Women remain underrepresented in ICT, especially in leadership, and face persistent pay gaps. Gender stereotypes, male-dominated work cultures, and poor work-life balance discourage women from entering or staying in tech. Only 23% of women with STEM degrees enter tech jobs, and many leave by age 44. Educational gaps persist, with women earning five times fewer ICT degrees than men⁽³²⁾.

Automation also poses risks of job displacement, while unpaid care responsibilities limit women's access to upskilling and new opportunities. The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated workplace digitalisation, but also exacerbated digital disparities, disproportionately affecting carers' productivity and work-life balance. Even with telework, higher-paid workers face greater difficulty maintaining work-life boundaries⁽³³⁾, and women teleworkers

⁽³⁰⁾ EIGE, Gender Equality Action Plans tools, [Gender Equality Action Plans | European Institute for Gender Equality](#)

⁽³¹⁾ EIGE, Gender Institutional Transformation, step-by-step toolkit, [Gender Institutional Transformation | European Institute for Gender Equality](#)

⁽³²⁾ EIGE (2018), Women and men in ICT: a chance for better work-life balance, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, https://eige.europa.eu/publications-resources/publications/women-and-men-ict-chance-better-work-life-balance-research-note?language_content_entity=en.

⁽³³⁾ EIGE (2021), Artificial intelligence, platform work and gender equality, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, https://eige.europa.eu/publications-resources/publications/artificial-intelligence-platform-work-and-gender-equality-report?language_content_entity=en

often face greater pressure due to caregiving interruptions and cyberviolence. Overall, in the EU, slightly more men than women (37 % to 34 %) report having a possibility to take an hour or two from work to take care of family or personal matters. But many men do not use it to support informal care. The workplace culture overall does not support it. STEM jobs are usually characterised by long working hours and family unfriendly culture, which push women out of the sector. Therefore, besides segregation, pay gap, upskilling/reskilling opportunities, it is important to talk about work-life balance friendly working cultures in jobs currently dominated by men.

The increased reliance on artificial intelligence (AI) technologies transforms hiring, task allocation and performance evaluation processes. AI-driven recruitment processes risk perpetuating gender biases in candidate selection. Both 36 % of women and 31 % of men teleworkers report experiencing increased AI-powered surveillance such as camera and keystroke monitoring to track their remote-work⁽³⁴⁾. Women face a higher pressure as they usually experience more caregiving interruptions.

Digitalisation has introduced advancements in various sectors, particularly in healthcare. However, it can also perpetuate existing biases and health disparities. For example, AI tools often overlook female-specific data, leading to misdiagnoses and deepening health disparities. Older women also face barriers to digital healthcare access. Finally, the digital shift has further enabled gender-based cyberviolence, where young women are disproportionately exposed to cyber harassment, such as non-consensual sharing of intimate images.

b. Recommendations

- **Guarantee equitable access to digital skills and employment pathways**
 - Integrate a gender-sensitive approach, using gender impact assessment with an intersectional perspective, within the 'Union of Skills' and all digital skills initiatives to ensure all groups benefit from digital opportunities, from education to professional advancement.
 - Promote targeted training and mentoring programmes for women who have limited experience in ICT and digital skills. Ensure access to these programmes for people with caregiving duties and those with limited internet access.
 - Establish a Europe-wide "STEM for girls" program through Erasmus+, Digital Europe and Horizon funding programs to address early discouragement and structural bias by embedding long-term mentorship, visibility and peer leadership pathways for girls and young women in ICT/STEM.
- **Establish flexible, supportive work environments with robust gender equality policies**
 - Ensure that further policies and funding are implemented and allocated to address diverse care needs and support a more holistic approach to work-life balance (expand the care definitions, fund innovative work-life models, strengthen flexibility in time and place...) in the tech sector.
 - Ensure that all platform workers, both employed and self-employed, have access to a comprehensive social protection system, such as healthcare and unemployment benefits.
 - Establish dedicated funding mechanisms and incentives for women entrepreneurs in high-tech sectors, such as grants, low-interest loans and venture capital funds. Promote financial literacy and investment readiness through targeted training to equip women with the skills needed to access and secure financing.

⁽³⁴⁾ EU-OSHA (2024), Exploring the gender dimension of telework: Implications for occupational safety and health, [Exploring the gender dimension of telework](#)

- **Embed gender equality into EU digital and AI strategies and initiatives**
 - Introduce mandatory gender impact assessment as a part of Fundamental Rights Impact Assessment under the AI Act framework to identify and mitigate potential adverse effects of AI tools on women and men. Include third-party audits to detect and correct algorithmic biases in hiring, retention and advancement practices.
 - Integrate gender equality considerations into EU digital strategies and regulations, such as the Digital Services Act (DSA), Digital Markets Act (DMA), and the Artificial Intelligence (AI) Act, to address gender biases in algorithms and promote the equitable representation of women and men in the digital area. Establish enforceable measures and impose penalties for non-compliance instead of relying on self-regulation by stakeholders.
 - Strategically leverage AI technologies to cultivate safer digital environments and more accessible media content. This can be achieved by utilising deep learning for the automatic detection and mitigation of gender-based violence (GBV) and online harassment within media. Employ speech recognition and automated captioning innovations to enhance media accessibility for persons with disabilities, ensuring a broader reach and greater inclusion across all platforms.
- **Support the implementation of a multi-faceted approach to combatting cyberviolence against women and girls⁽³⁵⁾**
 - Invest in research and data collection on cyber violence against women and girls, including in emerging areas, such as power and work. Include connection between gender-based violence and radicalisation online to implement safeguards against discrimination, harassment and cyber violence, including in the workplace offline and online.
 - Cooperate with social media platforms and enhance cross-platform cooperation to introduce e-safety regulations to protect women and girls from cyber violence and harassment on social media. Include the development of reporting mechanisms, penalties, harmful content removal and preventive measures. Promote the commitment of platforms to the Code of conduct on combatting gender-based cyber violence and provide support for content moderators.

⁽³⁵⁾ EIGE (2024r), Tackling Cyber Violence against Women and Girls: The role of digital platforms, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, <https://eige.europa.eu/publications-resources/publications/tackling-cyber-violence-against-women-and-girls-role-digital-platforms>.



VI. Advancing a socially fair green transition that leaves no woman or girl behind

a. Main challenges

The European Green Deal was launched in 2019, but it faced criticism for lacking a comprehensive gender-transformative approach. The social and environmental impacts of the green transition have a gendered dimension.

Women are often more environmentally conscious than men, adopting eco-friendly practices in their daily lives. However, if household sustainability management is left to the women of the house, this may reinforce traditional care roles. This may perpetuate the association of 'greenness' with femininity and deter men from participating in sustainable practices that may be perceived as threats to masculinity. In addition, feminist researchers argue that jobs in care, health and education should be at the centre of a just transition, as they are often by default 'green' (low emissions)⁽³⁶⁾. The focus on the care and health sectors is particularly pertinent given the expected increase in the toll on healthcare sector and workers due to climate change and ageing population⁽³⁷⁾.

Energy poverty is a problem that is on the rise in industrialised countries. When there is an increase in oil and gas prices there is a rise in energy costs, and this particularly affects households at risk of poverty. Over the past decades, the proportion of lone-parent households has increased in the EU. Most of these lone-parent households are headed by mothers. Lone parents are considered to be a group significantly at risk of living in poverty.

The workforce in sectors affected by the green transition is highly gender segregated. For example, women make up around 17% of the transport workforce in the EU. The share of women in the energy sector is around 25 %. There women are more than 6 times more likely than men to be on part-time contracts. Reducing gender inequalities in these sectors require addressing gender segregated educational choices, skills development and specific obstacles to entry and retention.

Young women are making significant contributions to climate activism, and the involvement of women in environmental decision-making is gradually increasing. Women's representation in decision-making roles across the eight areas of the European Green Deal varies widely⁽³⁸⁾. Gender parity has been nearly achieved in climate (50%) and energy (43%) decision-making bodies, and women are somewhat better represented in environment and oceans (35%). However, women remain strongly under-represented in decision-making positions in agriculture (15%) and transport (14%). These figures highlight that, despite progress, women continue to be under-represented in leadership and policymaking roles across many Green Deal sectors — a gap that hinders the integration of gender equality in environmental policies and slows progress toward inclusive governance.

The EU's actions that worsen or accelerate climate change have disproportionate effects on disadvantaged groups globally, such as women in the Global South and Indigenous women, who face intensified risks of poverty, exploitation and gender-based violence due to climate change. Women's economic vulnerability puts them at higher risks during climate crisis, since they are more likely to have unstable jobs and lower income. Extreme weather conditions and climate disasters are linked to higher rates of gender-based violence and human

⁽³⁶⁾ Greens/EFA (2021), *Feminists in the Climate Movement: Towards a Just Transition for All*, The Greens/European Free Alliance in the European Parliament, Brussels. Littig, B. (2017), *Gender and sustainable development: Theoretical considerations from a social research perspective*, in: Leach, M. (ed.), *Gender Equality and Sustainable Development*, Routledge, pp. 26–39.

⁽³⁷⁾ MacGregor, S., Widerberg, K., & Caglar, G. (2022), *Feminist perspectives on the European Green Deal: Reimagining gender, sustainability and justice*, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Brussels, <https://www.fes.de/en/displacement-migration-integration/article-page-flight-migration-integration/feminist-perspectives-on-the-european-green-deal>.

⁽³⁸⁾ EIGE (2024r), *Gender balance in the European Green Deal*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, https://eige.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/Gender%20balance%20in%20the%20European%20Green%20Deal_0.pdf.

trafficking, often due to heightened (financial) stress or climate-related migration. Lastly, gender stereotypes limit women's entry to fields that are crucial for green transition, such as the energy and transportation sectors.

b. Recommendations

- **Address data gaps to inform gender-responsive environmental policies**
 - Develop new indicators to track progress, in line with the BPfA, regarding the integration of a gender perspective into policies and programmes for sustainable development. Establish mechanisms to assess the impact on women of development and environmental policies.
 - Establish frameworks to regularly assess the gendered impacts of environmental policies, energy poverty and transport poverty.
- **Prioritise a gender and intersectional perspective across EU climate and environment policies, strategies and initiatives**
 - Embed a gender-responsive approach into the implementation of the European Green Deal and related EU climate initiatives, ensuring alignment with the gender equality strategy. Systematically embed gender considerations across all key areas of the green transition (agriculture, energy, transport).
 - Ensure that women's perspectives are integrated into environmental decision-making and resilience planning. Ensure equal representation (including through quotas) in forums, decision-making processes, job opportunities, consultation with women's organisations and investment in initiatives that recognise women's environmental efforts. Gender-specific needs must be addressed in disaster risk reduction and climate adaptation plans through comprehensive gender impact assessments.
 - Train staff on gender mainstreaming, consulting with gender equality experts during environmental policy design. Include gender criteria in project evaluations to ensure policies meet the need of the groups.
- **Recognise the key role of women in advancing a socially fair green transition**
 - Adopt policies that explicitly include care work in green job policies and sustainable caregiving practices. This involves targeted investment and incentives for green caregiving practices and research to broaden the knowledge on the role of unpaid and paid care work in the green transition. Promote and educate about care to increase uptake among men especially in view of the green transition.
 - Create focused actions to empower women in critical sectors of the green transition. Provide targeted training, address workplace discrimination and actively promote women's leadership. New employment strategies should focus on increasing women's participation in green jobs.

VII. Achieving peaceful and inclusive societies and advancing gender equality across the world

a. Main challenges

The European Union faces several continuous challenges related to its internal and external security, safety and stability. Multiple crises, including conflicts are increasing risks of gender-based violence for migrant women and girls. The EU has advanced gender equality in external actions, but major challenges remain in migration and asylum. Women asylum seekers face gender-based barriers, discrimination, and violence, especially women with intersectional vulnerabilities and they often lack access to sexual and reproductive healthcare. Only six Member States recognise female genital mutilation as grounds for asylum.

Despite some efforts by the European Union to face these challenges, current frameworks often fail to address the specific needs of women refugees, highlighting the need for stronger gender-responsive policies and protections. Further challenges are related to emerging threats such as cyberattacks, disinformation, democratic backsliding, environmental degradation, and geopolitical tensions that disproportionately impact vulnerable groups, particularly women and marginalised communities.

b. Recommendations

- **Embed the Women, Peace and Security Agenda across all areas of the EU conflict and crisis responses**
 - Support Member States' development and implementation of National Action Plans (NAP) on Women, Peace and Security (WPS), with allocated sufficient and long-term budget, human and technical resources and accountable monitoring. Encourage cross-border cooperation, trainings, support women's civil society organisations, including those engaging men and boys for gender equality.
 - Adopt GAP IV and address current challenges of GAP III, by ensuring robust implementation, monitoring, and evaluation processes. Focus on strengthening training, human resources, alignment with the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda, and the inclusion of clear indicators.
 - Mainstream and account for gender in anti-trafficking⁽³⁹⁾, migration and asylum strategies and policies. Encourage all EU MS to ratify the Istanbul Convention and monitor its full implementation, especially pertaining to complying with Articles 59, 60, 61, granting victims of gender-based violence autonomous residence permits, gender-responsive asylum claims and procedures and respecting the principle of non-refoulement.
- **Prioritise the prevention and elimination of gender-based violence especially in fragile, migration and humanitarian contexts such as conflicts**
 - Develop and implement standards and guidelines on the identification of gender-based violence in reception and asylum centres and victim-centred interview protocols for reception staff, frontline workers and practitioners, border management and integration programmes, as well as for

⁽³⁹⁾ European Union. (2024). Directive (EU) 2024/1712 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 June 2024 on combating violence against women and domestic violence. Official Journal of the European Union. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32024L1712>

migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers.

- Ensure access to healthcare, including sexual and reproductive health services, social care services and specialist victim support services to migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking women and women in conflict zones.
- Address human rights violations and gender-based violence during conflict, and hold perpetrators accountable by recording, investigating and prosecuting these crimes.
- **Mainstream gender equality in EU security, defence, environmental and foreign policies and strategies**
 - Encourage gender equality sectorial plans, particularly in the specific areas of security, civil defence and defence considering the international socio-political situation. Develop and implement, within these sectorial plans, specific sections on mainstreaming, training, awareness, and cybersecurity even including in this the WPS Agenda.
 - Ensure women's participation and leadership in security, defence, external action and make sure that peacekeeping processes are gender-balanced

VIII. Gender mainstreaming

a. Main challenges

Since 1996, the Commission committed itself to a 'dual approach' towards realising 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.⁽⁴⁰⁾

A comprehensive and consistent commitment to gender mainstreaming is critical to advancing gender equality across all areas of life. Yet, EIGE's latest 2024 data on the effectiveness of institutional mechanisms for gender equality and gender mainstreaming in the EU 27 Member States shows a decline in commitment to and implementation of gender mainstreaming.⁽⁴¹⁾ Significant gaps remain in commitment and use of methods and tools of gender mainstreaming, with limited obligations to undertake gender impact assessment, gender budgeting or gender awareness-raising.⁽⁴²⁾ These tools are essential for systematically integrating gender perspectives into policies, programmes and projects. Furthermore, governmental and independent gender equality bodies are not routinely consulted on new laws and policies in many Member States, limiting their impact on gender mainstreaming efforts. Finally, a deficiency in gender-sensitive data literacy can lead to data misinterpretation, misuse, or manipulation – potentially reinforcing gender biases and perpetuating inequalities. Improving gender-aware data literacy enables users to identify gaps, question assumptions, and make informed decisions based on accurate and inclusive information.

Building on the Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025 and the Roadmap for women's rights, sustained commitment is crucial for the long-term success of gender mainstreaming initiatives. This commitment materialises in strong leadership and accountability on the part of EU institutions; human resources and expertise; sufficient funding for

⁽⁴⁰⁾ EIGE, What is gender mainstreaming, website, [What is gender mainstreaming | European Institute for Gender Equality](#)

⁽⁴¹⁾ Based on a comparison for the 25 Member States with data available for 2021 and 2024, there has been a decline from 37 % in 2021 to 34 % in 2024. [EU Member States need to strengthen institutional mechanisms for the promotion of gender equality | European Institute for Gender Equality](#)

⁽⁴²⁾ EIGE (2025), Institutional mechanisms for gender equality in the EU: Present realities, future priorities, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, [Institutional mechanisms for gender equality in the EU: Present realities, future priorities | European Institute for Gender Equality](#)

gender mainstreaming activities; and the systematic inclusion of gender mainstreaming and its methods, such as ex ante impact assessment and gender budgeting, in the EU's strategic agendas.

b. Recommendations

- **Set gender equality and gender mainstreaming as EU priority in policymaking and governance**
 - Include gender mainstreaming as a priority area with specific objectives and concrete actions in post-2025 gender equality strategy.
 - Propose an EU Directive on substantive gender equality, which would foster transformative gender equality and gender mainstreaming standards across the EU, address structural inequalities and fully realise a gender-equal society.
 - Strengthen gender mainstreaming and gender budgeting: Enhance mechanisms dedicated to gender equality at all levels, e.g. through dedicated units, focal points and networks. Make the systematic use of gender mainstreaming tools mandatory at all stages of the policy cycle. From planning and budgeting to implementation and evaluation, applying tools such as gender impact assessment helps identify and mitigate potential gender inequalities early on.
 - Ensure successful transposition and implementation of all the gender equality Directives (e.g. Work-life balance, Standards for equality bodies, Pay transparency, Gender balance on company on boards, Violence against women...). Provide necessary human and budgetary resources to EIGE to support their implementation and monitoring.
- **Embed gender mainstreaming across all Commission portfolios**
 - Ensure gender mainstreaming in all EU strategic policy documents across all policy areas and EU funding programmes according to the Multiannual Financial Framework and NextGenerationEU, to highlight gender equality as essential for progress in all areas, making them more resilient and sustainable.
 - For Member States and organisations applying for EU funds, establish conditionality on access to funding to having and implementing a gender equality plan.
 - Implement the gender equality provisions of the Better Regulation and the Financial Regulation.
- **Enhance gender statistics and data literacy**
 - Collect systematic sex-disaggregated data for all areas of the Gender Equality Strategy, to improve the dissemination and production of gender statistics by promoting gender binding instruments. Transparent information helps to identify gaps and hold decision-makers accountable.
 - Enhance the capacity of both users and producers of gender statistics by strengthening their gender-sensitive data literacy skills, ensuring they are equipped to collect, analyse, interpret, and use data through a gender-responsive lens, can evaluate the quality of data, and use it responsibly.

Framework of the next Gender Equality Strategy

Several key elements are essential to ensure the gender equality strategy is impactful, sustainable, and aligned with best practices in advancing gender equality.

First and foremost, the strategy must begin with a **clear and shared definition of gender equality**. This definition should go beyond basic terminology and serve as a reaffirmation of the fundamental values of the European Union, including human dignity, freedom, democracy, non-discrimination and equality, the rule of law, and respect for human rights. Gender equality is enshrined in the EU Treaties and the Charter of Fundamental Rights and must be recognised as a cornerstone of a just and democratic society. It should also recognise the need to address both structural and cultural barriers that perpetuate inequalities between women and men, in all their diversity. Establishing this conceptual clarity is critical, as it provides a solid foundation for all subsequent actions. **Gender equality also needs to be contextualised** and aligned with shifting policy priorities and emerging challenges. For example, it must be integrated into discussions on new threats to security and democracy, as inequalities can exacerbate social divisions and undermine resilience. Furthermore, gender equality is essential for tackling challenges to the EU's competitiveness, as diverse and inclusive societies foster innovation, economic growth, and sustainable development. Therefore, maintaining gender equality at the core of EU debates, policies, and funding decisions is not only a matter of principle but also a strategic imperative for the EU's stability, prosperity, and global leadership. A more gender equal EU would have strong, positive GDP impacts growing over time, higher level of employment and productivity and could respond to challenges related to the ageing population in the EU⁽⁴³⁾.

The strategy should also include mechanisms such as a **gender-sensitive strategic foresight approach**, anticipating emerging challenges — such as digitalisation, climate change, and demographic shifts — and foreseeing their potential impacts on women and men. Strategic foresight is a method of anticipating and preparing for the future and in such context of uncertainty it is essential.

A dual approach is necessary to achieve gender equality, which involves **both integrating a gender perspective into all policies (gender mainstreaming) and implementing specific targeted measures to address gender inequalities**. This approach recognises that gender equality is not just about creating specific gender-focused initiatives, but also about ensuring that all policies and actions consider the potential impact on women and men. All Commission Services should apply the dual approach in their specific strategies, based on the commitments to gender mainstreaming that Commissioners made at the beginning of their mandates. This commitment signifies a dedication to integrating gender considerations into all aspects of their work, from policy design to implementation and evaluation. The aim is to ensure that policies and programs are designed and executed in a way that promotes equality between women and men, addresses gender disparities, and contributes to a more inclusive and equitable society.

At its core, the gender equality strategy must prioritise an inclusive, horizontal and **intersectional approach**, recognising how gender inequality spans across multiple thematic areas and intersects with other axes of discrimination (e.g. ethnicity, disability, age, migration status). A horizontal approach recognises the necessity to address challenges across all policy areas and actions. If the strategy follows the Roadmap on Women's Rights and the BPfA+30 structures, topics such as care, the engagement of men and boys, cyberviolence, stereotypes, and data collection, monitoring and data literacy need to be addressed horizontally.

The strategy must include concrete and measurable actions. It should move beyond general commitments and outline specific objectives that respond to identified challenges. Each action should be based on a solid diagnostic

⁽⁴³⁾ EIGE (2024), Economic benefits of gender equality in the EU: the economic case for gender equality in the EU, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, <https://eige.europa.eu/newsroom/economic-benefits-gender-equality>.

phase, including an honest and evidence-based assessment of what has already been achieved, what has not worked, and the persistent and emerging challenges. This assessment will help identify clear priorities for action and ensure the strategy is grounded in reality. The strategy should be clearly linked to responsible actors, timelines, and allocated resources. Attention should be given to both preventive and corrective measures. Without tangible actions, there is a risk that the strategy remains aspirational rather than effective. One possible approach could involve listing key actions and allowing for a progress framework, which could enhance clarity, accountability, and ease of implementation at multiple levels.

A **dual approach to monitoring and evaluation** is also a vital component of a successful gender equality strategy. First it is necessary to **establish a robust framework** to allow institutions to identify trends, mitigate risks, adapt actions proactively, and secondly, it is necessary to track progress through **clearly defined indicators and sex-disaggregated data**. Regular data collection, analysis, and reporting are essential for assessing impact and ensuring accountability as well as long-term, gender focused impact assessment is essential to eradicate gender-blindness in planning. The European Semester is the perfect instrument to use EIGE's data sources, assessment tools and strategy proposals. Moreover, the Social Scoreboard could include more gender sensitive and sex-disaggregated indicators. The Gender Equality Index and the BPfA recommendations can be used for country-specific recommendations to Member States. **Embedding monitoring and evaluation into institutional processes** will help sustain momentum and support continuous improvement. Transparency should be central to the monitoring process. The existing EU Gender Equality Strategy Monitoring Portal, developed by the Joint Research Centre in collaboration with DG JUST and EIGE, already provides a strong foundation by offering real-time tracking of progress, visualised data, and public access to key indicators. Building on this tool, stronger integration with the strategy — such as embedding direct hyperlinks and ensuring interactive navigation — would further enhance transparency, make the strategy and its implementation more complementary, and foster broader engagement and trust. Expanding the portal to include anticipatory indicators and simplified progress tracking (e.g. a “tick-box” action framework) could help make the monitoring system even more forward-looking, accessible, and results-driven. Moreover, ensuring effective coordination of action across EU institutions, agencies, and Member States—guided by shared indicators and timelines—will be essential to ensure that monitoring leads to coherent and sustained implementation.

An **effective communication and stakeholder engagement** are critical to the implementation of the strategy. A comprehensive communication plan should be developed to raise awareness, promote understanding, and encourage active participation among all relevant stakeholders across member states and institutions. This includes using inclusive and accessible language, tailoring messages to diverse audiences, and highlighting progress and success stories to build trust and motivation. Engaging strategic stakeholders, at both EU and Member State levels, is essential to fostering a shared sense of ownership and commitment. The development and implementation of the strategy should also enhance civil society organisations and equality bodies play a meaningful role in shaping, delivering, and reviewing policy. Additionally, trade unions, employer representatives, and governments should be actively involved in supporting and complementing these efforts. The strategy should be presented in a clear, accessible, and visually engaging format but also in a data driven way, supported by sex disaggregated data, and with an underlying gender perspective. Visible endorsement and support from institutional leadership are also essential to signal the importance of gender equality and to inspire collective action. A clear effort should be made to contextualise and communicate the strategy in an understandable, relatable way to the wider public. This includes simplifying key messages, using non-technical language, visual tools, and concrete examples that speak to everyday experiences. Doing so will strengthen public support, increase legitimacy, and empower broader civic engagement in advancing gender equality goals.

EIGE's work – from data sources, assessment tools to strategy proposals - can support the implementation of the Gender Equality Strategy. For instance, the Gender Equality Index and the BPfA recommendations can be used for country-specific recommendation to Member States. EIGE can also support and mandate data collection and data driven monitoring of policy measures, including the EU directives with a development of measurable target indicators for the monitoring. **EIGE's role**, as the EU Agency for gender equality, needs to be **recognised as imperative for the implementation of the Gender Equality Strategy**, providing that the necessary human and budgetary resources are ensured to fulfil its expanding tasks and effectively support the Commission, including by providing technical assistance on gender mainstreaming.



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