

THE EUROPEAN GENDER EQUALITY STRATEGY (2020-2025)

5 MARCH 2020

On 5 March the European Commission unveiled the [EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025](#) setting out actions across all policy areas aimed at achieving gender equality in the EU. The Strategy's key objectives include ending gender-based violence and stereotypes; ensuring equal participation and opportunities in the labour market, including equal pay; and achieving gender balance in decision-making and politics.

The Communication, presented by Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, Vice-President for Values and Transparency Vera Jourová and Commissioner for Equality Helena Dalli, replaces the EU's Strategic Engagement for Gender Equality (2015-2019). Together with the Strategy, it was announced that Commissioner Dalli will lead the Commission's work in integrating a gender perspective in all EU policies and major initiatives, with the support of the newly created Task-Force on Equality.

On the same day, the Commission opened a [public consultation](#) on the pay transparency initiative, aimed at introducing binding pay transparency measures. The consultation will feed into an impact assessment accompanying the future proposal, expected by the fourth quarter of 2020.

1. FREEDOM FROM GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AND GENDER STEREOTYPES

This first section of the Strategy lists actions aimed at preventing and combatting gender-based violence and stereotypes through all-round measures to support and protect victims of such crimes.

Key actions for the European Commission:

- Finalise the accession of the EU to the Council of Europe convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (the 'Istanbul Convention');
- Should the EU's accession to the Istanbul Convention not be possible the Commission intends to propose measures, within the limits of EU competence, to achieve the same objectives as the Convention (2021);
- The Commission, in particular, intends to extend the areas of crime where harmonisation is possible, adding violence against women to the list of EU crimes defined in the Treaty (so called 'Eurocrimes');
- The Commission will also propose additional measures to prevent and combat specific forms of gender-based violence, including sexual harassment, abuse of women and female genital mutilation (FGM);
- Present a Commission Recommendation on the prevention of harmful practices, including female genital mutilation, forced abortion and forced sterilisation, early and forced marriage and so-called 'honour-related violence';
- Launch an EU network on the prevention of gender-based violence and domestic violence, bringing together Member States and stakeholders to exchange good practice, and fund training, capacity building and support services;
- Propose a Digital Services Act clarifying online platforms' responsibilities with regard to user disseminated content and facilitate the development of a new framework for cooperation between internet platforms to address illegal and harmful online content (December 2020);
- Present an EU victims' rights strategy on a more effective fight against child sexual abuse and a new EU strategy on the eradication of trafficking in human beings (within 2020);
- Improve available data through an EU survey on gender-based violence against women and other forms of interpersonal violence (will be published in 2023);

- Supporting projects promoting gender equality under Creative Europe, including under Music Moves Europe, and present a gender equality strategy in the audio-visual industry as part of the next MEDIA sub-programme, including financial support, structured dialogue, mentoring and training for women film-makers, producers and screenwriters;
- Follow the European approach on AI, as set out in the new Commission White Paper, grounded in EU values and fundamental rights, including non-discrimination and gender equality;
- Launch an EU-wide communication campaign to tackle gender stereotypes.

Key actions for the Council:

- Conclude the EU's accession to the Istanbul Convention and ensure swift EU ratification.

Key actions for the Member States:

- Ratify and implement the Istanbul Convention (if not already done so);
- Ratify and implement the International Labour Organization Convention to combat violence and harassment in the world of work;
- Implement the Victims' Rights Directive, the Child Sexual Abuse Directive and other relevant EU law protecting victims of gender-based violence;
- Systematically collect and report data on gender-based violence;
- Support civil society and public services in preventing and combating gender-based violence and gender stereotyping, including with the help of EU funding available under the 'citizens, equality, rights and values' programme (2021-2027).

2. THRIVING IN A GENDER EQUAL ECONOMY

To tackle issues like the underrepresentation of women in the labour market the Strategy proposes measures meant to create a level-play field for men and women from childhood, education and training to career and public policy.

Key actions for the European Commission:

- Propose binding measures on pay transparency (within 2020);
- Enforce the Work-Life Balance Directive and other EU laws to close gender gaps and discrimination in the labour market;
- Monitor through the European Semester the gender equality progress in Member States, in particular in their labour market, social inclusion and education;
- Support structural reforms in Member States to increase gender equality in the labour market through the Structural Reform Support Programme;
- Support women as investors and entrepreneurs through the Horizon Europe's European Innovation Council and through the InvestEU programme;
- Address the digital gender gap in the updated Digital Education Action Plan;
- Present the Updated Skills Agenda for Europe and a proposal for a Council recommendation on vocational education and training, addressing gender balance in traditionally male- or female dominated professions, gender stereotypes and gender gaps in education and training;
- Propose to revise the Barcelona targets for the provision of early childhood education and care arrangements for children and propose a Child Guarantee focusing on barriers preventing children from accessing necessary services;
- Reinforce the Youth Guarantee to specifically address women that are not in education, employment or training and to ensure equal opportunities;
- Foster equality through the upcoming European Education Area and through the renewed Strategic Framework for Gender Equality in Sports;
- Development of an Inclusion and Diversity Strategy for the future Erasmus+ programme to provide guidance on how the programme can help address gender inequalities in all education and training, youth and sport sectors;
- Assess how risks and resources are shared in pension systems between women and men in the 2021 edition of the Pension Adequacy Report;
- Present a Green Paper on Ageing with a focus on long-term care, pensions and active ageing;

Key actions for Member States:

- Transpose the Work-Life Balance Directive and properly implement EU gender equality and labour law;
- Follow up on the Council conclusions of June 2019 “Closing the Gender Pay Gap: Key Policies and Measures”;
- Ensure adequate investments in early childhood education, care services and long-term care services including from available EU funding;
- Implement the Ministerial declaration of commitment on 'women in digital'.

3. LEADING AND PARTICIPATING EQUALLY THROUGHOUT SOCIETY

The measures proposed in this section of the Strategy are meant to tackle the issue of both pay and representation gap between in the EU. Particular attention is dedicated to the gender balance in the European Institutions.

Key actions for the European Commission:

- Push for the adoption of the 2012 proposal for a Directive on improving the gender balance on corporate boards, which set the aim of a minimum of 40% of non-executive members of the under-represented sex on company boards;
- Promote the participation of women as voters and candidates in the 2024 European Parliament elections;
- Promote EU Platform of Diversity Charters in all sectors;
- Reach gender parity (50%) at all levels of Commission's management by the end of 2024 and increase efforts towards reaching a larger share of female managers in EU agencies;

Key action for the European Parliament and the Council:

- Adopt measures to improve gender balance at all levels of their management and in leadership positions;
- Adopt the proposal for a Directive on improving the gender balance on corporate boards;

Key action for the Member States:

- Transpose and implement the Directive on improving the gender balance on corporate boards, once adopted;
- Develop and implement strategies to increase the number of women in decision-making positions in politics and policy making.

4. GENDER MAINSTREAMING AND AN INTERSECTIONAL PERSPECTIVE IN EU POLICIES

The below measures are based on the assumption that gender mainstreaming ensures policies and programmes maximise the potential of all women and men in society. The main focus is thus on redistributing powers, influences and resources in a fair and gender-equal way, tackling inequality, promoting fairness, and creating opportunity.

- Integrate a gender perspective in all major Commission initiatives during the current mandate (e.g. the European Green Deal, the Building Renovation Wave or the EU Strategy on Climate Adaptation);
- Establish the Task Force for Equality composed of representatives of all Commission services and of the European External Action Service to ensure the implementation of equality mainstreaming, including gender equality, at operational and technical level (e.g. for policies such as the Building Renovation Wave or the EU Strategy on Climate Adaptation).
- Integrate with a gender dimension the EU Beating Cancer Plan (to be launched in 2020);
- Adoption, in 2020, of the EU Drugs Agenda 2021-2025 to address gender-specific challenges faced by women and girls in substance abuse;
- Adoption of the forthcoming Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion and of the EU strategic frameworks on disability, LGBTI+, Roma inclusion and children's rights.

5. FUNDING ACTIONS TO MAKE PROGRESS IN GENDER EQUALITY IN THE EU

The Strategy also focuses on funding directed at supporting actions to promote women's labour market participation and work-life balance, invest in care facilities, support female entrepreneurship, combat gender segregation in certain professions and address the imbalanced representation of girls and boys in some sectors of education and training. To this end, the following measures are proposed:

- The Multi-Annual Financial Framework (MFF) will ensure the integration of a gender dimension throughout the financial framework, and more specifically in various EU funding and budgetary guarantee instruments, in particular the European Social Fund Plus, the European Regional Development Fund, Creative Europe, the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund, the Cohesion Fund and the InvestEU Programme, the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values Programme, the Asylum and Migration Fund;
- The proposed Common Provisions Regulation includes specific “enabling conditions”, requiring a Member State to have adopted the Charter of Fundamental Rights and to have in place a national gender equality strategic framework as a precondition to make use of the funds;
- The Commission will investigate the gender impact of its activities and at how to measure expenditure related to gender equality at programme level in the 2021-2027 MFF.

6. KEY EXTERNAL ACTIONS ON GENDER EQUALITY

The Strategy underlines the EU's commitment to promoting gender equality and women's empowerment in its international partnerships, political and human rights dialogues with third countries, in trade policy as well as in neighbourhood and enlargement policies, including in the context of accession negotiations and the Stabilisation and Association Process. To this end, the following measures are proposed:

- Launch the third Action Plan on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in External Relations (GAP III - 2020);
- Adopt the Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy (2020-2024);
- Continue to implement the EU Strategic Approach and Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security 2019-2024;
- Actively promote gender equality through the EU's trade policy (including through its active engagement on the issue in the World Trade Organisation), in the EU's neighbourhood and enlargement policies (including in the context of accession negotiations and the Stabilisation and Association Process), and in the EU's actions in fragile, conflict and emergency situation;
- Application of the External Investment Plan, of the Women's Financial Inclusion Facility and of the EU Strategy with Africa to promote women's entrepreneurship and labour market participation in third countries;
- Implement the Spotlight Initiative, a joint EU-UN global programme with €500 million EU funding to help eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls;
- Launch a campaign #WithHer in 2020, designed to challenge harmful gender norms and stereotypes, which perpetuate violence against women worldwide.