

# The Gender Gap in the EU's Public Employment and Leadership<sup>1</sup>

## ABSTRACT

This Study has been commissioned by the European Parliament's Policy Department for Citizens' Rights and Constitutional Affairs at the request of the FEMM Committee. It provides a situational analysis of the gender gap in EU and Member States' public sector, administration and sphere and identifies promising policy measures for reducing it.

The United Nations' Index on Gender Equality scored five EU Member States among the top 10 countries in the world for gender equality in 2020.<sup>2</sup> At the same time, the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) concluded that Europe is at least 60 years away from achieving full gender equality.<sup>3</sup> Gender equality is a fundamental right and one of the fundamental values in the EU. Achieving it involves putting in place and into practice smart policies that grant equal opportunities to women, allowing them to fully deploy their potential, participate and contribute to the public sector, administration and sphere. The inclusion of women in the European public workforce at all levels is not only in line with EU values: it is also a boost for Europe's economic growth and competitiveness in a quickly ageing society.<sup>4</sup>

For this reason, the EU democratic institutions have stepped up action for gender equality over the past decades. Legislative measures in this area have been accompanied by strategies and action plans, including the recent **EU Strategy for Gender Equality** (2020-2025). Despite all efforts made, women in the EU are still victims of stereotypes and gender violence. Substantial evidence gathered by analysts and scholars reveals the pervasive **existence of discriminatory practices and inequalities between men and women** in accessing

<sup>1</sup> Full study in English:

[http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2021/689276/IPOL\\_STU\(2021\)689276\\_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2021/689276/IPOL_STU(2021)689276_EN.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> The full data is downloadable at <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/gender-inequality-index-gii#:~:text=The%20GII%20is%20an%20inequality%20index.&text=Thus%20the%20higher%20the%20GII,major%20areas%20of%20human%20development>.

<sup>3</sup> <https://eige.europa.eu/news/gender-equality-index-2020-can-we-wait-60-more-years>

<sup>4</sup> <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/policy-areas/economic-and-financial-affairs/economic-benefits-gender-equality>



the job market, working conditions (including remuneration), decision-making power, economic independence and responsibility-sharing (for household, childcare and care of other family members).<sup>5</sup>

With the view of summarizing and giving supporting evidence to inform results-oriented policies, the present article provides:

- A situational analysis on the number of women employed in EU and national institutions, with insights on their managerial and/or leadership level (Chapter 1)
- A preliminary mapping of the factors hindering women's entry and progression in EU Member States' public sector, administration and sphere (Chapter 1)
- An outline of the international and EU legal frameworks on anti-discrimination and gender equality (Chapter 2)
- Identification and description of legislative and policy measures in the Member States that give implementation to the principle of gender equality and facilitate women's entry and progression in the public sector and administration (Chapter 3)
- An outline of future challenges for the EU's gender equality agenda, including those related to maintaining work-life balance during the Covid-19 pandemic, to the digitalisation of work and recent developments in the field of AI (Chapter 4)
- Actionable recommendations to EU and national policymakers (Chapter 4)

In order to ensure factual information, a balanced view and insights from practitioners, this research combined, to the extent possible, desk-research with semi-structured questionnaires and interviews with 30 civil servants in Member States and EU institutions. Our main findings are summarised below:

- Despite recent efforts, **the number of women in leadership and managerial positions in EU institutions and Member States is lower than that of men**; while these findings cannot lead us to conclude that women's specific needs are not represented or considered in policymaking, nevertheless, the data prompt compelling questions on I. The reasons why there is a significantly lower number of women than men in managerial and leadership positions of EU and national democratic institutions; II. The extent to which indirect representation can be effective; III. What are we missing out on by not benefitting from women's leadership?
- **There is an unfair share of household and caring responsibilities between men and women in the EU.** This situation has been addressed also through the recent EU Work-Life Balance Directive (WLB) at the EU level, and in the Member States through appropriate policies for maternal, paternal, parental leave and other instruments for long-term care. Most measures, however, are still tilted towards the attribution of caring-related responsibilities to women rather than to men. This leads us to question how social policies promote gender equality and equal opportunities and incorporate a de-gendered prospective.
- Member States' **Human Resources Management** - particularly in recruitment and promotion – still needs to improve in order to ensure **fairer and unbiased processes**.

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<sup>5</sup> For an overview of the status of Gender Equality in the EU, we refer the reader to the 2019 European Commission's report on equality between men and women in the EU [https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/aid\\_development\\_cooperation\\_fundamental\\_rights/annual\\_report\\_ge\\_2019\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/aid_development_cooperation_fundamental_rights/annual_report_ge_2019_en.pdf)

A recent report on women's out-of-work' responsibilities has been published by the World Economic Forum in December 2020 and available at <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/12/covid-women-workload-domestic-caring/>

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