



GENDER EQUALITY & WOMEN'S RIGHTS



Group of the Progressive Alliance of
Socialists & Democrats
in the European Parliament

FOREWORD

As progressive politicians, we are acutely aware of the significant prevalence of sexism and discrimination surrounding and shaping the societies we live in. We, the Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament, want this to change. Our vision for Europe is a feminist one. We want a life of dignity for all, and we see equality between men and women as the basis of democracy!

We will not allow gender equality and women's rights to be undermined, whether by conservative and right-wing governments or international anti-democratic movements. Gender equality and women's rights are an integral part of any democratic society and as such, they need to be advanced, safeguarded and protected.

We put forward this position paper and a Charter on Women's Rights as a roadmap, a pledge and a commitment to every woman and girl in the European Union and beyond. Gender equality and women's rights are at the heart of the S&D Group, being main priorities and core values we strive to uphold, because we know that gender-equal societies are not just beneficiary for women. These societies are happier, healthier, safer, fairer and more prosperous for all.



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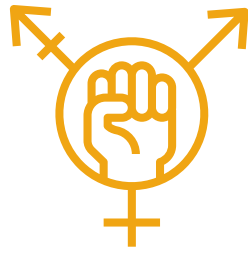
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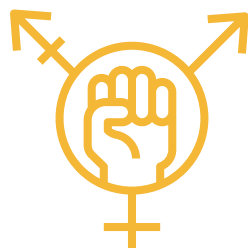
WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND GENDER EQUALITY — THE BASIS OF DEMOCRACY, NOT A CHERRY ON TOP

As Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament, we want a life in dignity for all and see gender equality as the basis of democracy, not the cherry on top.

As Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament, we want a life in dignity for all, and we see gender equality as the basis of democracy, not the cherry on top.

Gender equality and women's rights are indispensable and indivisible parts of human rights. As such, they present the very basis and purpose of the rule of law at national, European and international levels, as well as the most adequate indicators of health and resilience of our democracies. Thus, gender equality is not just for women, it is for all citizens and society as a whole, and we need not only women and girls but also men and boys to achieve it. We make politics for all, celebrating diversity and fighting for equality, because none of us are free until all of us are. The empowerment of women, the protection of women's rights and activists inside and outside of the EU is a priority for us.

We are witnessing a serious backlash against women's and LGBTIQ+ rights globally and within the European Union – a phenomenon that is clearly linked to the increase of transnational and well-funded fundamentalist and right-wing groups. These well-organised anti-gender actors seek to undermine the rule of law and to promote social and political hierarchies that benefit them. It is essential to understand this movement – and the threat it poses to the rights of women and the LGBTIQ+ community – as a manifestation and reinforcement of broader anti-democratic trends. We will not accept any backsliding on women's and LGBTIQ+ rights.

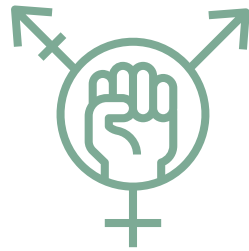


EU WOMEN'S RIGHTS CHARTER

We call on the Commission to present an EU Women's Rights Charter that sets uniform, Europe-wide standards for women's rights and shall serve as a guide towards gender equality in the enactment and implementation of all Union policies at European and national level.

There is no way back to the last century. We are committed to safeguarding achievements that have been made and pushing for faster progress towards a gender equal European Union. According to the Gender Equality Index, if we continue at the current rate, we will only achieve gender equality within the EU in around 60 years. That is why **we call on the Commission to present an EU Women's Rights Charter**. This Charter sets uniform, Europe-wide standards for women's rights and shall serve as a guide towards gender equality in the enactment and implementation of all Union policies at European and national level. It is a catalogue of basic rights, such as universal access to a comprehensive sexuality and relationship education, contraception, sexual and reproductive health and rights including safe and legal abortion and European perinatal standards, as well as equal pay for equal work and work of equal value, and ambitious proposals aiming at the political and economic empowerment of women. This Charter ensures standardisation of women's rights for every woman and girl wherever they live in the EU. It reaffirms the commitment of the Union to achieve gender equality and ensure respect and protection of fundamental rights for women and girls in all their diversity, whilst preventing any setbacks in their accessibility and enjoyment.





BEAT THE STEREOTYPES! EUROPE FREE FROM DISCRIMINATION

True gender equality takes an intersectional approach. Women, in all their diversity, face different obstacles and interlocking forms of discrimination on a daily basis, compounding the existing gender bias.

Harmful gender stereotypes, entrenched in a patriarchal system are a major cause of fuelling gender inequalities and impeding the achievement of women's rights, resulting in women's economic dependence, a plague of violence, unequal opportunities, underrepresentation in politics and economy and obstacles to bodily integrity. However, these stereotypes also limit boys and men, as they are rooted in patriarchy and toxic masculinity.

True gender equality takes an intersectional approach. Women, in all their diversity, be it LGBTIQ+ people, women of colour, refugee and migrant women, women with disabilities, elderly women, ethnic minorities, or the most economically vulnerable women, face different obstacles and interlocking forms of discrimination on a daily basis, compounding the existing gender bias.

We welcome the Commission taking steps **to criminalise hate speech and hate crime in the EU**, mainstreaming the dimension of gender equality in the proposal. We are calling on the Council to finally adopt the **horizontal directive against discrimination!**

The EU is and must remain an LGBTIQ+ freedom zone! We urge the Commission to take concrete measures **to ensure freedom of movement for all families. We also urge the Member States to establish laws that recognise same-sex marriages and partnerships as well as an EU wide recognition of parenthood** to ensure full respect for the right to private and family life without discrimination. We call on the Commission to **support training programmes for law enforcement and judicial authorities**, as

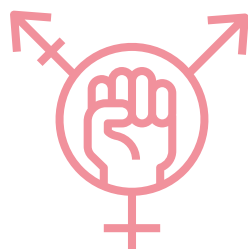
It is crucial to target these stereotypes in schools and strengthen sexuality and relationships education and violence prevention through gender - sensitive education programming for both boys and girls.

well as relevant EU agencies to prevent and tackle discriminatory practices and hate crimes. We call for the **LGBTIQ+ free zones to be recognised as a violation of freedom of movement and residence in the EU**. We are calling for an international convention, for protecting the rights and freedoms of LGBTIQ+ persons, as such an instrument still does not exist.

Harmful gender stereotypes and norms are not innate. Therefore, we have to work preventively from an early age. It is crucial to target these stereotypes in schools to strengthen sexuality and relationship education and violence prevention through **gender - sensitive education programming** for both boys and girls.

In this sense, one of the projects to be taken into account will be the new **European Education Area**, which has one of its main axes dedicated to inclusion and gender equality. By achieving this European Education Area by 2025, education and training systems should work to better develop gender sensitivity in the education processes, fight against gender stereotypes and discrimination, and close the gender gap in leadership positions.

We insist that **education campaigns** need to be an integral part of gender equality related measures proposed by the Commission. In addition, we call on the Commission to put forward an **annual Campaign Against Gender Stereotypes**, focusing on different areas of discrimination each year. This campaign must aim to raise awareness of the harmful effects of these stereotypes, debunk myths and empower girls and women to achieve their potential and boys and men to stand on their side and to free themselves from harmful gender roles and toxic masculinity.



MY BODY — MY RIGHTS!

Sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) are fundamental human rights, and their realisation is an essential element of human dignity and precondition for the achievement of gender equality.

Gender equality and women's rights starts with people's free choice about their body and their life. A person's bodily integrity, privacy and personal autonomy must always be respected!

Deciding on sexual activity, marriage, children and family size is a person's independent and well-informed choice that should not be based on social or economic status. Nobody should be forced into unplanned parenthood or forced to continue unwanted pregnancies. No one should die or suffer forced and coercive medical interventions during childbirth. The same applies to corrective rape, mutilation and exploitation. We, Socialists and Democrats, strongly **condemn harmful practices** such as **Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)**, **Intersex Genital Mutilation (IGM)** and **Child Early and Forced Marriages (CEFM)**. We strongly **condemn obstetric and gynaecological violence**, which has shown to be increasingly prominent for women across Europe.

Sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) are fundamental human rights, and their realisation is an essential element of human dignity and **a precondition for the achievement** of gender equality. Everyone must have access to information, resources, services and the support they need to enjoy these rights throughout their lifetime, without discrimination, coercion, exploitation and violence. Consent-culture must become the norm.

Figures show that criminalising abortion does not lead to fewer abortions, but only forces women to seek clandestine abortions in which they risk their health and life. And for those who have the means, it can force them to travel abroad – this is a violation of human rights and a form of gender-based violence! Only education, information and access to male and female contraception can reduce the number of unintended pregnancies.



Abortion is a right and must remain a free decision based on a woman's request, her own free will, and impartial information and without cost as a factor.

We strongly **condemn the backsliding in women's SRHR** that we witness worldwide and in certain EU member states. Socialists and Democrats will not accept that opponents of SRHR adopt further restrictive measures in SRHR, or exploit national interest or demographic change, in order to undermine women's rights.

Abortion is a right and must remain a free decision based on a woman's request, her own free will, impartial information and without cost as a factor. It must never be tied to refusal from medical professionals due to the so-called conscientious clause, mandatory counselling, bureaucratic requirements or a waiting period. Access to safe, legal and free abortion and free, safe and modern contraception is not only an issue of women's health, but also a central question of fundamental rights.

We urge all EU Member States to **ensure universal access** to age-appropriate and evidence-based **sexuality and relationship education**, a range of high-quality, accessible, affordable **modern contraceptive methods and supplies, family planning counselling and information on contraception**, and **free, safe and legal abortion care**.

Therefore, **we are calling for the right to safe and legal abortion to be enshrined in the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights**.

We urge all EU Member States to ensure universal access to age-appropriate and evidence-based sexuality and relationships education, a range of high-quality, accessible, affordable modern contraceptive methods and supplies, family planning counselling and information on contraception, and free, safe and legal abortion care.

Age-appropriate, comprehensive, non-judgmental sexuality and relationship education that critically addresses gender norms and power dynamics in relationships and informs about gender equality, consent and respect for boundaries is highly beneficial for young people. It is crucial for building their skills to form healthy, equal and safe relationships and the basis for a gender-equal society.

We call on the Commission to take concrete steps to protect SRHR, starting with the establishment of an **EU Special Envoy for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights**, the addition of a designated **chapter on the 'State of play of SRHR' in the EU Annual Report on Human Rights and Democracy**. We call on governments, women's rights organisations, activists and other entities to provide narrative, capacity and campaign building expertise to grassroots organisations focused on SRHR in Member States with restrictive SRHR policies, such as criminalisation.

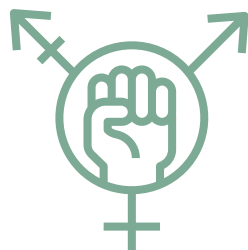
The European Parliament adopted a **historic report on the situation of sexual and reproductive health and rights in the EU, in the frame of women's health, which was initiated and driven by the S&D Group** and adopted in June 2021. This report represents a landmark position of the EP on SRHR. However, the fact that 1/3 of the EP voted against it clearly shows that the fight for women's sexual and reproductive health and rights is not yet won, and we will therefore continue.

Ensuring bodily integrity is one of the priorities for our Group. Prostitution has cross-border implications on women, their rights and gender equality in society and thus needs to be tackled at European level, to ensure that women everywhere enjoy the same rights and protection. We are therefore proud that in July 2023 – **thanks to the S&Ds' initiative, the EP Report on the regulation of prostitution in the EU: its cross-border implications and impact on gender equality and women's rights, was adopted by a clear majority.**


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The report calls for a Europe-wide approach to prostitution, putting women's rights, protection against violence and gender equality at its heart. It calls for the decriminalisation of people in prostitution and for more support services for those who want to leave it. The demand side needs to be drastically reduced by targeting sex buyers and others benefiting from the prostitution of others. While the Report acknowledges that there is a minority that say they engage in prostitution of their own free will, it also points out that most of the women in prostitution would leave it if there were a realistic alternative. This Report is a strong signal of support to the most vulnerable in society who are being dragged into a system of violence and exploitation, and is a call to take measures at EU level to end a system that only benefits human traffickers, pimps and sex buyers. We will not be able to eradicate prostitution completely. However, this Report is an important step that calls for a change of laws in order to change society. Our objective is to find a European solution to a European problem that has so far been ignored. As long as it is socially accepted that women are for sale, we cannot achieve real gender equality. We must therefore invest in prevention, education and exit programmes, as well as in better social and migration policies.

Finally, yet importantly, we want to raise **the issue of surrogacy** - a woman's body is not for sale or rent. Surrogacy increases a woman's exposure to exploitation and human trafficking and commodification of women and children. It has a clear impact on women's rights and gender equality and has cross-border implications. **We therefore call to tackle this issue at EU level, focussing on women's rights and needs.**



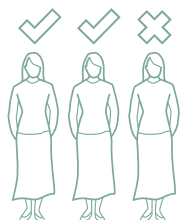
ENHANCING WOMEN'S ECONOMIC INDEPENDENCE

65 million 

Poverty is female and is the result of a lifetime of discrimination.

In Europe, more than 65 million women live in poverty compared to 57 million men, and **women's poverty creates child poverty.**

One in three women in the EU does not have a paid job and the vast majority of part-time jobs in the Union are held by women. Women's work has traditionally been undervalued. Both horizontal and vertical labour market segregation in the EU are still significant, with women over-represented in less profitable sectors. We want to close the gender gaps in employment and social protection and reduce gender gaps in part-time jobs as well as involuntary part-time employment. These are crucial steps if we want to strengthen women's economic independence within an ageing European society. The best way to ensure safe and adequate pensions for women is to increase the overall employment rate and provide more quality jobs across all ages, improve working and employment conditions, and commit the necessary public spending. Gender stereotypes are rooted in patriarchy and keep women in a subordinate role in society, They contribute to discrimination and unequal pay that leads to economic dependency and the feminisation of poverty. In order to eliminate the gender pay and pension gaps we need to tackle different structural and interlocking inequalities, operating at the household, organisational and labour market levels.

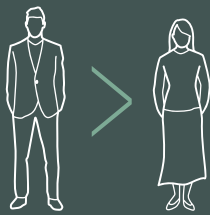


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One third of women in the EU **do not have a paid job.**

At the household level, an uneven division of unpaid care work between women and men constrains women's equal labour force participation and career advancement. Consequently, women tend to work in gainful and socially prestigious employment less often, have more career-breaks, do more involuntary part-time work and are overrepresented in low-paid sectors with precarious working conditions. In addition, more women than men are single parents in charge of their children. The double burden of balancing work and family responsibilities is still mainly a woman's struggle. On a daily basis, women perform on average more than 4 hours of unpaid care work. Furthermore, globally, women make up over 70% of workers in the health sector - including those working in care institutions. Nurses, care workers, pharmacists, cleaners, teachers, grocery store clerks - all are mainly women doing essential work. This is systematically ignored and undervalued,

Women constitute **the majority of minimum wage earners in Europe** and are often the main sub-minimum wage earners.



12%

The overall employment rate of women is almost 12% **lower than that of men**

causing in-work poverty, while women's essential economic and social contribution to our wealth and wellbeing is often not recognised enough. This has become clearly visible during the Covid-19 pandemic.

We Socialists call for the **equal share of unpaid work and responsibilities** in order to **achieve an "equal earner-equal carer" model in society**. We are strongly committed to proceeding quickly with an ambitious implementation of the **2019 Work-Life Balance Directive**, and to further develop care policies that foster equal parental and care leave schemes. We want to speed up efforts to reach the **Barcelona targets everywhere in the EU**, as quality, accessible, and affordable care services for children are crucial for women's participation in the labour market.

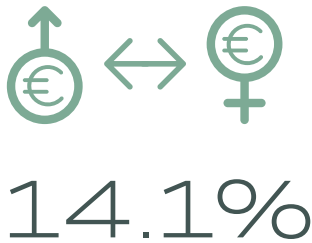
We therefore welcome **the European Care Strategy**, pushed for and adopted by S&D Commissioners Helena Dalli and Nicolas Schmit in 2022, as an important step in the framework of the European Pillar of Social Rights. However, we want to **develop it into an ambitious European Care Deal**, equipped with binding instruments, legislation at EU level with proper relevant public investment aimed at supporting a transition towards a true care economy, with benefits for informal and formal carers and the people they care for. Such a European Care Deal must promote decent working conditions and adequate wages for all carers, who are mainly women, in order to secure quality jobs that increase the attractiveness of working in the care sector. We will continue working with the Commission to ensure a gender-responsive approach to care that recognises care as a right and values it as the backbone of our society.



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One third of women who are employed **work part time** compared to 8% of working men.

The increasing use of digital tools for work purposes has resulted in an 'ever-connected', 'always on', or 'constantly on-call' culture, which can have detrimental effect on workers' fundamental rights and fair working conditions. This includes fair remuneration, the limitation of working time and work-life balance, physical and mental health and safety at work and well-being. It also has a negative impact on gender equality, because of its disproportionate impact on workers with caring responsibilities, who tend to be women. **Socialists and Democrats are therefore calling for a Directive on the Right to Disconnect** and a Legislative Framework with a view to establishing minimum requirements for remote work across the Union ensuring that teleworking does not affect the employment conditions of teleworkers, both with strong gender aspects.



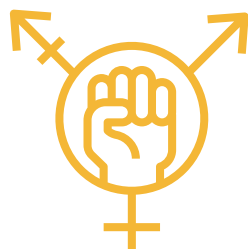
Today, the **gender pay gap** still stands at 14.1% in the EU. It has decreased **only minimally over recent years** and results in a gender pension gap that is even more than double the gender pay gap, nearly 40%.

Women in the EU earn on average 14.1% less than their male counterparts, and the gender pay gap has largely stagnated over the last decade. Therefore, we celebrate the recently adopted **Pay Transparency Directive in which the S&Ds took the lead from the beginning**. The Directive requires all companies to disclose information that makes it easier for those working for the same employer to compare salaries; companies with 100 or more employees will have to find solutions if the pay gap is larger than 5%; recruiters will not be allowed to ask candidates about their current pay. The S&Ds secured strong provisions on penalties and fines for non-compliance, which will be key to ensuring that companies actually take this Directive seriously. We also reinforced the role of social partners in the implementation of the Directive and ensured that the burden of proof in cases of pay discrimination lies on companies and employers to prove the contrary. We insisted on the ban of pay-secrecy clauses, as this now enables all workers to share information on their pay internally and externally to defend their right to equal pay. This Directive is an important step to break the pattern of pay inequalities. However, we as S&Ds would have liked to go further and wanted all companies – no matter their size – to be included in the whole scope of the Directive. This was not possible because of the conservatives and the liberals. We will fight for this in a future revision of the Directive.

The Pay Transparency focuses on equal pay in the same sector. However, the biggest part of the gender pay gap is due to the systematic lower pay in female-dominated sectors compared to wages in male-dominated sectors. Therefore, the S&D Group wants to tackle the issue of **equal pay for “work of equal value” across different occupational sectors in order to reach fairer remuneration in all sectors**.

We call on the Commission, Member States and social partners to develop guidelines that allow for defining and comparing the value of work; to set up gender-neutral job evaluation tools and criteria – such as education, skills, responsibility, physical and psychological burden – with the aim to fairer value and better remunerate work in female-dominated sectors.

Collective bargaining agreements should also address pay discrimination, the undervaluation of work predominantly carried out by women and secure the enforcement of equal pay. **Furthermore, we want to promote gender-blind CVs** to discourage companies and public administrations from operating gender bias during their recruitment processes. **We call on the Commission to propose an anonymised ‘Europass CV’**.



TACKLING GENDER BIAS IN TAXATION

While many Member States exclude some medical products from the sales tax base, tampons and other menstrual hygiene products are subject to sales taxes. Moreover, they are seen as 'luxury' items and are taxed as such.

Taxation policies have gender biases, as tax regulations interact with socioeconomic realities. While most Member States have abolished tax regulations that explicitly differentiate between men and women, **implicit tax bias is still prevalent**. This means that a provision nominally applies equally to all, but in reality there is discrimination because the policy interacts with behaviour/income patterns that affect genders differently.

The current EU and national taxation policies reinforce gender gaps (employment, income, unpaid work, pension, poverty, wealth, etc.) as they create disincentives for women to enter and remain in the labour market, in particular under the joint taxation scheme, and reproduce traditional gender roles.

In addition, women's consumption patterns differ from those of men as they purchase more goods and services with the aim of promoting health, education and nutrition. Combined with women's lower income, women bear a larger VAT burden. While many Member States exclude some medical products from the sales tax base, tampons and other menstrual hygiene products are subject to sales taxes. Moreover, they are seen as 'luxury' items and are taxed as such. This shows how deeply embedded gender inequality is in the tax system.

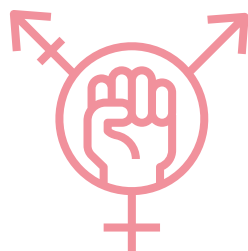


We, as Socialists, stress that individual taxation is key to achieving tax fairness for women.

We as Socialists stress that **individual taxation is instrumental to achieving tax fairness for women**. We call on Member States to phase in individual taxation while ensuring full preservation of all financial and other benefits linked to parenthood in current joint taxation systems. We call on the Member States to **provide for VAT exemptions, reduced rates and zero-rates for products and services with positive social, health and/or environmental effects, in line with the ongoing revision of the EU VAT Directive**.

We urge the Commission to carry out **regular gender impact assessments of fiscal policies**, focusing on the multiplier effect and implicit bias to ensure that neither direct nor indirect discrimination features in any fiscal policies in the EU. We want the Commission to **promote best practices on taxation policies** that consider gender impact and promote gender equality and to include a **gender analysis in its annual Taxation Trends in the European Union report**.





EQUAL REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN

30%

The average share of women in parliament in the 27 EU member states has increased from 21% to 30%, with wide national discrepancies.

89%

Yet 89% of country leaders remain men and less than one in five of the EU's major political parties is led by a woman. In the private sector, almost **three quarters of those sitting on corporate boards are men.**

Diverse groups take better, more inclusive and more sustainable decisions. Only the decisions that consider everyone's view are fit to pave the way for a future that is better for all. Women in decision-making positions are furthermore important role models for the next generation, as children need to see that a woman's place is at the decision-taking table. Major inequalities remain to be tackled when it comes to **economic and political decision-making**. However, it is not only about the sheer number of women being represented, but also about the positions they occupy.

Therefore, we are calling on the EU to lead by example and on the Council to establish a **Council Configuration on Gender Equality and Equality**, because the EU needs a platform for intergovernmental exchange on gender equality and a formal forum for the ministers responsible for the matters of gender equality and equality in general.

We, as Socialists, want women representation in economic and political decision – made on an equal footing with men.

Therefore, we call for enabling a fairer representation of women in decision-making processes in politics as well as on company boards, **by quota, reserved seats, and zip-lists**, but also by improving political and company culture implementing **codes of conduct** and **party statutes** in order to raise awareness for gender equality. **Underrepresentation of women in politics is a serious issue that poses an obstacle for fair democratic representation.**

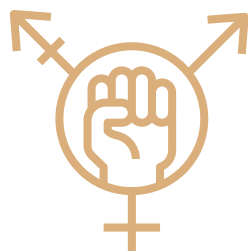
Women politicians, activists and journalists are **targeted by violence**. Political violence is gendered and has a silencing effect.

The latest data from the European Institute for Gender Equality confirms that **only binding measures are a game changer for women**: starting from a similar level (13%), **the proportion of women on boards rose to 36.4% in those countries that took legislative action, to 30.3% in countries that implemented soft measures and to only 16.6% in those that took no action.**

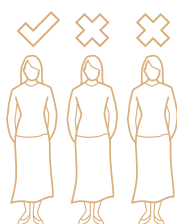
When it comes to women in economic decision-making, the situation is no better, as today; only 30.6% of board members in the EU's largest publicly listed companies are women, with significant differences among Member States. Currently, only seven Member States have binding legislation regarding women on boards, nine Member States have no measures at all, and eleven have only soft measures.

We are therefore happy and proud that the Women on Boards Directive was finally adopted in November 2022 after a decade-long blockage by conservative governments, and thanks to the continuous calls and negotiations for this landmark law by our group. **Negotiations led by the S&D Group set binding targets to improve gender balance on company boards in Europe.**

This Directive introduces an open and transparent procedure to ensure a minimum of 40% of women in non-executive boards of EU companies by 2026, introducing quotas in both executive and non-executive boards, with the overall minimum requirement of 33%. Member States have to set up a penalty system for companies failing to comply with the new laws and a list was set up whereby it will become clear which companies are complying with the targets. This is not only a great success for the S&Ds, but also for European businesses, because the most successful companies are those that have the most diverse boards of directors. It is now up to the Member States to implement this Directive. The S&Ds will closely monitor this in the next mandate.



STOP THE CYCLE OF VIOLENCE



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One in three women in the European Union, which represents 62 million women, **has experienced physical and/or sexual violence since the age of 15.**



55%

One in two women (55%) has experienced **sexual harassment.**

Harassment, cyberbullying, femicide, sexist hate speech, intimate partner violence, assault, revenge porn, stalking/cyberstalking, reproductive coercion and denial of safe and legal abortion, sexual violence, rape, psychological violence - enough is enough!

Violence against women and girls is one of the most widespread violations of fundamental rights. It is time to take action!

Thanks to continuous pressure from the S&D Group, the **EU finally ratified the Istanbul Convention** - a most comprehensive and legally binding international human rights standard to fight, prevent and prosecute violence against women.

Fighting gender-based violence has always been at the heart of our work and **our continuous fight for a comprehensive Directive combatting violence against women has finally paid off.** In 2022, the European Commission finally put forward the first piece of legislation to tackle gender-based violence (GBV) including sexual violence (SGBV) at European level: a **Directive on combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence.** This proposed law takes a comprehensive approach to tackling GBV covering prevention, protection and prosecution. Crucially, the law proposes six crimes that would be created at Union level, and therefore prosecuted and defined the same way in all EU countries. Included in this is the crime of rape based on a lack of consent as defined in the Istanbul Convention. It is a key priority for the S&D Group to have a consent-based definition of rape in this Directive, because in addition to securing better access to justice for rape survivors, it also creates changes of attitudes in societies that will ultimately help to prevent sexual violence. The Directive also proposes criminalisation



38%

of all femicides are committed by intimate partners.

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Worldwide, almost one third of women aged between 15 and 49 who have been in a relationship have reported that they **have been subjected to some form of physical and/or sexual violence by their intimate partner.**



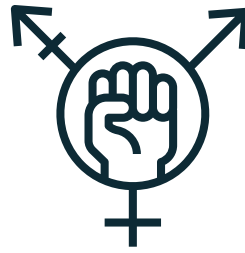
Even the online world is still not a safe space for women. 1 in 10 women in the EU **have been victims of sexual harassment via digital tools** since the age of 15.



of cyber-crimes and female genital mutilation. The Directive must have provisions for free legal aid for victims of violence, as well as provisions for preventing re-occurrence of violence through developing methods to work with the perpetrators. The Directive includes provisions for comprehensive sexuality and relationship education, which should focus on educating on consent, boundaries and responsibility of all people in the efforts to end gender-based violence through awareness raising campaigns that would challenge gender stereotypical views that help perpetuate violence against women. In addition, there is a need for guidelines and training for judges, prosecutors, police, lawyers and all authorities encountering victims of SGBV.

However, our fight does not stop there. There is no denying that gender-based violence is a serious crime – it's time to treat it like one. We urge the European Commission to fulfil the goals set up in the Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025 and **submit a proposal for a Council decision to identify gender-based violence as a new area of crime listed in the Article 83(1) TFEU. Only this step can make it possible to tackle all forms of gender-based violence at EU level**, as current proposals for the Directive only include the crimes that fit the existing legal basis.

We, the Socialists, are calling on the Commission and the Member States to collect and make available quality gender-disaggregated data on all forms of gender-based violence through cooperation with Eurostat, the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights and the European Institute for Gender Equality. **We are calling on the Commission to develop a European Union protocol on violence against women in times of crisis and emergency** to prevent violence against women and to support victims providing essential protection such as EU helplines, safe public accommodation and health services.



GENDER PERSPECTIVE MAKES FOR A GREENER FUTURE

More can be done to ensure women can take advantage of the opportunities created by the green transition.

Climate emergency and gender inequalities go hand in hand, as systemic inequalities cause and perpetuate the climate crisis as well as discrimination of women. **Women and girls are powerful actors of change**, who need to be equally represented in political decision-making and industries vital to a green transition.

The Fit for 55 package policies must be designed and implemented with a clear gender and social dimension. The renovation and innovation initiatives, which the green transition requires, will need strong investment in workers, the creation of quality jobs and retraining, and women should be included in all aspects.

In the field of the green energy transition, creating a more gender equitable energy policy must be a priority, as women and men experience energy poverty in different ways and are unequally affected by energy poverty due to income differences, housing conditions, care responsibilities and age. Access to affordable heating and electricity should be guaranteed to low-income households, and especially single women and mothers. In addition, more can be done to ensure women can take advantage of the opportunities created by the green transition. For instance, by reducing the gender gap in the renewable energy sector of employment and education. Access to education, re- and up-skilling and supporting women's participation in STEM education and careers are crucial.

We emphasise the right to safe and attractive workplaces in the transport sector, where all workers are free from violence or sexual harassment. We urge stakeholders to promote standards as laid down in ILO Convention No. 190 on Violence and Harassment and to implement without delay a zero-tolerance policy towards violence and harassment in the workplace.

Women are also vital in designing smart mobility policies.

Currently, the design, planning, implementation and evaluation of transport and mobility solutions are gender blind, reproducing society's existing gender biases, norms and inequalities, due to the lack of women's representation in the sector. For this reason, **we are calling on the Commission to gender mainstream all transport-related legislation, policy, programmes and actions and to include gender criteria and work-life balance in the design of mobility planning.** We emphasise the right to safe and attractive workplaces in the transport sector, where all workers are free from violence or sexual harassment and their health and safety at work is ensured, including access to decent sanitary facilities, appropriate tools and equipment including work gear, as well as a good work-life balance.

In this regard, **we urge stakeholders to promote standards as laid down in ILO Convention No. 190 on Violence and Harassment and to implement without delay a zero-tolerance policy towards violence and harassment in the workplace.**

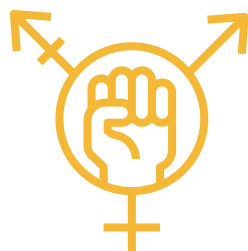
Despite the fact that women make up 51% of the world's population, their experience of the environment has not generated much interest in the past, and the spaces and structures for participation have not been created so that women are represented equally and contribute with knowledge they have about the territories and cities where we live. For this reason, we need **gender-sensitive urban planning** that includes a more active participation of women in decision-making, diagnosis, transformation and urban design processes. Participation helps to give greater visibility to the issues that most concern women and to promote understanding of the relationships between issues such as safety, accessibility and mobility that shape the daily routine of women's lives. The implementation of **The New Leipzig Charter** must address this issue. Likewise, initiatives that aim to improve the quality of the spaces and cities where we live, such as the **New European Bauhaus**, need to have a gender perspective.



Gender equality as well as non-discrimination principles should be an integral part of the preparation, implementation and evaluation of CAP interventions.

There needs to be a particular focus on promoting the participation of women in socio-economic development in **rural areas**. The work performed by women, mostly as male farmers' family members, is not recognised on an equal footing, which affects women's economic independence.

The CAP Regulation should help to ensure that the work that women do is more visible, better appreciated and taken into account within the specific objectives to be proposed by the Member States in their strategic plans. We call on actions focused on promoting a greater inclusion of women in the rural economy, through granting support to promote the involvement of women in knowledge transfer and information actions, advisory services, investments in physical assets, farm and rural business start-up and development, installation of digital technologies and co-operation.

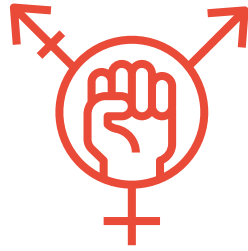


GENDER SENSITIVE DIGITAL TRANSITION

The importance of these subjects and related jobs is growing and we must ensure that women are not left behind or excluded from the society of today and the future.

It is estimated that there are 8 million ICT specialists in the EU but only 17% of them are women. Globally, only 22% of AI professionals are women. The importance of these subjects and related jobs is growing and we must ensure that women are not left behind. **Gender mainstreaming of digital education policies and programmes**, through creating safe spaces for girls to learn, educating parents and teachers about gender stereotypes and setting up positive women role models, is the first step towards closing the digital gender gap and tackling leaky pipe phenomenon in the area of digital education. There is a need for **EU wide life-long learning campaigns directed at women** to improve digital literacy.

Therefore, **we are calling on the Commission to promote gender equality in companies in the ICT and related sectors**, including through financing female-led projects in the digital sector, and the promotion of a minimum number of women researchers participating in ICT projects. Furthermore, digitalisation requires that we put in place **a strong regulatory framework for online platforms** which shape the way our societies communicate and receive information. It must be ensured that social media platforms do not employ practices that are discriminatory, promote exploitation and exclusion, which negatively affect women in particular. It is of equal importance to put strong safeguards for algorithms driven by AI systems to avoid any gender bias in the field of their application.



FEMINIST FOREIGN POLICY

The need for feminist foreign policy is clearly demonstrated by the Russian war against the Ukraine. The women of Ukraine face disproportionate risks, including but not limited to conflict sexual and gender-based violence as a weapon of war and risk of trafficking for sexual exploitation.

EU foreign and security policy must be a feminist one with the achievement of women's rights and gender equality as one of the overarching goals. Equal representation of women and girls in foreign policy actions is key, as women and girls are disproportionately affected by violence, poverty, armed conflicts, and the impact of climate, health and other emergencies.. Meaningful participation of women and girls in conflict prevention and resolution, peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction increases the sustainability and success of peace and the resilience of local communities. Protection and support for women activists, educators and leaders in conflict zones must be a priority in all EU conflict response strategies.

The need for feminist foreign policy is clearly demonstrated by the Russian war against Ukraine. The women of Ukraine face disproportionate risks, including, but not limited to, conflict sexual and gender-based violence as a weapon of war and risk of trafficking for sexual exploitation. Women's access to SRHR, including safe and legal abortion care in times of crisis, must never be jeopardised, as is currently the case in some EU Member States. Notably, women in Ukraine are not only active in combat, but offer a crucial non-combat support, forming a second line of defence. Equal and meaningful representation of women is therefore key to building a more resilient society.



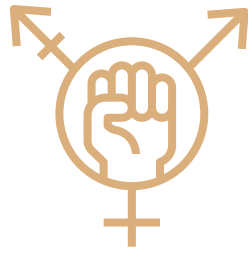
EU foreign and security policy must be a feminist one with the achievement of women's rights and gender equality as one of the overarching goals.

The EU shall lead by example by ensuring **gender equal representation of women in the key positions** in EEAS, relevant Commission services, European agencies working outside of the EU and delegations. **We highly encourage increased engagement of women from affected communities** into these structures to ensure direct representation and to further the ability of these institutions to take the most effective possible measures.

We welcome the GAP III, but maintain yet again that **85% of all new external actions shall incorporate gender as a significant or principal objective and that 20% of official development aid in each country should be allocated to programmes having gender equality as one of its principal objectives. We insist on the systematic implementation of rigorous gender analysis, gender-disaggregated data collection, gender budgeting and gender impact assessments** to inform the design of all EU and EU Member States' external financing, as well as their engagement in policy dialogues. There is a need to invest in knowledge, resources and in-house expertise on gender equality in EU Delegations to be able to implement GAP III adequately.

We need a **feminist migration policy, taking into account the needs of migrant and asylum seeking women and girls** and their human rights by finally adopting a comprehensive migration and asylum framework that specifically addresses their experiences. The fortress Europe should be a fortress protecting rights and people, not shutting them out.





POLICIES THAT WORK FOR WOMEN

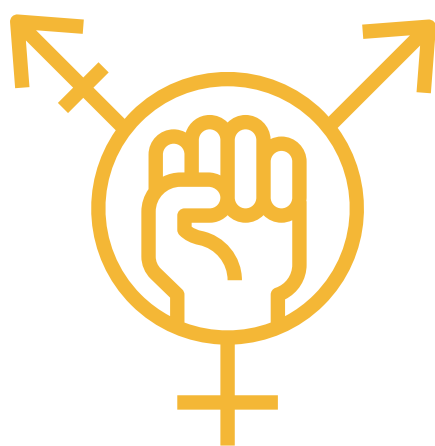
We, Socialists in the EP, want a gender equality perspective integrated at all stages and levels of policies, programmes and projects.

The previous discussion demonstrates clearly that gender is everywhere. Thus, achieving gender equality is only possible by implementing a crosscutting approach that is integrated into all areas of society. The globally accepted tools for this are **gender mainstreaming and gender budgeting**.

We, Socialists in the EP, want a **gender equality perspective integrated at all stages and levels of policies, programmes and projects**. Women and men have different needs, living conditions and circumstances, including unequal access to and control over power, resources, human rights and institutions, as well as the justice system. The situations of women and men also differ widely according to country, region, economic status, age, ethnic or social origin, race, disability, or other factors. **Gender mainstreaming means taking into account these differences when designing, implementing and evaluating policies, programmes and projects, so that they benefit both women and men and do not increase inequality but enhance gender equality**. It should also be included in areas that do not seem to be gender-relevant at first sight, such as taxation, trade, mobility design and as previously demonstrated, the green transition. Gender mainstreaming shows us the hidden gender inequalities and biases.

Gender mainstreaming has to be complemented by **gender budgeting: the application of gender mainstreaming in the budgetary process**.

We want the gender-based assessment of budgets to become the norm. The gender perspective has to be integrated at all levels of the budgetary process, and revenues and expenditures must be restructured to be beneficial to **achieving gender equality goals**. The European Commission must ensure that gender budgeting is applied to the EU budget as a whole and that the recommendations from the European Court of Auditors are fully implemented, including into the mid-term review of the current Multiannual Financial Framework and the implementation of the Recovery and Resilience Facility.





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