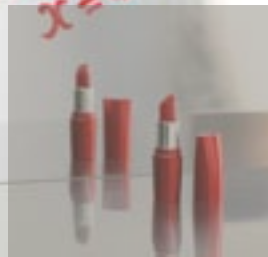
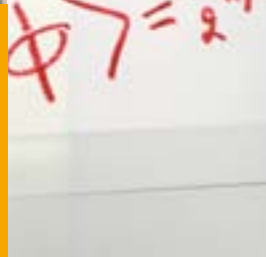
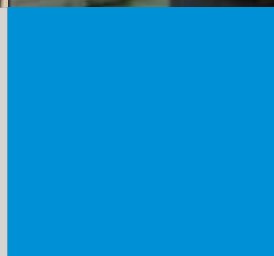
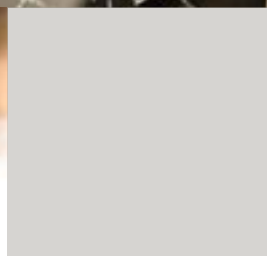
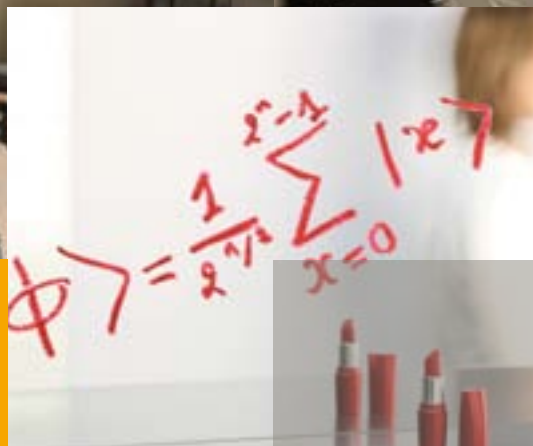


Gender equality in the European Union

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Gender equality in the European Union





Introduction

The equal treatment of men and women has been a fundamental tenet of the European Union since its inception and the principle of gender equality is central to all its activities.

- **The Treaty of Rome**, signed by the six founding countries of the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1957, committed Member States to the right of equal pay for equal work for men and women.
- **The Treaty of Amsterdam (1997)** stipulated that the promotion of equality between women and men was one of the EU's fundamental tasks. It also introduced the elimination of inequalities and discrimination and the promotion of equality between women and men in all activities.
- **The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (2000)** states that equality between men and women must be ensured in all areas, including employment, work and pay (Article 23) and reaffirms the ban on discrimination on a wide number of grounds, including sex (Article 21).

The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union

Article 23: Equality between women and men

Equality between women and men must be ensured in all areas, including employment, work and pay.

The principle of equality shall not prevent the maintenance or adoption of measures providing for specific advantages in favour of the under-represented sex.

- **The Treaty of the European Union (2009)** commits Member States to non-discrimination and equality between women and men (Article 2 and 3).
- **The Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union** provides that the Union will aim to eliminate inequalities and promote equality between men and women (Article 8). It also stipulates that the Union will aim to combat discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation (Article 10).





Approach, principles and instruments

EU LEGISLATION

In addition to the rights enshrined by treaty, 15 European Directives have been adopted between 1975 and 2010. Among other things, this wide-ranging body of legislation:

- Ensures the equal treatment of men and women at work.
- Prohibits discrimination in social security schemes.
- Sets out minimum requirements on parental leave.
- Provides protection to pregnant workers and recent mothers.

- Sets out rules on access to employment, working conditions, remuneration and legal rights for the self-employed.

EU Directives are legally binding for Member States and must be incorporated into their national legislation. This allows citizens who feel that they have suffered discrimination to take their cases to national courts.

All Member States have established **national equality bodies** to monitor the application of gender equality laws. They meet regularly with the European Commission to exchange information, ideas and best practice. National Equality Bodies can help citizens in legal actions and provide advice on the availability of legal remedies.



A DUAL APPROACH

The European Commission follows the dual approach by both implementing gender mainstreaming and initiating specific measures.

Gender mainstreaming is the integration of a gender equality perspective into every stage of policy process - design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation - with a view to promoting equality between women and men. It means assessing how policies impact on women and men, and taking steps to change policies if necessary. The aim is to make gender equality a reality and to improve policy-making by bringing it closer to citizens' needs.

As part of the process, statistics, indicators and benchmarks are used to monitor progress in implementing the gender dimension in different policy fields, from employment to health, from research to education, to name just a few.

In addition to the gender mainstreaming approach, the EU has used a wide variety of **specific measures**, such as legislation, awareness-raising campaigns or financial programmes. The aim of these measures is to tackle specific problems such as the gender pay gap or the persistent underrepresentation of women, particularly in the field of employment.



FINANCIAL SUPPORT PROGRAMMES

THE EUROPEAN SOCIAL FUND

The **European Social Fund (ESF)** is a Structural Fund set up to tackle differences in prosperity and living standards across EU Member States and regions and is in particular devoted to promoting employment. Since 1993, the Fund has made equality between men and women one of its priorities.

Thus, the ESF has made important contributions to improving the situation of women in the labour market. During the period 2007-2013, the ESF is particularly focusing on supporting the promotion of women in employment, the elimination of pay differentials, the promotion of equal opportunities and increasing women's participation in the workforce.

An ESF-funded project in Germany aims to encourage women into the traditionally male-dominated fields of science and technology. For the last eleven years, Germany has designated an annual 'Girls' Day' when thousands of hi-tech companies, research organisations and other technology-based organisations throw open their doors to over 100,000 teenage girls to try to interest them in a technical or scientific career. The 'Future Prospects for Girls' campaign has been such a success that a 'Boys' Day' event has recently been introduced on the same day, when teenage boys visit organisations in the female-dominated liberal and caring professions, such as nursing and social work.

http://www.girls-day.de/Girls_Day_Info/English_Information

An ERDF-funded programme to improve access to finance for migrant women in Sweden helped boost the careers of 80 new female entrepreneurs within the scheme's first 18 months. The project, which got underway in four counties of Sweden in 2008, led to the establishment of a permanent Micro Finance Institute for migrant women who want to set up or further develop micro-enterprises, including self-employment. Activities include the development of a loan fund of around €480,000 and support for businesses before and after start-up. In 2010 the project was awarded a RegioStars Award, for its contribution to good practice in regional development.

<http://www.mikrofinansiering.se/page112187.html>

THE EUROPEAN REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT FUND

The **European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)** is another of the Structural Funds and aims to strengthen economic and social cohesion by correcting imbalances between the EU's regions. Among other things, the Fund provides financial support to encourage companies to create sustainable jobs. This Fund has in particular been used to promote childcare facilities. A recent innovation requires gender equality, non-discrimination and accessibility for disabled persons to be taken into account in all projects.



THE PROGRESS PROGRAMME

The **PROGRESS programme** was set up to help implement the employment, social affairs and equal opportunities objectives of the EU's Social Agenda. The programme has five sections:

- employment;
- social inclusion and protection;
- working conditions;
- non-discrimination;
- gender equality.

The €743 million PROGRESS programme got underway in 2007 and will run until 2013 and €50.3 million has been allocated to fund gender equality projects.

PROGRESS operates in all 27 EU Member States, EU candidate countries and EFTA/EEA countries. It targets Member States, local and regional authorities, public employment services and national statistics offices.

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=327&langId=en>

THE DAPHNE PROGRAMME

To protect children, young people and women from all forms of violence the EU launched the **DAPHNE** programme in 2000. DAPHNE III got underway in 2007 and will run until 2013. The DAPHNE programme has so far funded hundreds of projects around the EU. Some of them are initiated by the European Commission itself but the majority are run by NGOs, with grant funding provided by the European Commission. Public authorities and institutions and non-profit making private organisations in the 27 EU Member States, EU candidate countries and EFTA/EEA countries can apply for funding under the scheme.

http://ec.europa.eu/justice/fundamental-rights/programme/daphne-programme/index_en.htm

FUTURE STEPS

The European Commission is currently preparing the next Multi-annual Financial Framework (MFF), which is the Commission's package of legislative proposals and documents for the 2014-2020 European Union budget.

This multi-annual spending plan will aim to increase growth and jobs in Europe, encourage greener agriculture and establish a more environmentally conscious and internationally prominent Europe.





The European Commission's priorities

THE WOMEN'S CHARTER

When the Barroso II Commission took office in 2010 it underlined its commitment to gender equality by adopting a **Women's Charter**¹.

This political declaration commits the European Commission to strengthen efforts to build a gender perspective into all its policies for the next five years while taking specific measures to promote gender equality.

"This Charter represents the commitment of the Commission to making gender equality a reality in the EU. Women and men still face widespread inequalities, with serious repercussions for economic and social cohesion, sustainable growth and competitiveness, and the ageing of Europe's population. It is therefore important to include a strong gender dimension in the future **Europe 2020 strategy** that the Commission will develop in the next five years. Especially in times of crisis, we need to incorporate the gender dimension in all of our policies, for the benefit of both women and men."

José Manuel Barroso,
President of the European Commission.

THE STRATEGY FOR EQUALITY BETWEEN WOMEN AND MEN

The **Strategy for Equality between Women and Men 2010-2015**² builds on the experience of the Roadmap for Equality between Women and Men of 2006. It represents the **European Commission's work programme on gender equality** for the period 2010-2015. It is a comprehensive framework committing the Commission to **promote gender equality** into all its policies for the following thematic priorities:

- equal economic independence;
- equal pay for equal work or work of equal value;
- equality in decision-making;
- dignity, integrity and ending gender-based violence;
- gender equality in external actions;
- horizontal issues (gender roles, legislation and governance).

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=6568&langId=en>

THE REPORT ON PROGRESS ON EQUALITY BETWEEN WOMEN AND MEN

Every year the European Commission reports on progress in achieving equality between men and women at the EU level through the publication of the Report on Progress on Equality between Women and Men. The annual report includes a range of gender equality indicators.

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=6562&langId=en>

Strategy for equality between women and men 2010-2015





The partnership for gender equality

Co-operation with the various institutions and stakeholders active in the field of gender equality – EU countries governments, the European Parliament, social partner organisations, civil society, equality bodies, international organisations, EU agencies – is crucial to ensure progress in this field. The Strategy for Equality between Women and Men foresees an Annual Dialogue on gender equality between the European Commission, the European Parliament, the Council and key stakeholders such as social partners and civil society organisations at a European level.

COMMITTEES AND GROUPS

HIGH-LEVEL GROUP ON GENDER MAINSTREAMING

The High-Level Group on Gender Mainstreaming is an informal group created in 2001, which comprises high-level representatives responsible for gender mainstreaming at the national level. It is chaired by the European Commission and meets twice per year in the country holding the Presidency of the European Union. The HLG plays a key role in the EU gender equality agenda, through the formulation, programming and implemen-

tation of the EU Gender Equality Pact and the Trio of Presidencies' Programme. It helps the Presidencies and the Commission to identify gender equality subjects and priorities which are of political relevance, for debate by the Council of the EU. The HLG is also the main forum for planning the follow-up of the Beijing Platform for Action inside the EU and for preparing the annual meeting of the UN Commission on the Status of Women. It also assists the Commission in the preparation of its Report on Progress on Equality between Women and Men.

<http://ec.europa.eu/transparency/regexpert/detailGroup.cfm?groupID=1240>

ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN AND MEN

The Advisory Committee was set up by the European Commission in 1981. It is composed of the representatives of EU Member States' ministries responsible for gender equality, representatives from gender equality bodies, European social partner organisations as well as the European Women's Lobby. It assists the Commission in formulating and implementing European

Union activities aimed at promoting equality between women and men. To achieve these aims the Committee delivers opinions to the Commission on issues of relevance to the promotion of gender equality in the EU.

<http://ec.europa.eu/transparency/regexpert/detailGroup.cfm?groupID=1238>

FORMAL COMMITMENTS

THE EUROPEAN PACT FOR GENDER EQUALITY

Member States are committed to gender equality through the European Pact for Gender Equality, originally adopted in 2006. In March 2011 a new Pact for the period 2011-2020 was adopted. It urges the EU and Member States to work towards achieving equality, ensure equal pay for equal work and promote the equal participation of women in decision-making. The Pact also calls for an increase in affordable and high-quality

childcare, the promotion of flexible working arrangements, action to reduce violence against women and increased protection for victims of violence.

http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/lisa/119628.pdf

THE BEIJING PLATFORM FOR ACTION

The EU and its Member States are also committed to promote gender equality through the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA) agreed at the UN World Conference on Women in 1995. The BPfA aims to remove obstacles to women's participation in all spheres of public and private life through an equal share in economic, social, cultural and political decision-making. It also aims to improve women's health and their access to education. The implementation of the BPfA agenda is reviewed by the UN every five years.



EUROPEAN INSTITUTIONS

THE PRESIDENCY OF THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

Trio Presidency Joint Declarations on Equality between Women and Men are adopted at the beginning of each Trio to encourage Member States and the EU to speed up efforts to promote equality between women and men. These declarations detail the gender equality programmes and activities of the three Presidencies of the EU for 18 months.

THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

The Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality of the European Parliament is responsible for:

- the definition, promotion and protection of women's rights in the Union and related Community measures;
- the promotion of women's rights in third countries;
- equal opportunities policy, including equality between men and women with regard to labour market opportunities and treatment at work;
- the removal of all forms of discrimination based on sex;
- the implementation and further development of gender mainstreaming in all policy sectors;
- the follow-up and implementation of international agreements and conventions involving the rights of women;
- information policy on women.

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/activities/committees/homeCom.do?language=EN&body=FEMM>

THE EUROPEAN INSTITUTE FOR GENDER EQUALITY

The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) was officially opened in Vilnius in June 2010. Its main task is to support the EU institutions and Member States in their efforts to promote gender equality. It does this by collecting and publishing reliable

and comparable information and data on gender equality with the aim of helping the EU institutions and Member States to take evidence-based policy decisions.

<http://www.eige.europa.eu/>

THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

The Strasbourg-based Council of Europe also works actively to promote gender equality. Article 14 and Protocol 12 of the European Convention on Human Rights, whose implementation is monitored by the Council, have helped to improve the legal protection and status of women in recent decades. On 7 April 2010, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe adopted a Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence.

CIVIL SOCIETY AND EUROPEAN SOCIAL PARTNER ORGANISATIONS

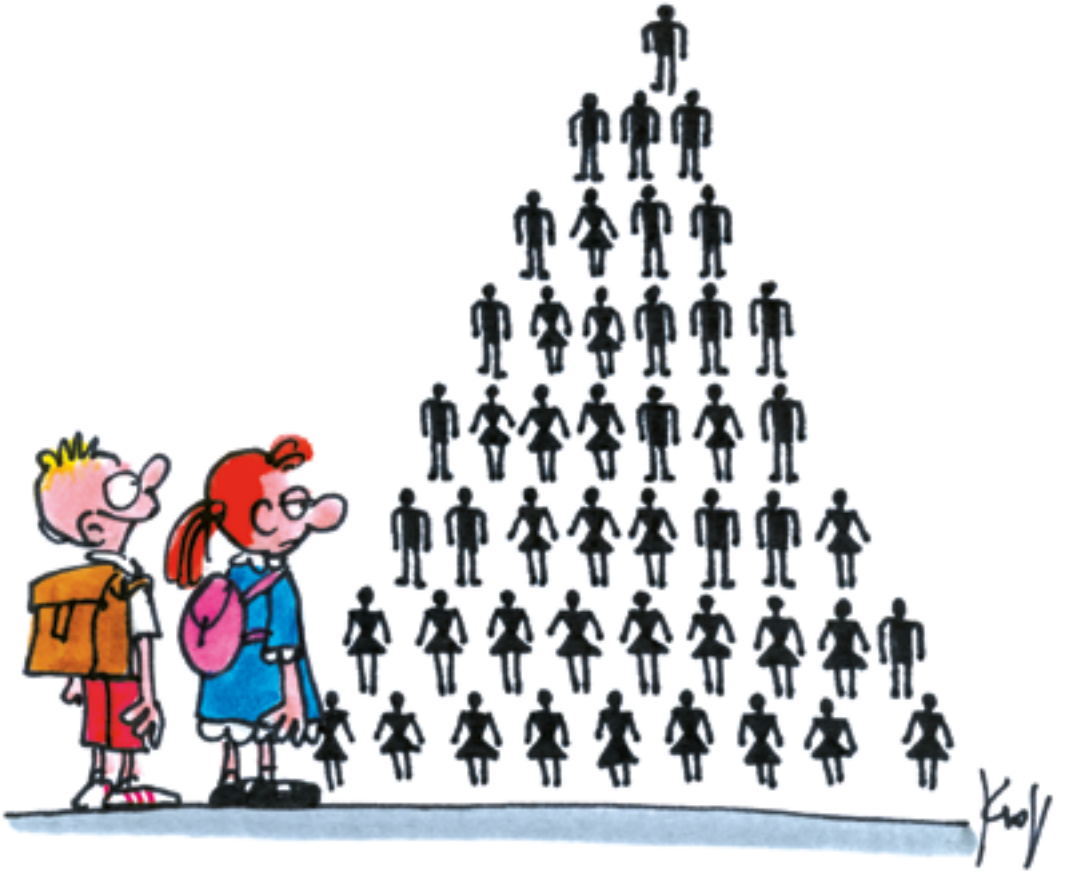
EUROPEAN SOCIAL PARTNERS

The European social partners – UNICE/UEAPME, CEEP and ETUC – have an important role to play in the promotion of gender equality, in particular in the workplace. They are specifically committed to gender equality through the **Framework of Actions on Gender Equality** for 2005-2010. The four priority areas of action are:

- addressing gender roles;
- promoting women in decision-making;
- supporting work-life balance;
- tackling the gender pay gap.

EUROPEAN WOMEN'S LOBBY (EWL)

The 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 27 EU Member States and the three candidate countries, as well as to 20 Europe-wide bodies, representing a total of more than 2500 organisations.



http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/index_en.htm

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