

Advisory Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men

Opinion on A gender- equal future: Follow up to the Gender Equality Strategy

The Opinion of the Advisory Committee does not necessarily reflect the positions of the Member States and does not bind the Member States

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1. Background

Gender equality is a core value of the European Union and a universally recognised human right, crucial for well-being, economic growth, competitiveness, prosperity, democracy, and good governance. The European Commission has expressed a clear political commitment to advancing gender equality in the EU, which is a fundamental part of creating a Union of Equality.^{1, 2}

As stated in the current Gender Equality Strategy, the EU is a global leader in gender equality, with 14 of the top ranking 20 countries being EU Member States. Furthermore, the EU aims to meet the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and considers gender equality as a cross-cutting priority of all SDGs. Nevertheless, no Member State has achieved full gender equality. As demonstrated by the annual Gender Equality Index produced by The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), progress is slow.

This opinion of the Advisory Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men aims to review the current Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025, delineate the major challenges beyond 2025 and explore the possible content of an anticipated future Gender Equality Strategy.

2. Taking stock of the current Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025

The current Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025³ (hereafter the Strategy), adopted on 5 March 2020, constitutes a valuable contribution to a gender-equal Europe. It is built around three main pillars:

- being free from violence and stereotypes,
- thriving in a gender-equal economy, and
- leading equally throughout society.

¹ EU Commission President Von der Leyen stated that “equality for all and equality in all its senses” was one of the major priorities of her Commission, see the President’s political guidelines for the European Union, July 2019: https://ec.europa.eu/info/files/political-guidelines-new-commission_en

² European Commission, *A Union of Equality: Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025*, March 2020: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52020DC0152&from=EN>

³ Doc. 6678/20. European Commission, *A Union of Equality: Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025*, March 2020: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52020DC0152> (COM/2020/152, Document 52020DC0152)

Under the respective pillars, concrete actions are enumerated, for instance in the form of legislation to be adopted or recommendations to be issued. With more than one year to go on the implementation of the Strategy, actions are well underway.

Under the first pillar (free from violence and stereotypes) all but two concrete actions have been completed. As for pillars two and three (thriving in a gender-equal economy and leading equally throughout society) all actions have been completed. It can be deduced that once enumerated and formulated in a Strategy adopted by the College of Commissioners, promised concrete actions are largely followed through and implemented.

The implementation of the current Strategy is not finalised, but significant progress has been made, including adopting the Directive on Gender Balance in Corporate Boards in 2022⁴, the Directive on Pay Transparency⁵ in May 2023, the EU's accession to the Istanbul Convention in October 2023, the adoption of the minimum standards for Equality Bodies Directives⁶ in May 2024 and the first ever EU-legislation combating violence against women and domestic violence⁷ adopted in 2024. A pilot tracking methodology to measure gender equality-related expenditure in the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) 2021-2027 has also been developed. All of the above highlights the effectiveness of the Commission's actions and the value of a structured Strategy with clear, targeted actions and policy objectives.

Gaps in the implementation of the current Strategy

The Strategy represents a significant advancement towards achieving gender equality in the Union, yet certain areas require further attention to fully realize its goals.

Firstly, the Strategy does not contain the Council of Europe definition of gender mainstreaming⁸, which is essential to make sure mainstreaming is effectively carried out within the European Commission. A particularly important element of the Council of Europe definition highlights that it is the actor normally responsible for policy-making who also should be responsible for operationalising gender mainstreaming.

⁴ DIRECTIVE (EU) 2022/2381 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 23 November 2022 on improving the gender balance among directors of listed companies and related measures

⁵ Directive (EU) 2023/970 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 10 May 2023 to strengthen the application of the principle of equal pay for equal work or work of equal value between men and women through pay transparency and enforcement mechanisms

⁶ Directive (EU) 2024/1500 on standards for equality bodies in the field of equal treatment and equal opportunities between women and men in matters of employment and occupation, and amending Directives 2006/54/EC and 2010/41/EU

⁷ DIRECTIVE (EU) 2024/1385 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL on combating violence against women and domestic violence

⁸ Council of Europe. Gender mainstreaming: conceptual framework, methodology and presentation of good practices. Strasbourg, 1998.

Secondly, the external visibility as well as the coordination of the Strategy with other relevant strategies could be improved by better synergies between and among Commission services, and the Council.

The Strategy should also more effectively have addressed intersectionality, considering how gender intersects with other forms of discrimination. This requires stronger political commitment and better coordination among EU institutions, and sustained efforts to shift societal attitudes towards true gender equality.

3. Main current and future challenges in EU Gender Equality

As stated in the current Strategy, the core challenges affecting the EU today all have a gender dimension⁹. Nevertheless, a new Commission will have to navigate a changing political context and tackle emerging issues, strongly influenced by multiple crises, such as Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, energy crisis, care crisis, the climate crisis as well as anti-gender equality movements.

Main current and future challenges in the area of gender equality in the European Union

It has become clear that in times of **crisis**, such as the COVID-19 pandemic or the Russian war of aggression in Ukraine, to name but a few, gender equality often falls out of political focus. Legislation and practices therefore need to be adopted before the crisis appears. In the context of **crisis preparedness and responses**, a gender equality perspective needs to be applied to analyses, assessments, and budgets.¹⁰

The implementation of the current Strategy is based on the **dual approach** of targeted measures to achieve gender equality, combined with strengthened gender mainstreaming¹¹. One part of the Strategy, Chapter 4, is dedicated specifically to gender mainstreaming. There is ample evidence, underpinned by research and studies¹², on what makes gender mainstreaming work. One of most important success factors is a strong political commitment.

⁹ European Commission, *A Union of Equality: Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025*, p.15, March 2020: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52020DC0152&from=EN>

¹⁰ Council Conclusions on Mainstreaming a gender equality perspective in policies, programmes, and budgets, para 17

¹¹ European Commission, *A Union of Equality: Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025*, p.2 March 2020: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52020DC0152&from=EN>

¹² Council of Europe (2004) [Gender mainstreaming: Conceptual framework, methodology and presentation of good practices. Final report of activities of the Group of Specialists on Mainstreaming \(EG-S-MS\)](#)

However, in order for the dual approach to succeed, political will also needs to encompass the process of gender mainstreaming, e.g. by building the capacity and awareness within the organisation. This requires resources and dedicated expertise. For strategic reasons, capacity building should first and foremost focus on persons in key positions, supported by accountability mechanisms to ensure that directives and guidelines are followed. Capacity building needs to be understood as an ongoing and long-term process.

Another suggestion to promote **gender mainstreaming** at EU and national level is to explore ways to strengthen its implementation, for instance by presenting a Council Recommendation. The Treaty of the Functioning of the European Union already contains an obligation for the Union to eliminate inequalities and to promote equality between women and men in all its activities.¹³ Furthermore, several Member States (e.g. FI, DK, AT, BE, EE, ES) already have a legal obligation or other regulation to gender mainstream part of their activities or their budgets. A potential Council Recommendation could therefore contain definitions of gender mainstreaming including gender budgeting in line with the Council of Europe definitions, guidelines for coherent wording and translations of gender equality aspects in the EU in all documents, as well as provisions relating to the production, use and analyses of sex-disaggregated statistics.

Facts and figures are the cornerstone for evidence-based policy-making and substantiate the relevance of gender equality in different contexts. Collecting robust facts and figures in the form of **sex- and age- disaggregated statistics** is a key issue moving forward. EIGE's work on the Gender Equality Index is essential, but it should be better used to support the European Semester. A major challenge is to systematically disaggregate all indicators that are relevant to individuals by sex, age, and if possible, other grounds of discrimination, both at EU level and at national level. Synergies should be identified; cooperation should be strengthened and key factors that influence and intersect with gender should be gradually integrated into data collection and analysis.

Gender equality challenges in health are shifting due to the developments in the care sector, ageing societies, the gender dimension of mental health, and new challenges related to digital work environments and health. The different situations of women and men as both carers and cared for must be taken into account in these changes. To close the persisting Gender Health Gap, the integration of a gender dimension into health research, health policies, and medical health care practices is key. **Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR)** are an inherent part of gender equality challenges in health. Access to safe and affordable quality sexual and reproductive health services are hampered by systemic barriers. It is important that

¹³ Treaty of the Functioning of the European Union, Art 8.

European institutions and Member States ensure universal access to these rights, including the right to safe and legal abortion, in line with their respective competences, and integrate these rights into the Charter of Fundamental Rights. Other issues that may be covered in a future Strategy are measures to counteract obstetric violence, to prevent period poverty, the launching of campaigns to further age-appropriate comprehensive sexuality education and SRHR and the funding of pertinent research in the area.

The increasing speed of **digitalisation and the evolution of artificial intelligence (AI)** can be construed as both an opportunity and a threat to gender equality. Challenges include risk of opaque decision-making and algorithmic discrimination as well as misinformation and gender stereotypes¹⁴, although the implementation of the new EU Regulation laying down harmonised rules on artificial intelligence¹⁵ is a step forward in the area of handling algorithmic discrimination. The AI also represents a risk due to issues related to cyber violence such as deepfakes and deepnudes surfacing increasingly. However, AI detection tools also provide an opportunity to detect harmful and/or non-consensual sexual explicit content early on, even before it is uploaded/sent. Other challenges are issues related to remote work and connectivity, which change the dynamics of workforce participation. With this also comes the opportunity to use the potential of digitalisation and AI to create opportunities in remote rural areas, which could enhance work-life balance and promote the participation of women in the labour market. However, the gender digital divide affects access to information, services, and the labour-market.

The European Union has placed **the green transition** at the heart of its post-pandemic economic recovery efforts, through the multiannual financial framework 2021-2027 and through the EU's Next Generation recovery plan, which requires 37% of funds to contribute to the achievement of EU climate targets. As the current strategy recognises, the green transition has a gender dimension, women and men are affected by and affect the climate differently, environmental behaviours are gendered and women remain under-represented in environment-related areas, notably in decision-making.

Gender equality is also essential for **democracy and the rule of law**. The rule of law extends the dual promise that all are subject to the law, and all enjoy equal protection under the law. Equal access to justice is compromised, and the rule of law undermined, if gendered inequalities and discriminatory social structures and practices prevalent in society result in

¹⁴ Council Conclusions on the Impact of Artificial Intelligence on Gender Equality in the Labour Market, 14750/2021

¹⁵ Regulation (EU) 2024/1689 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 June 2024 laying down harmonised rules on artificial intelligence and amending Regulations (EC) No 300/2008, (EU) No 167/2013, (EU) No 168/2013, (EU) 2018/858, (EU) 2018/1139 and (EU) 2019/2144 and Directives 2014/90/EU, (EU) 2016/797 and (EU) 2020/1828 (Artificial Intelligence Act) (Text with EEA relevance)

discriminatory laws or gaps in legal protection.¹⁶ In this context, national or regional equality bodies help ensuring access to justice at national level, by assisting complainants in Court or in other proceedings. Furthermore, the rule of law could be strengthened through conditionality of funds.

The **underrepresentation of women in political and leadership positions** needs to be addressed. The “Women on Boards” directive¹⁷ is an advancement for women’s participation in economic leadership positions and on company **boards**. However, proper implementation of the directive has to be ensured. In order to strengthen women’s possibilities to become **entrepreneurs**, dedicated measures should be included in the future Gender Equality Strategy. Supporting women’s economic activity and entrepreneurship will positively impact both gender equality and the economy as a whole.

Gender stereotypes continue to impact various aspects of life. Historically, women and girls have been disproportionately affected by gender stereotypes, roles and thus discriminated and disadvantaged compared to men and boys. This lack of true gender equality persists. Gender stereotypes strongly contribute, among others, to persisting gender gaps in care, pay and in the labour market. They also affect boys and men throughout their lives, limiting their personal development and causing health issues. Data reveals that in certain areas of life men and boys are also facing barriers connected to their gender, for instance in making career and educational choices, and that these barriers can intersect with other factors, resulting in enhanced vulnerabilities for some men. Among other things, gender stereotypes and the unequal share of care and domestic responsibilities between women and men as well as the lack of affordable, accessible and high-quality care services, have a direct negative impact on women’s participation in all aspects of social, economic, cultural and political life¹⁸. **Including men** in the future strategy can increase the engagement of men and boys. The situation for boys and men can impact significantly on gender equality, therefore should be taken into account in the future Gender Equality Strategy.

At the same time, gender stereotypes and traditional gender roles affect women’s full and equal participation in future-oriented sectors, notably the **STEM fields and the ICT sector**. The European Commission forecasts that 20 million ICT specialists will be needed to position

¹⁶ United Nations on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), “Gender and the rule of law”, [Gender and the rule of law | UNODC](#)

¹⁷ DIRECTIVE (EU) 2022/2381 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 23 November 2022 on improving the gender balance among directors of listed companies and related measures.

¹⁸ 2021 - Opinion on The care gap in the EU: a holistic and gender-transformative approach, Advisory Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men

Europe as a global competitor in the Digital Decade¹⁹. This necessitates overcoming cultural factors and gender stereotypes that often divert women from educational and professional paths aligned with market opportunities.

To prevent and **combat gender-based violence and harmful practices, including in the world of work**, continues to be a major challenge. How to compile, analyse and disseminate comparable statistics at EU level regarding these violations over time is key in this regard. The **emergence of new forms of violence**, including technology-facilitated gender-based violence, as part of the continuum of violence against women, requires that we improve the understanding, delimitation, and legal definitions of violence. For instance, women face higher risks of online harassment, cyber-violence, and privacy breaches, which leads to safety concerns, negatively impacts employment, causes psychological stress and deter participation in civic and political engagement as well as in online platforms.²⁰

The newly established **EU network of prevention of gender-based violence** and domestic violence should be equipped with resources and further developed under the new Commission. It is important to continue focusing on prevention as well as men, boys, and masculinities, in line with the original aim of the network. Operations should become even more strategic, with an increased focus on disseminating good practices. To create a certain degree of continuity, a small steering group of Member States could assist the Commission to plan and execute the programme planned. Each year could have a specific theme and each year the various good practices presented could be compiled and disseminated among Member States.

Another challenge to gender equality is addressing the risk of an increasingly polarised debate at EU level, which is why common denominators need to be found. Despite efforts to increase **economic prosperity and growth**, concrete measures to reduce the gender employment gap on the labour market still tarry in a lot of Member States. A common understanding of gender equality as a prerequisite for future economic growth therefore needs to be established and supported through discussions at EU level. This would help creating a joint interest of future measures in the area of economic gender equality, which in turn may foster a better understanding for related subject areas, such as gender stereotypes that, inter alia, contribute

¹⁹ "Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, 2030 Digital Compass: the European way for the Digital Decade", COM (2021) 118 final

²⁰ European Commission, "Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: A Union of Equality: Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025," COM/2020/152 final

to the unequal share of unpaid care work that are detrimental to women's full-time labour participation.

The argument of gender equality as contributing to increase the overall GDP²¹ must be put forward without losing sight of the main argument for economic gender equality, i.e. that economic gender equality forms part of the full enjoyment of human rights by all women and girls. Across the EU, evidence shows large gender disparities in wealth accumulation, property ownership and access to financial services – including retirement income. This affects women's economic independence and bargaining power. It also influences employment opportunities, including entrepreneurship, and career progression. The common habit to depreciate female-dominated professions must be counteracted. Gender-neutral and objective revaluation of work through, for example, pay audits is one key lever to increase economic gender equality.

Gender equality must furthermore stay **relevant for the younger generations**.

It is important to develop long-term tactics to reduce the effectiveness of populist and **anti-equality movements**, including addressing the rise and spread of disinformation, countering challenges to fundamental rights and democratic values, and any potential backlash against women's rights, LGBTQIA+ and gender equality.

4. The future approach to tackle the identified challenges as well as how to formulate the new framework for action

During the last 15 years, the Commission has had two Gender Equality Strategies²² adopted by the College of Commissioners as well as a staff working document called the Strategic Engagement for Gender Equality 2016-2019, which defined the framework for the European Commission's work towards gender equality during the referred period.²³

²¹ European Commission, Joint Research Centre, "Beyond GDP: Delivering Sustainable and Inclusive Wellbeing," [Alternative measures of progress beyond GDP - European Commission \(europa.eu\)](#) and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), "Human Development Index | Human Development Reports," [Human Development Index | Human Development Reports \(undp.org\)](#)

²² Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions of 21 September 2010 - Strategy for equality between women and men 2010-2015, [[COM\(2010\) 491](#) final] and Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions of 5 March 2020 - *A Union of Equality: Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025*, [COM (2020)152 final], <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52020DC0152> (COM/2020/152, Document 52020DC0152)

²³ Strategic Engagement for Gender Equality 2016-2019, [89af673e-daf5-455d-b4f0-948b7fae01f0_en \(europa.eu\)](#)

The strengths and weaknesses of the Strategic Engagement for Gender Equality (SEGE) were evaluated by the Commission.²⁴ One of the **major weaknesses identified** included the SEGE's **status as a Staff Working Document**, seen by Member States and stakeholders as a political downgrade with respect to the previous strategy.²⁵ Other weaknesses identified were, inter alia, vague definitions of objectives and actions and absence of concrete targets, a limited coordination with the European Semester and a lack of focus on cultural change values and gender stereotypes.²⁶

The SEGE evaluation also presents **recommendations** for the future, the first one being to adopt the **next gender equality strategy as a Commission Communication**²⁷. In short, the main lesson learned by SEGE is that progress in gender equality depends, above all, on the degree of political commitment.

There can be little doubt that the strengthened political will, clearly expressed by the adoption by the College of Commissioners of the current Strategy, has had several positive effects on the promotion of gender equality in the EU. It can be deduced that a future Strategy should keep its current form as **a Commission Communication adopted at the highest political level** by the College of Commissioners. Furthermore, it should be emphasized that **the three pillars of the Strategy still can be used as a basic structure and outline** when designing the new Equality Strategy.

The future EU Strategy for Gender Equality should include a number of targeted objectives on intersectional challenges, to address the situation of women who are at the intersection of multiple factors of discrimination.

In terms of the new framework for action, it is important to consider what types of monitoring, reporting and evaluations that should be carried out as well as the regularity of those processes. This may, for instance, take place within the framework of an annual reporting and recommendations cycle.

Quantitative or qualitative targets for the EU's primary objectives?

The questions of whether to set quantitative or qualitative targets for the EU's primary objectives and how to strengthen targeted interventions are appropriate to answer in one and the same context.

²⁴ Evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of the Strategic Engagement for Gender equality 2016-2019, [strategic_engagement_2016-2019_evaluation.pdf](#)

²⁵ Evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of the Strategic Engagement for Gender equality 2016-2019, p.54-55

²⁶ Evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of the Strategic Engagement for Gender equality 2016-2019, p. 54-55

²⁷ Evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of the Strategic Engagement for Gender equality 2016-2019, p. 64

Quantitative, time-bound and measurable targets

The EU Commission has proven its ability to deliver upon measurable and time-bound targets. A good example is the EU Gender Action Plan III (GAP III), which sets an ambitious agenda for gender equality and women's empowerment in EU external action.²⁸ GAP III focuses on five pillars. The first pillar is to make EU engagement on gender equality more effective as a cross-cutting priority. Consequently, the European Commission reconfirmed that by 2025, 85 % of all new external actions will contribute to this objective. According to GAP III this target requires further gender mainstreaming in all external policies and sectors using a gender-transformative, rights-based and intersectional approach. The concrete target is building on the progress of the earlier GAP II, 2015-2020.

The current Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025 sets as a target that the Commission will integrate a gender perspective in **all** major Commission initiatives during the current mandate. While the target as such is laudable, it has not been concretised. It may be therefore advisable to set **concrete and time-bound targets** also for gender mainstreaming of the EU's internal activities, preferably in several consecutive steps.

Qualitative targets are just as important, especially given the wide disparities between EU Member States in terms of gender equality and considering the need for a mix of quantitative and qualitative targets in some instances.

Action to be taken at EU or national level?

There is added value for common action at EU level, for example to include a gender equality perspective in EU policy-making and programming in support of gender-responsive green and digital transitions, to put forward legislation on women's access to senior executive and management positions, and to put forward legislation to prevent and combat gender-based violence, including in the world of work. To ensure effective outcomes of legislation, it is essential to focus on monitoring the implementation at the national level. Furthermore, the EU can fund EU level research, for example regarding health issues that specifically affect women.

When taking action at national and EU level, the role of social partners should be recognised, particularly when addressing aspects related to working life and the labour market.

²⁸ Joint communication to the European Parliament and the Council, EU gender Action Plan (GAP) III – An ambitious agenda for gender equality and women's empowerment in the EU external action, Brussels, 25.11.2020 JOIN(2020) 17 final, [join-2020-17-final_en.pdf \(europa.eu\)](#)

5. Recommendations

Recommendations

The Advisory Committee recommends that:

On a Strategic Level

- The European Commission adopts a new Gender Equality Strategy, adopted as a Commission Communication covering the years 2026-2030 and based upon the dual approach: gender mainstreaming and targeted measures.
- The European Commission ensures that the new Gender Equality Strategy takes into account how gender mainstreaming and targeted measures could be supported in all EU funding programmes and structural funds, including the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP).
- The European Commission continues and strengthens the mandate of a Commissioner with a gender equality and equality portfolio, with sufficient financial and human resources, competencies and assertiveness.
- The European Commission strengthens governance within the Commission to ensure that gender equality and equal opportunities is indeed a priority for the EU institutions, including by establishing accountability mechanisms, to ensure that guidelines on gender mainstreaming are followed.
- The European Commission continues to seek the commitment and active collaboration of each Trio Presidency to ensure the establishment, political value, and continuity of EU gender equality policy and the Commission's equality strategies.
- Member States ensure full transposition of the newly adopted Directives in the area of gender equality including the Directives on standards for Equality Bodies, pay transparency, combating violence against women and domestic violence, anti-trafficking, , work-life balance and improving the gender balance on corporate boards.

- The European Commission continues to support and monitor the Member States' transposition and implementation of the newly adopted directives.
- The European Commission conducts a full analysis and evaluation of the Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025.

Gender Mainstreaming

- The European Commission adopts an official definition of gender mainstreaming, as defined by the Council of Europe, where gender mainstreaming is defined as a “the (re)organisation, improvement, development and evaluation of policy processes, so that a gender equality perspective is incorporated in all policies at all levels and at all stages, by the actors normally involved in policy-making”.
- The Commission sets concrete, measurable and time-bound targets for gender mainstreaming of the EU's internal policymaking. As an example, at least 50 % of all major Commission initiatives that impact individuals, should include either a gender equality impact assessment or an integrated gender perspective by 2028.
- The European Commission promotes a common Union definition of the concept of 'gender budgeting', which is defined by the Council of Europe as a “gender-based assessment of budgets incorporating a gender perspective at all levels of the budgetary process and restructuring revenues and expenditures in order to promote gender equality”.
- The European Commission presents a proposal for a Council Recommendation on gender mainstreaming, including gender budgeting.
- The European Commission includes gender budgeting as an essential element of gender mainstreaming in all strategies and programs, and Next GenerationEU.
- The European Commission continues integrating equality considerations in the implementation of the EU budget, by including gender budgeting as well as the European Commission's pilot methodology for tracking gender equality expenditure in the current Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) 2021-2027 as well as in the next MFF 2028-2034, due to be adopted under the new Commission.

- The European Commission maintains the Task Force on Equality, with a strengthened mandate regarding gender mainstreaming.
- The European Commission and EU Member States continue to arrange exchanges on gender mainstreaming, for example through the Mutual Learning Programme, to share lessons learned, good practices, and upscale these.
- The European Commission ensure systematic and strategic capacity building, trainings, and use of methodological tools within its services, to support implementation of gender mainstreaming including through strengthened collaboration with EIGE.
- The European Commission seeks synergies between various Strategies, such as the Gender Action Plan III, the LGBTIQ Strategy, the Roma Strategy etc., in order to ensure consistency across areas, strengthen gender mainstreaming and ensuring an intersectional approach.

Sex-Disaggregated Data

- The European Commission ensures the presentation of statistics disaggregated by sex throughout the Commission's reports as well as the consistent use of such statistics in policy documents, inter alia in the drafting of the annual Joint Employment Report, so as to uncover and to gradually close remaining gender gaps. In this regard, it is also important to consider aspects of intersectionality.
- The European Commission provides access to methodological support, guidance, and training to its civil servants so as to raise awareness of the importance of sex- and age- disaggregated data collection and improve their understanding of the relevance of such statistics.

National Strategies

- The European Commission calls upon the Member States to draft national strategies for gender equality, to be adopted by their respective Governments, while also taking into account the federal systems in some Member States.

Gender-Based Violence

- The European Commission continues and further develops the work of the EU network of prevention of gender-based violence and domestic violence.
- In light of the EU accession to the Istanbul Convention, the European Commission will continue to combat and prevent gender-based violence and domestic violence, including by taking awareness-raising measures, considering violence-specific aspects in all relevant legislative proposals and by commissioning research on the topic.
- The European Commission revisits the Directive on combating violence against women and domestic violence in order to update it, notably as concerns the issue of consent, in line with the review obligation under Article 45(2) of the Directive.²⁹

A Gender-Equal Economy

- The new Strategy promotes the understanding of the importance of women's labour market participation, including self-employment and entrepreneurship, for overall economic growth and competitiveness as well as for the empowerment, independence, and the economic self-sufficiency of women, with a focus on the promotion of the equal sharing of unpaid care responsibilities while also addressing the gender pay gap, employment and pension gap.
- The European Commission and EU Member States ensure available support dedicated to women entrepreneurs, focusing on equal treatment and protection from discrimination, equal access to finance as well as mentoring programmes, including on aspects related to lifelong learning, which should be underpinned by increased availability of ECEC and long-term care.
- The European Commission promotes further measures to ensure sustainable working and employment conditions, i.e. quality and adequately compensated jobs in female dominated sectors, especially education, health and care, while supporting social dialogue and collective bargaining.

- The European Commission initiates better and more transparent job evaluation methods and schemes in female dominated sectors, especially education, health and care.

Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights

- The European Commission reaffirms its commitment to promote the protection and advancement of Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) within the limits of its competences, as SRHR form an inherent part of gender equality and fundamental rights of women and girls. Such advancement is to be realized by promoting access to age-appropriate comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services – such as modern contraception, quality obstetric and gynaecological care, safe and legal abortion and age-appropriate comprehensive sexuality education as well as addressing harmful practices such as female genital mutilation and forced sterilisation.
- The European Commission complements and supports Member States in their efforts to advance sexual and reproductive health and rights and encourages the exchange of good practices between Member States.

Crisis Preparedness and Responses

- The European Commission incorporates a gender perspective into crisis preparedness and response strategies to address the specific needs of women and girls in all their diversity during emergencies as well as potential geo-political and humanitarian crises e.g. pandemic and climate change.

The Green and Digital Transition

- The European Commission incorporates gender perspectives and intersectionality into the green transition, ensuring that initiatives and investments benefit women and men on equal terms.
- The European Commission incorporates gender perspectives into the digital transition and ensures transparency in digital policies, improves women's access to digital resources, addresses gender biases in AI development and deployment

²⁹ In its evaluation report, the Commission will assess in particular whether the objective of preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence across the Union has been achieved and whether an extension of the scope of the Directive and the introduction of new offences is necessary.

including through implementation of the AI Act, and pays specific attention to AI-generated gender based cyber violence, such as deepfakes.

Women in Political and Leadership Positions

- The European Commission continues to strive for equal representation of women in political and leadership positions, for instance by insisting that each Member State proposes one woman and one man as candidate for the College of Commissioners.

Men and Boys

- The European Commission strengthens the inclusion of men and boys in the new Strategy, taking into account that they are strategic allies to achieve gender equality, as well as beneficiaries and subjects of gender equality themselves.

Anti-Gender Equality Movements

- The European Commission develops a strategy to counter disinformation and reduce the effectiveness of populist, anti-gender narratives and **anti-equality movements**. This is normally best achieved through sharing and spreading impartial and correct information, facts and figures.

Rule of Law

- The Commission explores an explicit requirement in the Financial Regulation (2024/2509), regarding respect for fundamental rights, such as non-discrimination, as a condition for the use of EU funds.

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