

EU GENDER EQUALITY POLICY

Social, Economic
and Political
Empowerment
for Women

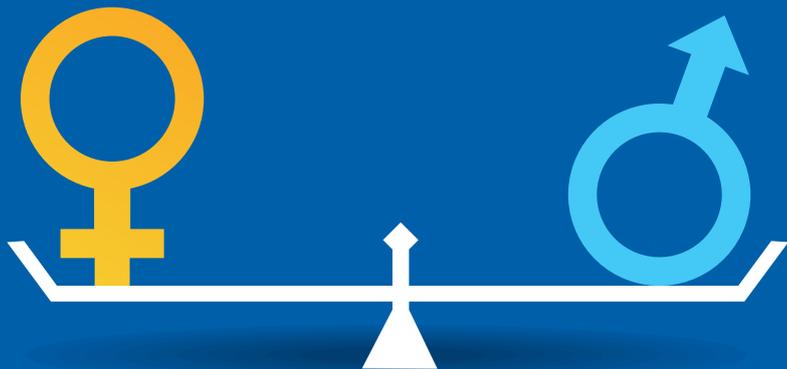




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INTRODUCTION



Agnieszka Kozłowska-Rajewicz
MEP (Poland)

EPP Group Coordinator in the
Committee on Women's Rights
and Gender Equality

Equality between women and men is one of the European Union's founding values. It goes back to 1957 when the principle of equal pay became part of the **Treaty of Rome**.

The EU and its Member States have made significant progress in addressing inequalities between men and women over the last decades and have helped to change the lives of many European citizens and their families in a positive manner. However, inequalities still exist.

2017 marked a watershed moment in the economic, social and political empowerment of women globally. The **#MeToo** campaign engendered a global community of female solidarity that continues to take hold and mature. The European Parliament agreed in October 2017 that as well as holding individuals to account, institutions must change also.

The EPP Group in the European Parliament works to advance women's social, economic and political empowerment. Promoting equality between women and men in the labour market is a top priority. Our Group is at the forefront in:

- Promoting women's entrepreneurship
- Supporting gender equality in the Digital Market
- Addressing gender inequalities in pensions
- Strengthening opportunities for women in rural areas
- Ensuring women's health and wellbeing in the EU
- Combatting violence and sexual harassment against women

The EPP Group in the European Parliament is dedicated to putting forward a set of key actions in terms of enhancing equal opportunities for men and women, beneficial to all citizens throughout the continent.

We believe in women as actors of change.



WOMEN AND THE LABOUR MARKET

Across the European Union, **women remain underrepresented in the labour market and in management.**

Women's economic empowerment is a key goal for the EPP Group. Taking action in this field is not only a question of fairness, but also an **economic imperative**: the economic loss due to the gender employment gap amounts to €370 billion per year.

Most EU Graduates are Women

Within the EU-28 women constituted close to three fifths (57.6%) of all graduates in 2015. However, **they are underrepresented in the labour market**: the difference between the employment rates of men and women of working age (20-64) across the EU-28 was 11.6% in 2015.

Part-time work



31.5% of working women **work part-time** vs. 8.2% of working men. This is especially the case for those with children.

Caring responsibilities are the main reasons for inactivity for almost **20%** of inactive women, while this is only the case for less than 2% of men.



Just over

5 out of 10 women
work full-time, compared to
7 out of 10 men

Therefore the full-time
employment rate gap
reaches 25.5%



Women as Decision-makers

The EPP Group strongly supports measures aimed at improving the advancement of women into top employment positions as women's talents need to be tapped to their full potential. Women continue to be under-represented in senior positions in many fields, even though they make up nearly half of the workforce and more than half of university graduates in the EU. At the top executive level, women are even less represented, accounting for only 5.7% of CEOs - only 3% of the largest companies in the EU have a woman directing the highest decision-making body.

The EPP Group measures the importance of company boards setting transparent selection criteria for candidates and favouring the underrepresented sex when there is a choice between two equally qualified applicants, as it is proposed in the **Women on Board Directive**.



**Elissavet
Vozemberg-Vrionidi**
MEP (Greece)

EPP Group Vice-Chair of the Working Group on 'Legal and Home Affairs'

EPP Group Member in the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality



Dubravka Šuica
MEP (Croatia)

EPP Group Substitute Member in the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality

Vice-President of EPP Women



Work-life Balance Directive - Sharing Responsibilities

Well designed, work-life balance policies can contribute to increased economic independence and well-being for both men and women and promote more equal sharing of care responsibilities between both parents.

The impact of parenthood on labour market participation still varies greatly between women and men – **only 65.5% of women with children under 12 work**, compared to **90.3% of men**. This employment gap largely stems from the unequal sharing of family responsibilities, which is as a result linked to the unequal perception in the labour market of women and men with children. Having children may hinder women's access to the labour market as they are perceived as more likely to be absent while men with children are perceived as more stable employees.

The EPP Group is highly dedicated to helping caring parents in balancing their professional and family life and to work towards a modern family policy and economic prosperity for families. Indeed, work-life balance is an issue which concerns not only women but all working parents. It needs to be tackled with concrete policy measures, at national and EU level, in line with the Subsidiarity principle. To be efficient, work-life balance policies must be accompanied by measures that ensure high-quality, affordable and full time childcare facilities as well as parental leaves and possibilities for a flexible organisation of work as agreed with employers.

"The EPP Group promotes and leads by example"

"We need a better work life-balance for European citizens to support families, equality between women and men and long-term economic growth"



Agnieszka Kozłowska-Rajewicz
MEP (Poland)

EPP Group Coordinator in the
Committee on Women's Rights and
Gender Equality



Promoting Women Entrepreneurs

Women's entrepreneurship has become a strong driving force in the economy. However, when businesses are started by women, they tend to grow more slowly, are less likely to expand cross-border and are more likely to be in less-profitable sectors. **Furthermore, many factors, including stereotyping, family responsibilities and greater involvement in unpaid work, make entrepreneurship a less attractive option for women than for men.** There is no doubt, however, that entrepreneurship offers an opportunity to strengthen women's role as business leaders and to bring cultural and societal change. The EPP Group believes that women have huge entrepreneurial potential and women's entrepreneurship is about economic growth, job creation and the empowerment of women.

The Current Situation of Women's Entrepreneurship in the EU



Women constitute only 34.4% of the EU self-employed and 30% of start-up entrepreneurs.



They are missing in the most promising sectors (exemplified by the gender digital gap) and are underrepresented in decision-making.



When establishing and running a business, women face challenges such as access to finance, information, training and networks for business purposes, reconciling business and family life.





“60% of university graduates are women, but only 1 in 10 women are entrepreneurs. Support women’s entrepreneurship to ensure business dynamism”

The EPP Group strongly believes that women’s creativity and entrepreneurial potential are an under-exploited source of economic growth and jobs that should be further developed.

Thus, the main principles and policy proposals are:

- Raising awareness of European funding possibilities and implementing a targeted support and information campaign targeting women business owners and women entrepreneurs.
- Breaking glass ceilings and promoting positive role models.
- Developing an environment in which women entrepreneurs and family businesses can prosper and in which enterprise is rewarded by taking the necessary measures based on the exchange of best practices and by paying particular attention to mothers.



Angelika Niebler
MEP (Germany)

EPP Group Member in the Committee on Women’s Rights and Gender Equality



“In the EU women account for 34.4% of the EU self-employed and 30% of start-up entrepreneurs. Allowing women to express their creativity and entrepreneurial potential will substantially benefit society as a whole”

- Inciting schools and universities to encourage girls and women to take up subjects that lead to careers in sectors in the areas of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) and high-growth profitable sectors such as new technologies, including green technology, digital environments and IT.
- Encouraging the Commission and the Member States to address career counselling and media campaigns in support of women’s entrepreneurship, also reaching young girls.
- Granting greater allocations within the EU Budget to support women’s entrepreneurship and to ensure and encourage access for women to loans and equity finance through EU programmes and funds, such as **COSME**, **Horizon 2020** and the **European Social Fund**.
- Calling for greater synergies between instruments available under the **EAFRD**, **Leader+**, **Horizon 2020** and the **European Social Fund** for creating better living and working conditions for parents.



Barbara Matera
MEP (Italy)

EPP Group Vice-Chair in the Committee on Women’s Rights and Gender Equality



Digital Market – Key to the Future: More Women on the Web

The increase in women's presence in the digital jobs market can create an annual €9 billion GDP boost in the EU. As it stands, there is a large and growing information and communication technologies (ICT) gender gap in Europe.

The digital revolution changes everything that is relevant for the economic empowerment of women – the labour market, the nature of work in almost all sectors, the access and provision of services, ways of communication and organisation of work. Digitalisation has a significant impact on the economic position of women.

Informatisation, automatisisation and the robotisation of the world changes the demand and supply for certain skills, creates new forms of flexibility and new forms of services through e-banking, e-shopping, online medical and educational services as well as telework. Nonetheless, the digitalisation of work and access to services happens **almost with the non-participation of women. Women in general use the benefits of the digital world less frequently than men:**



81% of EU households have Internet access



47% of men use online banking compared to 35% of women



68% of men and 62% of women use computers and the Internet on a regular basis



22% of women sell goods on the Web and only 17% of 8 million people working in ICT are women



33% of men install software for the devices themselves, only 18% of women



20% of men buy goods online compared to 13% of women

The **EPP Group is strongly convinced that digitalisation brings new opportunities** for women in terms of **education, communication, employment, healthcare and financial services, which may enhance equal opportunities in the economy and business world.** Therefore, **the EPP Group is strongly committed to:**

- Identifying the systemic causes of the growing digital gender gap and taking action to stop digital exclusion.
- Improving digital skills in education, with an increasing need to educate, train and build new skills and capacities, with a special focus on girls (**universal access to coding, maths and ICT classes**).
- Training and life-long learning to keep up with digital innovations throughout life.
- Prioritising diversity and inclusion in the fields of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM).
- Improving participation and access of women to expression and decision-making in and through media and new technologies of communication as well as a balanced and non-stereotyped portrayal of women by the media.

“Women in media and ICT should bring their talents to the fore. This will create an annual 9 billion GDB boost in the EU area”

Michaela Šojdrová
MEP (Czech Republic)

EPP Group Member in the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality



“The Digital sector is one of the fastest growing in the European economy, yet only 30% of start-ups are run by women; let's close the gender digital gap”

Sirpa Pietikäinen
MEP (Finlande)

EPP Group Substitute Member in the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality





Women in Rural Areas: Working to Bring out their Potential

The many roles played by women in rural communities help to maintain those areas vibrant and viable farm businesses. Yet despite their crucial contribution, rural women still face numerous challenges, such as difficulties accessing the labour market, a lack of adequate public services and a weak presence in decision-making forums.

The EPP Group supports strengthening existing opportunities and creating new possibilities to enhance the lives of women living and working in rural areas through:

- The synergistic use of existing funds: these include instruments under the EU funding programmes **EAFRD**, **Leader+** and **Horizon 2020** and utilising the **European Development Fund** - the thematic sub-programmes on 'Women in Rural Areas' to be effectively used by all EU Member States.
- Strengthening existing opportunities as well as creating new ones, including entrepreneurship in rural areas, and promoting entrepreneurship among mothers in **agro tourism** and **digital villages** (IT infrastructure).
- Improving working and living conditions at the Member State level, including exchange of best practices concerning the creation of a professional status for assisting spouses, better access to land and credit and greater availability of services.

“Formal status to recognise the role of rural women is of utmost priority. Their potential could be even more enhanced by the development of smart villages”



Marijana Petir
MEP (Croatia)

EPP Group Member in the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality

ADDRESSING INEQUALITIES IN PENSIONS

Gender inequalities in pensions in the EU remains very wide, with **women on average receiving pensions that are approximately 40% lower than men's**. In fact, this number reflects the wider inequalities as it mirrors cumulative disadvantages experienced by women in the labour market throughout their working lives. The gender pension gap cannot be fully explained by direct discrimination; rather, it arises from the unequal position of women in employment as compared to men. Three major factors need to be considered:

- 1 Employment gap in the labour market (the EU-28 average women's employment rate is 11,6% lower than that of men)
- 2 Career breaks and fewer hours worked by women primarily because of family obligations
- 3 Gender pay gap (on average women receive 83.6% of men's remuneration)

As a consequence, these factors lead to a number of women facing **unexpected constraints and a loss of independence** when entering retirement.

The EPP Group laid down the basis for a comprehensive EU strategy to address the existing imbalances in pensions, without going against the competences of the Member States to define their pension system.



“We need an EU strategy to address gender pay and pension gaps as these are common problems that require different solutions adapted to economic conditions in each Member State”



The EPP Group supports:

- Eliminating barriers in the labour market for women so that they can contribute equally to their pensions.
- Reconciliation of professional and family life and flexible working arrangements, together with accessible care facilities for children, the elderly and dependants.
- Improved data collection and established formal and reliable gender pension gap indicators with monitoring.
- Best practice-sharing among the EU Member States and awareness raising among decision-makers and women.

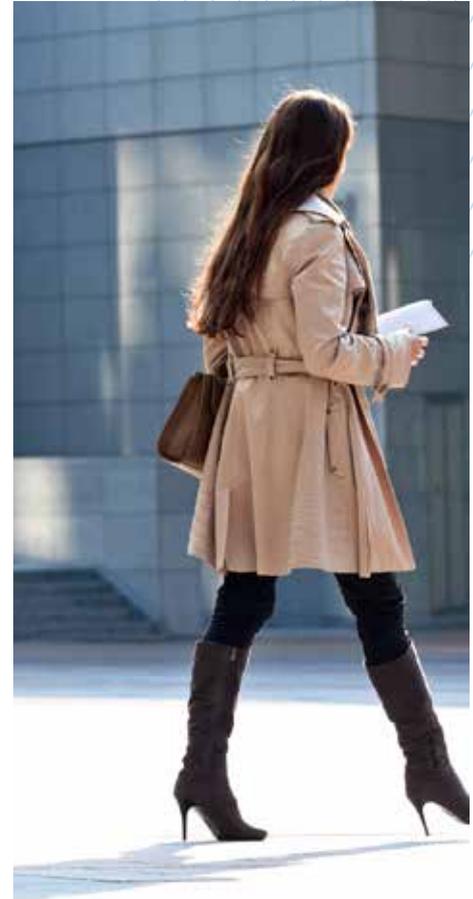
Heinz K. Becker
MEP (Austria)

EPP Group Member in the Committee on Women’s Rights and Gender Equality

WOMEN'S WELLBEING AND HEALTH - EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL WOMEN

The EPP Group Members in the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality in the European Parliament are particularly attentive to the needs of those who require special attention and tailored actions at EU level.

Respecting the Member States' competences to define their healthcare systems, the EPP Group strongly supports efforts at EU level encouraging know-how and best practices sharing, fostering cooperation between research institutes and universities, addressing risk factors through legislation, raising awareness campaigns throughout the EU and taking actions focusing on prevention. There are many health matters in the EU common for all its Member States, where prevention is key, for example, in the area of maternal health or women's cancer. Women with disabilities represents an area whereby the EPP Group shares particular responsibilities.





Women with Disabilities

Only 4% of disabilities stem from birth, whereas 69% are acquired over life. 80 million people with disabilities live in the European Union, of which 46 million are women and girls; thus, this figure represents nearly 60% of the overall population of persons with disabilities. They experience problems regarding access to education, the labour market, goods and services; they are much more likely to experience poverty, social exclusion or violence, and may not even be able to vote. Their voice may not be heard, given their legal status or state of disability. They are also not alone; the situation of their families responsible for caring is often dramatic.

The EPP Group strongly supports:

- Supporting the **European Disability Strategy 2010-2020** with integrated gender perspectives - or a separate chapter on disability policies sensitive to specific women's needs.
- Collecting clear and comparable data on women's and men's disabilities and monitoring common indicators in EU Member States.
- Optimising the use of the existing EU funding instruments to promote accessibility and non-discrimination with regards to women with disabilities.
- Mainstreaming gender disability in EU Equality Policies and programmes, as well as gender mainstreaming within disability policies.

"The EPP Group fights multiple forms of discrimination to support vulnerable women and their inclusion in all aspects of life"



Rosa Estaràs Ferragut
MEP (Spain)

EPP Group Substitute Member in the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality

ZERO TOLERANCE AGAINST HARASSMENT

The EPP Group strongly condemns all forms of harassment and insists on effective implementation of the existing legal framework addressing this phenomenon, encouraging at the same time the EU Member States, public and private companies and institutions to take further measures to effectively end and prevent harassment in the workplace. The issue of harassment has become a global phenomenon since the emergence of the “**#MeToo**” campaign in October 2017.

Thanks to the work of the EPP Group, the European Parliament has established a dedicated body - the **Advisory Committee Dealing with Harassment Complaints between Accredited Parliamentary Assistants and Members of the European Parliament** - that complements the analogical body dedicated for staff within its premises. The most important principle guiding the Committee's work is **confidentiality**, particularly important to ensure freedom regarding the voices of potential victims. **Confidential reporting** as well as **awareness raising campaigns** aimed at preventing and combatting harassment within the European Parliament have been initiated. The Committee has also requested that the competent service in the Parliament organises **training sessions** for the Members and Assistants regarding the existing formal procedures on reporting harassment in the workplace as well as victims' rights. In this way, enforcing the principle of dignity at work and promoting the zero tolerance approach as a norm becomes entrenched.

“The data is clear: workplace bullying and sexual harassment are widespread. Action is urgently needed to end and prevent them”



Anna Záborská
MEP (Slovakia)

EPP Group Member in the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality

COMBATting GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

The EPP Group is fully committed to zero tolerance against gender-based violence and to the Member State and EU ratification of the Istanbul Convention. It stands for the eradication of all forms of violence against women and considers this a central issue to achieve women's rights and equality between women and men, change mentality, combat sexism, and empower women. Time is running out considering one in 10 women have experienced some form of sexual violence since the age of 15, and one in 20 have been raped. One in five women have experienced physical and/or sexual violence from either a current or previous partner, and one in 10 women indicate that they have experienced some form of sexual violence by an adult before they were 15 years old.

Violence is **still regrettably under-reported**. It is time to give a voice to those women and girls so as to break the vicious circle of silence and fear and shift the guilt from the victims to the perpetrators.





The Istanbul Convention in a nutshell - the 3 “Ps”:

- Entered into force in August 2014
- Member States will have to collect and send accurate and comparable data on violence against women to **Eurostat**. This could save the lives of many women and girls.
- The first instrument in Europe to set legally binding standards:

- **P**revention of gender-based violence: through sustained measures that address its root causes and aim at changing attitudes, gender roles and stereotypes that make violence against women acceptable (awareness raising, education, training of professionals, participation of the private sector and the media).
- **P**rotection of victims of violence: women and girls who are known to be at risk and setting up specialist support services for victims and their children (shelters, round-the clock telephone helplines, psychological assistance, rape crisis or sexual violence referral centres).
- **P**unishment of perpetrators: Prosecuting the perpetrators, including enabling criminal investigations and proceedings to continue, even if the victim withdraws the complaint. It breaks new ground by requesting states to criminalise the various forms of violence against women, including physical, sexual and psychological violence, stalking, sexual harassment, women genital mutilation, forced marriage, forced abortion and forced sterilisation.



Protecting

On 4 March 2016, the European Commission proposed the EU's accession to the Istanbul Convention. All EU Member States have signed it, but only eight have thus far ratified it. Joining the Convention not only confirms the EU's commitment to combat violence against women; it gives us responsibility to do more, to strengthen existing frameworks and to push for practical actions. On 13 June 2017, in a historic move, the EU signed the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, also known as 'Istanbul Convention'. Now all the Member States need to ratify it and implement it, and we have to continue to join forces also in the European Parliament. To this end, the EPP Group will remain at the forefront.

"Violence against women is not a private issue. It is a serious crime. We in the EPP Group stand for zero tolerance of gender-based violence. It is time for Member States to ratify and implement the Istanbul Convention"

"The EU must guarantee the rights, protection, dignity and justice for all victims of crime. The EPP Group always puts the victim first"



Anna Maria Corazza Bildt
MEP (Sweden)

Vice-Coordinator in the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality



Teresa Jiménez-Becerril Barrio
MEP (Spain)

EPP Group Member in the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality



“The EPP Group in the European Parliament will carry on working to ensure that women, on a completely equal footing with men, make themselves indispensable to the success of the European project”



Esteban González Pons
MEP (Spain)

Vice-Chair of the EPP Group in the
European Parliament

Substitute Member of the Committee on
Women's Rights and Gender Equality



Publisher: EPP Group in the European Parliament
Directorate for Press and Communications
Publications Unit

Editor: Pedro López de Pablo

Responsible: Pete Pakarinen

Coordinator: Agnieszka Kozłowska-Rajewicz

Address: European Parliament,
60 Rue Wiertz, B-1047 Brussels

Internet: www.eppgroup.eu

Email: epp-publications@ep.europa.eu

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