



EUROPEAN WOMEN'S
LOBBY
EUROPEEN DES FEMMES

25 years of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995-2020)

THE TIME TO DELIVER IS NOW!

The EU at a turning point on the road to achieving equality between
women and men



“The full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by women and girls is a priority for Governments and the United Nations and is essential for the advancement of women.” – Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action



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This report was finalised at the eve of the celebration of the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPfA) and of International Women's Day 2020. It is published as the 64th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) of March 2020 is significantly sized down to a one-day procedural meeting with Member State representatives, in light of increasing global concerns of the spread of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19). Backed by the BPfA, women's organisations and feminist groups have been a driving force for change, playing an important role in advancing legislation or mechanisms to ensure women's and girls' human rights. It is not by chance that the CSW is the second largest annual meeting of the United Nations!

Having CSW shortened during the 25th anniversary of the BPfA, at a time when we are witnessing the progressive weakening of the recognition of women's and girls' human rights, is deeply disturbing. Women's civil society organisations from around the world will miss this unique moment to bring the collective voices of women and girls to the international political table. This situation, which is caused by external, extenuating circumstances, is devastating for the thousands of women's and feminist organisations around the world, many of whom are from small, grassroots organisations and have funded their travel to New York from scarce resources, now lost.

When women's voices are at risk of being silenced, we must remain vigilant. This report has been drafted, recognising the incredible work of women's activists and feminists everywhere, which acknowledges their ongoing efforts to ensure a feminist world where women and girls live free, equal and dignified lives.

While we are physically divided, we are united in our vision for a feminist world.

- March 2020

Executive Summary

In 1995, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPfA) was adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing and put forward a visionary blueprint for women's and girls' rights globally, identified across 12 critical areas of concern. This built on the stepping-stones laid out by the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), and is the backbone for emerging international frameworks including the UN 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development (SDGs). Through these building blocks, equality between women and men as a lived reality is a vision that transcends all generations, regions and countries.

In welcoming the BPfA's 25th anniversary, we have yet to see its full implementation and the transformative change in the European Union (EU). The European Women's Lobby (EWL) is pleased to present this report, which looks back at progress made in the EU in the last five years in relation to some of the BPfA's critical areas of concern. It highlights key actions of EWL and its members, and identifies remaining obstacles, to which we present our demands. We confirm that the BPfA remains valid today as it did a quarter of a century ago.

This report comes in light of the new European Commission's five-year *Gender Equality Strategy*,¹ which we see as a pivotal building block with the potential to accelerate positive change for women and girls. Our recommendations call on the EU and its Member States to reaffirm their commitment to the BPfA through their political leadership and strengthening the institutional mechanisms which are needed to secure this commitment.

Looking back on the progress made to date, we highlight areas where there is still unfinished business in the BPfA's implementation: women in decision-making; institutional mechanisms and gender mainstreaming; eliminating male violence against women and girls; and building a feminist economy. We also look ahead at ongoing and emerging challenges beyond 2020: shrinking political space and funding for women's civil society; the impact of digitalisation and climate change; and the challenges faced by migrant women and girls.

As we celebrate the BPfA and welcome in a dynamic new generation of feminists to the women's movement, we also celebrate the invaluable work of our members, many of whom remain resilient in the face of volatile and challenging political contexts. Together, we call on the EU to:

- **Adopt binding-legislation on preventing and combatting all forms of violence against women and girls**, online and offline, including sexual exploitation;
- **Adopt a "Care Deal for Europe"** to address women's enduring social and economic inequalities and put forward binding measures to tackle the gender pay, pension and poverty gaps; and
- Apply **gender mainstreaming in all EU policies, funded projects and programmes** and **increase resources and sustainable funding** to women's organisations both in and outside the EU.

The time to deliver is NOW!

¹ https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/aid_development_cooperation_fundamental_rights/gender-equality-strategy-2020-2025_en.pdf

25 years of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995-2020) THE TIME TO DELIVER IS NOW!

The EU at a turning point on the road to achieving equality between women and men

*“Another world is not only possible, she is on her way. On a quiet day, I can hear her breathing” --
Arundhati Roy*

Introduction

As we celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPfA), the European Union (EU) is at a turning point for the human rights of women and girls, with more women in positions of leadership in the EU than ever before. The first woman European Commission President is leading a more gender-balanced Commission, and the new legislative mandate of the European Parliament has more female representation than ever before. This new political context must take on the responsibility and leadership to take immediate actions to make equality between women and men a reality. In this context, the European Women’s Lobby (EWL), Europe’s largest umbrella organisation of women’s organisations across Europe, is pleased to present this report which looks back on the last five years of progress to achieve a feminist Europe.

At the time of its adoption, in which the EWL and our members were present in Beijing, the BPfA represented a pinnacle moment for women’s and girls’ rights, and the global women’s movement. Today, the BPfA continues to be the compass in directing action to achieve full and effective equality between women and men in the EU across all generations, regions and countries, alongside with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the UN Security Council resolution 1325.

Despite these international commitments, equality between women and men is not yet a reality in one single EU Member State.² In line with the European Institute of Gender Equality’s publication *Beijing +25: the fifth review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in the EU Member States*,³ we confirm that progress on equality between women and men has moved at a snail’s pace in the last five years. In 2019, with the EU scoring 67.4% on the Gender Equality Index, a mere one point increase was recorded since its 2017 score.⁴ Furthermore, gender stereotypes continue to perpetuate power imbalances, subordinate women and girls and legitimise male violence against women and girls. An active backlash from all sides of the political spectrum is mobilised across Europe seeking to undermine women’s rights, and push back decades of progress.

At the dawn of a new decade, and marking the EWL’s 30th anniversary, we reflect on the last five years’ progress in the EU and its Member States. Building on our previous assessments of the implementation of the BPfA in the EU,⁵ this report is not intended to provide a full assessment of all of the 12 BPfA critical areas of concern, but should be considered as a review of EU progress, EWL actions and remaining obstacles, for which recommendations are formulated.

² <https://eige.europa.eu/news/gender-equality-index-2019-still-far-finish-line>

³ European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), “Beijing +25: the fifth review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in the EU Member States”, March 2020, <https://eige.europa.eu/publications/beijing-25-fifth-review-implementation-beijing-platform-action-eu-member-states>

⁴ European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), “Gender Equality Index 2019: Still far from the finish line”, 15 October 2019, <https://eige.europa.eu/news/gender-equality-index-2019-still-far-finish-line>. The Index looks at equality between women and men in the following areas: work, money, knowledge, time, power and health

⁵ See: European Women’s Lobby, “1995-2015: From Words to Actions”, October 2014, <https://womenlobby.org/IMG/pdf/beijing20ewlreport.pdf>; and European Women’s Lobby, “From Beijing to Brussels: An Unfinished Journey”, February 2010, https://www.womenlobby.org/IMG/pdf/EWL_Beijing_15_Report_2010.pdf

Our report first looks back on the progress made towards equality between women and girls at the EU level, whilst also highlighting areas of unfinished business in the implementation of the BPfA in the EU, specifically:

- a. Step-up women in decision-making;
- b. Gender mainstreaming in all EU policies and through strong EU institutional mechanisms
- c. Accelerate the elimination of all forms of male violence against women and girls; and
- d. Pave the way for a feminist transformation of the economy.

The second part of this report highlights ongoing and emerging challenges as we look beyond 2020, which have also been underlined in the European Institute of Gender Equality's regional review,⁶ notably:

- a. The shrinking space and funding for women's civil society;
- b. The impact of digitalisation and climate change on women and girls; and
- c. The challenges faced by migrant and asylum seeking women and girls.

This report comes in light of the new European Commission's five-year *Gender Equality Strategy*.⁷ In welcoming this Strategy, we also call on the EU and its Member States to reaffirm their commitment to the BPfA and to demonstrate their political leadership, by joining behind a common **political, ambitious and actionable strategy engaging all EU institutions and Member States that leaves no woman or girl behind**. To implement a successful strategy that empowers women and advances equality between women and men, the EU must recognise AND directly address the fact that discrimination on the basis of sex is often combined with other factors such as race or ethnicity, religion or belief, disability, age, sexual orientation, class and/or migration status.

Throughout this report, **we celebrate the incredible work of our members who work across all corners of Europe** and in all the BPfA's critical areas, often in challenging political contexts: feminists, workers, activists, human rights defenders, sisters, mothers and volunteers who are committed to ensuring equality between women and men becomes a reality for all women and girls. Together with our members, we put forward our collective voice: **The time to deliver is NOW!**

Unfinished business in the implementation of the BPfA in the EU

As we enter 2020, we reflect on the last five years in the EU where some notable progress has been achieved by the women's movement despite a volatile political context. However, we must not become complacent, as further action is urgently needed to ensure the full implementation of the BPfA and a gender perspective is applied across all policy areas.

a) Step-up women in decision-making

"Without the active participation of women and the incorporation of women's perspective at all levels of decision-making, the goals of equality, development and peace cannot be achieved." – Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action

⁶ European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), "Beijing +25: the fifth review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in the EU Member States", March 2020, <https://eige.europa.eu/publications/beijing-25-fifth-review-implementation-beijing-platform-action-eu-member-states>

⁷ https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/aid_development_cooperation_fundamental_rights/gender-equality-strategy-2020-2025_en.pdf

EWL 50/50 Campaign: Women for Europe – Europe for Women

During the European Parliament elections in 2019, the EWL members ran a 50/50 Campaign⁸ to promote an active democratic citizenship and parity democracy in Europe. The campaign led to a greater number of women elected to the European Parliament, and a strong political commitment from the new EU leadership to put equality between women and men high on the political agenda.



The May 2019 European Parliament elections welcomed an increase in women elected from 36.1% to 39.2%⁹; a step closer towards parity democracy. In 2019, the European Central Bank welcomed its very first female President, the first female President of the European Commission now leads the most gender-balanced Commission since its establishment over 60 years ago. Positive measures at national level such as quotas have proven an effective tool to ensure that equal political representation is seriously

considered and have had a huge impact in some countries.¹⁰

EUROPE AT A GLANCE

The **Finnish** government is currently headed by a female prime minister with a coalition of five female party leaders. Issues of gender equality are now back on the political agenda: combating violence against women, the gender pay gap, care provisions, and the gig economy. Civil society is further included in political processes.

Greece has adopted a 40% mandatory target of women in the local, national and European elections. In addition, a woman President was elected for the first time in 2020

OUR MEMBERS AT A GLANCE

During the European Parliament elections in 2019, the **Coordination française pour le Lobby Européen des Femmes (CLEF)** lobbied for greater parity in the national elections. 39 out of 79 women deputies were elected; the first time France has reached parity for the European elections!

In looking forward, parity democracy is yet to be achieved in all political institutions, both at the national and European level.¹¹ Furthermore, the blatant absence of the diversity of women in these institutions, including women of colour, ethnic minority women, migrant women and women with disabilities, must be urgently addressed.

Economic decision-making is also still largely in the hands of men. In 2019, only 27% of women were on the boards of the largest publicly listed companies in the EU Member States, while only 7% of CEOs are women.¹² Failure by the EU to reach an agreement on the 'Women on Boards' Directive, a significant tool to ensuring women's equal participation in economic decisions, has stalled since its introduction in 2012.

⁸ <https://www.womenlobby.org/-WomenForEurope-?lang=en>

⁹ This figure has been adjusted to capture the number of women elected to the European Parliament after the departure of the UK from the EU.

¹⁰ For example, in 2017, Italy introduced legislative candidate votes, which had a significant improvement on the share of women parliamentarians, rising from 11% in 2005 to 34% in 2018. See EIGE, "Gender Equality Index 2019: Italy", https://eige.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/20190366_mh0319021enn_pdf.pdf, p 3.

¹¹ In November 2018, the European Parliament's Women's Rights and Gender Equality Committee' (FEMM) adopted its second report on gender mainstreaming, putting forward recommendations to "ensure a gender-balanced composition". https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/A-8-2018-0429_EN.pdf

¹² https://eurogender.eige.europa.eu/system/files/events-files/women_on_boards_eige.pdf

To ensure the full implementation of the BPfA critical area of concern ‘Women in Decision-Making’, we call on the EU to adopt binding texts to **ensure parity** at all levels within the European institutions and agencies and call on Member States to adopt legislation ensuring the equal representation of women and men in decision-making. The EU member states should **reopen the process of adopting the Women on Boards Directive** and push for more women on the boards of public institutions and entities, technology giants, large companies, SME’s, financial institutions, judiciary, cultural and sport bodies and media organisations.

b) Gender mainstreaming in all EU policies and through strong EU institutional mechanisms

“Governments and other actors should promote an active and visible policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes, so that, before decisions are taken, an analysis is made of the effects on women and men, respectively.” - Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action

Gender mainstreaming was first introduced into the international arena as a transformative strategy

OUR MEMBERS AT A GLANCE

The **Portuguese Platform for Women's Rights, Plataforma Portuguesa para os Direitos das Mulheres**, continues to provide technical support to the Portuguese State on the implementation of gender budgeting in the State Budget.

The **Swedish Women’s Lobby, Sveriges Kvinnolobby** is training governments, municipalities, regions and unions on how to implement gender budgeting.

in the BPfA. Alongside the BPfA, CEDAW and other international instruments, the EU’s obligations to gender mainstreaming are rooted in the EU Treaties and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union.¹³ In the last five years, the various EU institutions have taken some steps to implementing gender mainstreaming, with varying degrees of impact.¹⁴

The creation in 2010 of the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) has proven to be extremely valuable in the work of monitoring the implementation of the BPfA and identifying gaps. EIGE also provides tools on gender mainstreaming and training around gender impact assessments.¹⁵ The EU must continue to **support EIGE as a strong institutional mechanism leading on comparable sex disaggregated data, gaps and research on all aspects of equality between women and men.**

This is crucial as many EU policy areas continue to lack a gender perspective. This is true for the latest European Commission policy proposals on the European Green Deal and on Europe Fit for a Digital Age,¹⁶ the two most important political priorities of the new Commission. There are also concerns that the upcoming EU Migration and Asylum Pact will not reflect the specific rights and needs of women and girls, and that the proposed Common European Asylum System (CEAS) will not be aligned with the Istanbul Convention.

¹³ See Article 8 of the Treaty of the Functioning of the European Union and Article 23 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights which lay out the groundwork for gender mainstreaming by ensuring that equality between women and men are considered in all activities.
¹⁴ In the FEMM Committee’s second report on gender mainstreaming, the Committee called for greater use of gender mainstreaming tools such as gender budgeting within the European Parliament’s work. See: https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/A-8-2018-0429_EN.pdf
¹⁵ See EIGE, *Toolkits*, <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/toolkits>
¹⁶ https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/europe-fit-digital-age_en

Today, the EU's proposed budget for the period 2021-2027 fails to incorporate gender mainstreaming across all its seven policy priorities, including major areas such as the Common Agriculture Policy.

The BPfA's critical area of concern "Institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women" is essential to ensuring gender mainstreaming is applied in all areas. We call on the EU to ensure that **gender mainstreaming is implemented across all of the EU policies and processes**, to ensure that all actions are contributing to the achievement of equality between women and men.

OUR MEMBERS AT A GLANCE

The **European Disability Forum** are engaging with the EU to ensure a gender perspective is mainstreamed in the future European Disability Strategy, and all legislation and policies implementing the BPfA to guarantee the rights of all women and girls with disabilities.

c) Accelerate the elimination of all forms of male violence against women and girls

"Violence against women both violates and impairs or nullifies the enjoyment by women of their human rights and fundamental freedoms." – Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action

Violence against women threatens the security of half of the population in the EU, affecting over 250 million women and girls. 1 in 3 of women in Europe are affected by physical and/or sexual violence and 1 in 2 women in the EU have experienced sexual harassment since the age of 15. 43% of women in the EU experience psychological violence by a partner. Women and girls make up an alarming two-thirds of victims of trafficking and are overwhelmingly trafficked for sexual exploitation in the EU.¹⁷ Women with disabilities are 2 to 5 times more likely to be victims of violence, including forced sterilisation.

In June 2017, after huge lobbying efforts by EWL members, the EU signed the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combatting Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, known as the Istanbul Convention.¹⁸ To date, the Convention has been ratified by the vast majority of EU Member States, which has fostered positive legislative and policy developments at the national level. However three years on, **accession by the EU to the Convention has been stalled due to a severe backlash in some countries**¹⁹ where conservative forces have intentionally been spreading misleading messages in an attempt to avoid the ratification and implementation of the Convention.

On the other hand, a number of EU Member States have taken significant steps towards legislative action and implementation of the Equality Model²⁰ on prostitution, and/or ending trafficking and sexual exploitation through policy and resourcing. From legislative changes in Ireland and France, governmental reviews and legislative proposals in several Member States, as well as increased grassroots and civil society campaigning, we are making significant progress

OUR MEMBERS AT A GLANCE

For more than ten years, our members in **Northern Ireland, France** and the **Republic of Ireland** campaigned for the adoption of the Equality Model including provision of support for those affected by prostitution and ending the impunity of those driving this exploitation and violence. In 2015, 2016 and 2017 the Governments of these countries brought in such legislation.

¹⁷ European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), "Beijing +25: the fifth review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in the EU Member States", March 2020, <https://eige.europa.eu/publications/beijing-25-fifth-review-implementation-beijing-platform-action-eu-member-states>

¹⁸ 21 EU member states have ratified the **Istanbul Convention**: the first legally binding treaty and the most comprehensive one to date in Europe to address this issue.

¹⁹ This includes Member States who have signed the Convention, notably Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania and Slovakia.

²⁰ https://www.womenlobby.org/IMG/pdf/brussels_call_brochure_8_pages.pdf, p.8

OUR MEMBERS AT A GLANCE

The concerted advocacy of the **Spanish Women's Lobby, LEM España and its members** was successful in securing a state pact between all political parties, recognising the need for improvements to laws recognising, for increased funding and programmes against violence against women beyond intimate partner violence. In 2020, a bill has been adopted to align the definition of rape to the standards of the Istanbul Convention with regards to the lack of consent instead of the use of force.

towards a consensus vision for a **Europe Free from Prostitution**. Sexual exploitation is already recognised as a Eurocrime in the TFEU and the 2014 'Honeyball' Resolution of the European Parliament recognises prostitution as a form of violence against women; together this clearly sets the grounds for legislative action at the international level.

We also welcome the recent political commitment at the highest level - by the President of the European Commission and the Commissioner for Equality - to work to end violence against women and to support victims. But, further work is still needed across the region.

Male violence against women and girls continues to be the **most fundamental violation of women's human rights in the EU**, as in all regions of the world. There is not one single country in Europe where women and girls are free from male violence. Women and girls are subjected to intimate partner violence, sexual exploitation and the commercialisation of their bodies, including through the systems of prostitution, pornography and surrogacy, and

increasingly subjected to violence against women online. Women with disabilities, displaced women and girls and those of minority backgrounds are particularly exposed to situations of vulnerability, heightening their risk to trafficking and sexual exploitation.

The EU lacks a comprehensive framework to end the continuum of male violence against women and girls, while national legislation and policies on violence against women and girls vary greatly from one country to the other in the EU.²¹ There is a consistent lack of recognition of the impact of European policies on the experiences of women and girls who experience violence inside and outside Europe, as a result of the EU's migration policies; a lack of feminist legislative action on surrogacy; or limited transnational collaboration to tackle the sex trade. This is also true for EU digital policies which fail to recognise the online space as a facilitator of violence against women, particularly girls.

To achieve the full implementation of the BPfA's critical area 'Violence against Women', we call on the EU and all its Member States to **ratify and implement the Istanbul Convention**. The EU should further adopt a **Directive on preventing and combating all forms of male violence against women and girls**, whether online or offline, including sexual exploitation of women and girls.

EUROPE AT A GLANCE

Upon **Finland's** ratification of the Istanbul Convention in 2015, the Council of Europe have now called on the country to reform its legislation on rape to include the issue of consent.

Following the ratification of the Istanbul Convention in **Romania**, in just one year, 7,986 emergency protection orders have been issued by police against male perpetrators.

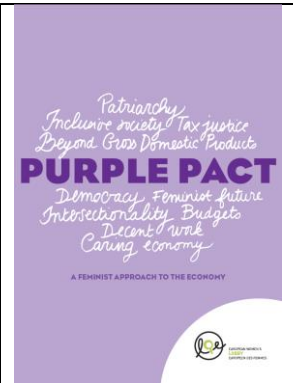
²¹ "Although most Member States have criminalised some forms of violence against women, important differences remain in definitions of violence, with only some countries having a specific criminal offence that addresses violence in intimate relationship". European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), "Beijing +25: the fifth review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in the EU Member States", March 2020, <https://eige.europa.eu/publications/beijing-25-fifth-review-implementation-beijing-platform-action-eu-member-states>

d) *Pave the way for a feminist transformation of the economy*

“To realize fully equality between women and men in their contribution to the economy, active efforts are required for equal recognition and appreciation of the influence that the work, experience, knowledge and values of both women and men have in society.” – Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action

Purple Pact: A feminist approach to the economy

In 2019-2020, the EWL’s Feminist Economics Working Group published the Purple Pact,²² an opportunity to re-think the current macro-economic system and how we measure growth and productivity, by recognising women’s unpaid and invisible work as the backbone of society. The Purple Pact argues for a feminist economic model, by placing care at the centre to ensure the well-being and sustainability of people and the planet.



OUR MEMBERS AT A GLANCE

The **Austrian Women Ring, Österreichischer Frauenring** is working to abolish women’s un-paid care work, addressing gender gaps where women are losing their jobs, earning low incomes and pensions, and experiencing poorer health.

The Belgian **Nederlandstalige Vrouwenraad** has been lobbying the government, Parliament and civil society to adopt a collective reduction of working time to 30 hours per week.

In 2017, the EU adopted the **European Pillar for Social Rights**, a European-wide framework containing 20 principles requiring legislative measures to be taken in areas including gender equality (in the context of work and pay). In 2019, the EU adopted a landmark Directive on **Work-Life Balance** for parents and carers,²³ covering parental and paternity/second parent leave, and granting statutory carers’ leave to both women and men for the first time.

In 2020, the EU is expected to come forward with legally-binding measures on **pay transparency** as a contribution to closing the gender pay gap.

Despite these milestones, austerity measures

continued to disproportionately impact women in areas of employment and social protection. The gender pay gap remains an unchanged average of 16% across the EU. The gender pension gap is as high as 40% in some Member States.²⁴ Women work on average 6 hours longer per week

OUR MEMBERS AT A GLANCE

The **Estonian Women’s Associations Roundtable (EWAR)** are lobbying to include the gender pay gap, occupational segregation and access to employment in Estonia’s national review. EWAR have set up a Women 50+ Working Group and Rural Women Working Group to increase women’s access in rural areas to services and employment.

²² https://www.womenlobby.org/IMG/pdf/purplepact_publication_web.pdf

²³ 2017/0085 (COD)

²⁴ Countries including Malta, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, Austria and Cyprus all having a gender pension gap of over 40%. https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/factsheet-gender_pay_gap-2019.pdf

EUROPE AT A GLANCE

The impact of austerity measures on women, under the strict Troika conditions (European Commission, European Central Bank and International Monetary Fund) can still be felt in **Greece** today, particularly with regards to access to public services and pensions. Despite this, the **Coordination of Greek Women's NGOs for the EWL, ΕΥΡΩΠΑΪΚΟ ΛΟΜΠΥ ΓΥΝΑΙΚΩΝ**, is resilient. As actors of change, they were instrumental in supporting the ratification of the Istanbul Convention in Greece.

than men in total (paid and un-paid) with fewer paid hours.²⁵ These gender gaps only fuel women and girl's risk of social exclusion and poverty, further exposing them to situations of sexual exploitation and male violence. These average gaps are further deepened for women at risk of multiple forms of discrimination including women from an ethnic minority, migrant women, younger or older women, women with disabilities, or at a disadvantage due to class inequalities.

All of these issues need to be specifically considered as the economy rapidly evolves due to digitalisation. As the EU prioritises its Digital Single Market Strategy and the various policies surrounding this, the need for actionable and monitored gender mainstreaming measures is vital; excluding women from the digital transformation will only further the socio-economic inequalities that women currently face.

To achieve the full implementation of the BPfA critical areas of concern 'Women and the Economy' and 'Women and Poverty', we call on the EU to invest in a **Care Deal for Europe** and shift towards an **equal-earner-equal-carer model**. This should include recognition of work of "equal value", the adoption of EU binding legislation to address the **gender pay** and **pension gaps**.

Emerging and ongoing challenges beyond 2020

While we have reflected on the last five years of progress in the EU, we must also look at emerging and ongoing challenges beyond 2020 that will have a significant impact on women's and girl's rights. Some areas are part of the BPfA's 12 critical areas of concern, while others are newly emerging and urgently require a gender perspective.

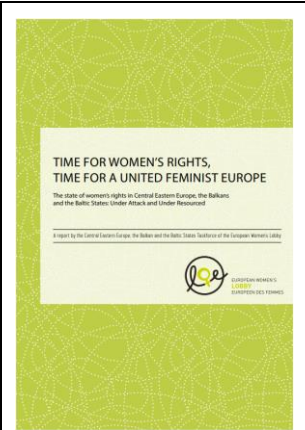
a) The shrinking space and funding for women's civil society

"The participation and contribution of all actors of civil society, particularly women's groups and networks and other non-governmental organizations and community-based organizations, with full respect for their autonomy, in cooperation with Governments, are important to the effective implementation and follow-up of the Platform for Action." - Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action

²⁵ https://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/just/document.cfm?doc_id=50074

EWL's Time for women's rights, time for a united feminist Europe report

In EWL's 2018 report by our Central and Eastern Europe, the Balkan and Baltic States (CEEBS) Taskforce,²⁶ we found that there was a lack of nationally available funds for women's rights organisations and limited possibilities for grassroots funding. As such, civil society organisations often rely on international funding opportunities, particularly complex EU funding opportunities requiring matching funding. This has a disproportionate impact on smaller women's rights organisations, and there is a concerning lack of funding opportunities to address poverty, reproductive rights or violence against women in the region.



OUR MEMBERS AT A GLANCE

In May 2018, the **National Women's Council of Ireland**, together with the Coalition to Repeal the 8th Amendment and the Abortion Rights Campaign, formed 'Together for Yes', a national campaign which led to a landslide referendum in favour of removing the Constitutional ban on abortion.

The **EWL** has finalised its report '**Feminist Sexuality Education**' which sets out opportunities for change and development which can assist campaigners, educators and political champions who strive to provide sexuality education based on the principles of a more equal, fair and enjoyable European society.

The new European Commissioner for Equality recently reaffirmed the importance of ensuring the inclusion of women's civil society in EU policy making. EWL's members are essential to reporting on the situation of women's rights on the ground throughout the EU and bringing to light Member States' compliance with EU law.

Yet women's civil society are increasingly faced by an alarming spike in anti-women's rights movements. We have seen in the past decade the rise of nationalism, conservatism, sexism and anti-feminist populism across EU Member States. Women's rights activists and defenders have been targeted by misogynist and violent attacks, media exposure and smear campaigns, from all sides of the political spectrum. Cuts have been made to women's frontline services, women and girl's sexual and reproductive health and rights, and the budgets available to national agencies for equality between women and men, and resources have been neutralised so that there is effectively a cut to services and organisations focused on women's rights. For example, in the period of 2005-2015, only 2-3% of European Commission funded projects were directed to combatting trafficking of women and girls,

despite the fact that women are officially the majority of trafficking victims in Europe.²⁷

The shrinking space and funding of women's civil society organisations is contributing to the dilution and exclusion of women's and feminist organisations in shaping the feminist agenda. The lack of financial security, resources, and political stability – factors emblematic of working within a neo-liberal system – is silencing women's voices. **It is time to get back on track and to acknowledge and recognise the critical voice, expertise and knowledge of the feminist agenda.** The EU and its Member States must come together and ensure a safe space for women's and feminist organisations to conduct their work for women and girls, through adequate resourcing and funding, particularly for smaller, grassroots organisations at the heart of the women's movement.


²⁶ https://www.womenlobby.org/IMG/pdf/ceebbs_report_ewl_web.pdf

²⁷ https://ec.europa.eu/anti-trafficking/sites/antitrafficking/files/study_on_comprehensive_policy_review.pdf

To ensure the full implementation of all 12 critical areas of concern of the BPfA **we need the full engagement of a strong women’s civil society**. Therefore, we call on the EU and national decision-makers to **increase resources and sustainable funding to women’s organisations** both in and outside the EU. A strong women’s civil society is crucial to ensure progress in women’s rights to date is not rolled back. Political and financial support is needed to ensure the participation of diverse women’s organisations within the Generation Equality processes around Beijing+25.

b) The impact of digitalisation and climate change on women and girls

“Strengthen or establish mechanisms at the national, regional and international levels to assess the impact of development and environmental policies on women” - Beijing Platform for Action

<p>EWL’s #HerNetHerRights report</p> <p>In 2017, the EWL led a six-month project and released a report on “#HerNetHerRights”,²⁸ which analysed the current state of online violence as part of the continuum of violence against women and girls in Europe and put forward recommendations to combat violence and create a safer, more inclusive web for all women and girls. A Resource Pack was also developed,²⁹ and included an Activist Toolkit to empower women on their rights, how to combat male violence against women online and resist and combat abusers online.</p>	
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The digital technologies and climate emergency are issues dominating EU political discussions today and are driven by economic interests.

OUR MEMBERS AT A GLANCE

The **Romanian Women’s Lobby** plan to commence projects on digitalisation, the European Green Deal and smart villages through the lens of gender mainstreaming, to specifically target poorer rural communities.

The EU has continued to grow in competence in the area of the **environment** in the last five years, both in terms of environmental quality standards for air and water and regulating processes and products that contribute to environmental damage and climate change. While the newly elected European Commission has given top priority to tackling the climate crisis, with the ambition for the EU to be carbon free by 2050 as set out in the December 2019 Communication on a European Green Deal,³⁰ there is a notable absence of a gender perspective. The EU must however consider the experiences unique to women and

girls, i.e. women at risk of poverty are more likely to be affected by the **impacts of climate change** and are more vulnerable to energy poverty and climate taxation.³¹ EU climate policies must also bring

²⁸ https://www.womenlobby.org/IMG/pdf/hernetherrights_report_2017_for_web.pdf
²⁹ https://www.womenlobby.org/IMG/pdf/hernetherrights_resource_pack_2017_web_version.pdf
³⁰ https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal_en
³¹ <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-14254-2019-ADD-2/en/pdf>

opportunities for women to be equally represented in political decision-making, environmental entrepreneurship and access quality green jobs.

Similarly, **digital technologies** have major positive prospects for women’s rights: new economic opportunities within the labour market, increased access to vital sexual and reproductive health and rights services, and fostering societal change as seen in the #MeToo movement. However, there is a current lack of a gender dimension across EU digital economic policies. Women are hampered by the digital gender gap; they do not benefit equally from the digital transformation of the economy, are underrepresented in training and employment in this area, and remain invisible in digital decision-making processes. Digital technologies also remain unregulated as a medium to sexually exploit women and girls and as a facilitator of online violence.

OUR MEMBERS AT A GLANCE

The **National Council of German Women’s Organisations, Deutscher Frauenrat**, published a comprehensive policy paper “[Shaping the Future. Achieving a gender-equitable digital transformation.](#)” The paper looks at three areas with a gender lens: education, work 4.0 and communication in digital spaces. The report puts forward a set of recommendations to decision-makers in politics and the private sector.

Gender mainstreaming must be applied across all policy areas of the EU. To meet the BPfA’s critical area of concern on ‘Women and the Environment’, the EU must ensure a strong gender perspective within the European Green Deal and subsequent measures including funding mechanisms. An effective gender mainstreaming and women’s human rights measureable framework must also be applied in digital policies, including the EU Digital Market Strategy.

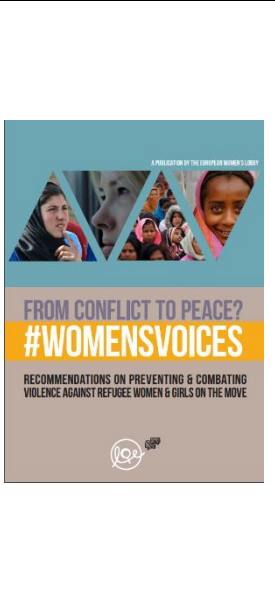
c) The challenges faced by migrant and asylum seeking women and girls

“Refugee, displaced and migrant women in most cases display strength, endurance and resourcefulness and can contribute positively to countries of resettlement or to their country of origin on their return. They need to be appropriately involved in decisions that affect them.” – Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action

EWL’s From conflict to peace? #WomensVoices report and #GirlsVoices infosheet

In 2016, the EWL together with the **Women’s Refugee Commission (WRC)** and the **European Network of Migrant Women (ENoMW)**, carried out a six month **#WomensVoices** project³² on the ground, to raise awareness on the situation of women and girls fleeing conflict and traveling through Europe. The project looked at the protection risks they face in terms of male violence against women and their links with the asylum policies and puts forward recommendations to end all forms of violence against refugee women and girls.

This work was further emphasised in the 2018 **#GirlsVoices infosheet**,³³ highlighting the specific needs and rights of girls at the intersection of issues relating to children’s rights, women’s rights and asylum seeking and migrant persons’ rights.



³² <https://www.womenlobby.org/IMG/pdf/womensvoicesfinalforweb.pdf>
³³ https://www.womenlobby.org/IMG/pdf/girlsvoicesinfosheet_for_web.pdf

The last five years have been a turbulent and difficult period for migrant, asylum seeker, refugee, displaced, undocumented and stateless women and girls. Migration is not new to Europe. When confronted with the largest refugee wave since World War II in 2015, the EU Member States turned away from their international human rights obligations under the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees. Their approach instead emphasised national security, border protection and the urgent need to reduce the in-take of refugees.

OUR MEMBERS AT A GLANCE

The **Medical Women’s International Association (MWIA)** has developed an online teaching module on violence for physicians, which aims to increase the number of case studies and teaching materials, including material on migrant and refugee women's health.

Women and girls fleeing their country of origin are **exposed to a higher risk** of male violence, sexual exploitation and cumulative harm throughout the whole process, including once they arrive in Europe. Asylum seeking women and girls are at increased risk of being exploited in prostitution due to a lack of subsistence, housing and/or transport. There is also a fundamental lack of gender-sensitive services, including a lack of access to female interpreters, psychosocial and legal support and of accountability mechanisms to hold perpetrators of violence against asylum seeking women and girls while on

the move. Women and girls often do not report such experiences for fear of reports impacting their asylum claims, due to threats of pressure from the perpetrators, or due to an understanding of a lack of potential impact if they were to report.

The EU and Member States must maintain their obligations under international human rights law to guarantee the protection, safety and rights of those fleeing life-threatening situations. Developments within the **Common European Asylum System** and the **Migration and Asylum Pact** must be conducted from a gender perspective, to fully ensure the rights and freedoms of all women and girls irrespective of their legal status.

Conclusion

The journey since the adoption of the BPfA, in particular the past five years, have brought forth momentous political, economic and social change for women and girls. New challenges on top of those identified in the BPfA's 12 critical areas of concern have emerged. Areas of the BPfA are still lacking full implementation and have yet to achieve transformational change to the lives of women and girls across Europe.

We continue to stand strong and resilient, as the collective voices of women and girls across the globe is what inspires the women's movement. Equality between women and men, girls and boys today has celebrated some **significant milestones in the past generations** that have contributed to the more equal representation of women in decision-making roles, combatting male violence against women and girls, closing gender gaps in employment and social protection, and strengthening institutional mechanisms. **But, we must remain vigilant and continue to push for accelerated change in these areas and beyond.** This includes areas, both current and emerging, which transversally impact equality between women and men, as highlighted in this report: the shrinking civil society space, the impact of digitalisation, the climate crisis and ecological deterioration, and the challenges faced in particular by migrant and asylum seeking women and girls.

The transition towards a digitalised world played a key role in the #MeToo campaign, which exposed the structural pervasiveness of male violence against women and girls across the whole spectrum of social, economic, cultural and political life. While it has given a voice to many women and girls, many women and girls continue to be silenced and made invisible through structural discrimination, inequalities and systemic oppression. The #MeToo movement must go beyond a social awakening and space for survivor's voices, and lead to the prevention of future harms, accountability for perpetrators and the full and effective implementation of women's human rights.

Looking beyond 2020, there is still a choppy journey ahead, particularly in the current political context that is rampant with power imbalances, austerity and anti-women's movements. As we welcome a new generation of feminist activists, the SDGs will play a crucial role in paving the way for the next 10 years, both within the EU and world-wide. **It is crucial that the continuum of women's rights, namely the generational building blocks of the past – the BPfA and CEDAW – are woven in a comprehensive framework to make equality between women and men a reality everywhere in the world by 2030.** Gender mainstreaming, wherein the experiences of all women and girls, and feminist principles founded on human rights, equality, and social, economic and climate justice, must be at the core. Women's organisations will remain vigilant in holding governments accountable.

The time to deliver is NOW!

EWL Members in Action!



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