



EUROPEAN WOMEN'S  
**LOBBY**  
EUROPEEN DES FEMMES

## **European Women's Lobby Handout for participants at the EU Mutual Learning Programme in Gender Equality Webinar: Gender-sensitive responses to the COVID-19 crisis - valuing women's work and contribution to the economy**

18th June 2020

Founded in 1990, the European Women's Lobby (EWL) is the largest European umbrella network of women's associations representing a total of more than 2,000 organisations in the EU coming together to campaign for their common vision of a Feminist Europe. The EWL has members in 26 EU Member States, three Candidate Countries (North Macedonia, Serbia, Turkey), the United Kingdom and Iceland, as well as 17 European-wide organisations representing the diversity of women and girls in Europe. Together with our members, we aim to influence the general public and European Institutions in support of women's human rights and equality between women and men.

Women's economic independence is the corner stone of equality between women and men, to enable women to exercise their right to have real choices in their lives. Despite treaty obligations, equality between women and men has not yet been achieved in any EU Member State, nor in the world – a startling reality in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Long standing gender gaps in pay, life-long earnings, pensions and poverty remain intact despite legislation and policies to address these. In the COVID-19 pandemic the reality of women's lives and the persistent inequalities between women and men were never so visible. As countries grappled with the public health pandemic, women were at the forefront of providing essential services that kept society functioning: health and care workers, supermarket workers, cleaners – they were and continue to be the backbone of society. The reality of women's different life experiences, coupled with factors that shape women's lives : age, ethnic origin, class, disability, etc. became more apparent than ever, providing evidence that not all women are equal. The post COVID-19 period is an opportune moment to value women's contribution to society, including the economy.

We need a **Care Deal for Europe**. To avoid some of the disastrous consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic and to project towards the future, a Care Deal is necessary to 'close the circle' with the Green Deal by providing a holistic approach that combines caring for the planet with caring for each other. The lack of and/or insufficient care services and policies were visibility apparent at the onset of and during the acute phase of the public health pandemic, demonstrating that care is a collective need which requires a collective responsibility. Care necessitates a life-cycle approach that encompasses childcare, elderly care, care for dependents and care for oneself.

At this moment in time, a **Care Deal** provides the potential to bring together in a coherent way a set of policies that weave current and future EU policies, actions and measures that aim directly and indirectly, to address equality between women and men, social cohesion and preparing for future



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generations. Some of these include: the future directive on pay transparency<sup>1</sup> to address the persistent gender pay gap – currently at 16% average in the EU; the future Child Guarantee for vulnerable children<sup>2</sup>; the future Road Map for the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights<sup>3</sup> and in particular principles 9 (work-life-balance), 11 (childcare), 16 (healthcare) and 18 (long term care)<sup>4</sup>. A Care Deal for Europe would boost the goals of the European Employment Strategy<sup>5</sup> in terms of the huge potential the care sector offers in terms of quality jobs. It would also provide a framework to follow-up and implementation of the Work-Life-Balance Package<sup>6</sup>, including implementation of the directive and the non-legislative measures.

A Care Deal for Europe is also timely in the context of implementation of the European Gender Equality Strategy<sup>7</sup>, adopted in March 2020, in which closing the gender care gap is one of the priorities and which is crucial in recognising the implications the COVID-19 pandemic will have on women working in care roles and in precarious work. The emphasis of care was also prominent in the EPSCO Council conclusions of 8 June 2020 on Demographic challenges – the way ahead<sup>8</sup>.

The recent proposal from the European Commission 'Next Generation EU' – Repair and Prepare for the next generation<sup>9</sup> provides many opportunities to invest in a Care Deal for Europe. **Ensure the next Multiannual Financial Framework for 2021-2027 allows for increased investment in the care economy and the funding of a Care Deal for Europe**, making sure that women's perspectives are streamlined across all areas **through gender budgeting**, and that **adequate resourcing** is provided to women's organisations.

**However, EWL is alarmed at the reduction of significant funds - a decrease in €186 million in current prices - that contribute towards the advancement of women's rights and eliminating violence against women**, i.e. under the Justice, Rights and Values Fund, in which the Rights and Values programme is placed. The Commission's current proposal for the [Justice, Rights and Values Fund](#) is €761 million; a *significant decrease* since its [May 2018 proposal](#), which was €947 million. The Commission further proposes to spread this amount over the next seven years without making any adjustments to account for increased inflation over time, making it harder over time for sufficient funds to be acquired. This is in total contradiction to the aims and objectives of this programme, which directly addresses equality between women and men, equality for all and preventing and eliminating violence against women, children and young people.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say/initiatives/12098-Strengthening-the-principle-of-equal-pay-between-men-and-women-through-pay-transparency>

<sup>2</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1428&langId=en>

<sup>3</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1487&langId=en>

<sup>4</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/social-summit-european-pillar-social-rights-booklet\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/social-summit-european-pillar-social-rights-booklet_en.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=101&langId=en>

<sup>6</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1311&langId=en>

<sup>7</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52020DC0152&from=EN>

<sup>8</sup> <https://eu2020.hr/Home/OneNews?id=330>

<sup>9</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip\\_20\\_940](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_20_940)



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At a time when inequalities between women and men and violence against women are rising significantly, and structural inequalities and racism are being challenged, it is contradictory to reduce funding to address these in a meaningful and substantive way and contrary to the values of the EU. We urgently call on Member States to reject such a proposal and to increase funding to Justice, Rights and Values.



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