

## The Parliament's fight for gender equality in the EU



Photo by Brooke Cagle on Unsplash

**Find out how the EU and the European Parliament fight to protect women's rights and to improve gender equality at work, in politics and other areas.**

### **What does the EU do to tackle inequalities?**

Since its start, the European Union has used any policies and any measures needed in order to promote [gender equality](#) and create a more [social Europe](#).

---

*" The Council, acting unanimously in accordance with a special legislative procedure and after obtaining the consent of the European Parliament, may take appropriate action to combat discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation. "*

Article 19, Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU)

---

The EU has adopted [legislation](#), issues recommendations, exchanges and good practices and provides funding to support action by member states. The concepts of EU gender equality policy were shaped by European Court of Justice rulings. The European Parliament regularly adopts own initiative reports on gender issues, calling for more efforts to [improve gender equality](#).

The European Parliament has always been very active on achieving equality between men and women and has a standing committee dedicated to [women's rights and gender equality](#). Every year, Parliament marks International Women's Day on 8 March and raises awareness by organising events.

### **Gender equality at work**

In 2019, the EU approved new rules on [family and care-related leave](#) and more adaptable working conditions, to create more incentives for fathers to take family-related leave and to increase women's employment rate.

#### **EU legislation on gender equality in the work place:**

- rules on employment (incl. equal pay, social security, working conditions and harassment)
- rules on self-employment
- rights to maternity, paternity and parental leave

Parliament also calls for concrete measures to narrow the [gender pay gap](#) - the difference between what men and woman are paid for the same work - which in the EU was an average of [16% in 2017](#) and the [pension gap](#) - the difference in pension income that men and women get -

which stood at **35.7% in 2017**. It also called for measures to tackle **female poverty**, as women are more likely to live in poverty than men.



### Promoting gender equality

<https://www.europartv.europa.eu/en/programme/society/closing-europe-s-gender-gap>

Women are underrepresented in Europe's **digital sector**, as they are less likely to take up studies or apply for a job in this field. In a **resolution** adopted in 2018, MEPs called on EU countries to put in place measures to ensure the full integration of women into ICT sectors, as well as foster education and training in ICT, science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

.....

*"Each member state shall ensure that the principle of equal pay for male and female workers for equal work or work of equal value is applied." "*

Article 157, Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU)

.....

### Preventing violence against women

The EU is tackling violence against women in various ways. Parliament has repeatedly called for a EU strategy strengthening policies in this area. It also wants to conclude EU accession to the Council of Europe's **Istanbul Convention** and for it to be ratified by all EU countries.

Parliament has also drawn attention to the need to combat specific forms of violence, including **sexual harassment**, **trafficking**, **forced prostitution**, **female genital mutilation**, **cyberstalking** and **online violence**.

In 2014, the European Parliament awarded the Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought to Congolese gynaecologist [Dr Denis Mukwege](#) for dedicating his life to helping thousands of victims of [gang rape and brutal sexual violence](#) in the Democratic Republic of Congo, and for fighting for women's dignity, justice and peace in his country.

## From migration policy to EU trade

Parliament has repeatedly called on the European Commission to increase consistency between gender equality policies and other policies, such as those covering trade, development, agriculture, employment and migration.

In a resolution adopted in 2016, members called for a set of [EU-wide gender guidelines](#) as part of wider reforms on migration and asylum policy.

In a [report](#) adopted in 2018, MEPs called for climate change measures to take into account [the role of women](#) as well as action to empower them and protect the most vulnerable.

All [EU trade agreements](#) must include binding and enforceable provisions to ensure respect for human rights, including gender equality, according to a [resolution](#) adopted in 2018.

## Women in politics

The Parliament has repeatedly highlighted the [importance of gender equality](#) in politics, promoting women's equal participation in decision-making processes at all levels.

In a [report](#) adopted in January 2019, Parliament called on European political parties to ensure both women and men are put forward for the [bodies governing the European Parliament](#) in the ninth parliamentary term. In the new Parliament, which officially started in July 2019, there are [more women than ever](#), accounting for 41% of MEPs, up from 36.5% at the [end of the previous term](#).

## Find out more about what the EU does on social policies:

- [How the EU improves workers' rights and working conditions](#)
- [Reducing unemployment: EU policies explained](#)
- [Youth employment: the EU measures to make it work](#)
- [Improving public health: EU measures explained](#)

## Find out more

[European Institute for Gender Equality](#)