

International Equal Pay Day

As things stand, the gender pay gap persists globally and in the European Union, and progress in reducing it is slow. To accelerate the realisation of the principle of 'equal pay for work of equal value', the United Nations marked the first International Day for Equal Pay on 18 September 2020. This year, for its third edition, the debate will focus on pay transparency measures.

A persisting gender pay gap

The 'gender pay gap' is a measurable indicator of inequality between women and men. It generally refers to the average difference between the remuneration of employed female and male workers.

Although the gender pay gap is measured by [different methods and indicators](#), data clearly show that women around the world still earn less when compared to men. According to the [Global Gender Gap Report 2021](#), produced by the World Economic Forum (WEF), on average, the wage gap (the ratio between the wages of women and of men in a similar position) is still approximately 37%. Despite the increase in women's educational attainment and participation in the labour market over the years, the gender pay gap remains a persistent and multi-dimensional issue in all countries and across all economic sectors. For women with [children](#), women of [colour](#), [migrant](#) women, and women with [disabilities](#), the discrepancy is even larger. In 2020, women's gross hourly earnings were on average 13.0% below those of men in the European Union (Eurostat, EU-27). Across Member States, the gender pay gap varied widely, ranging from 0.7% in Luxembourg to 22.3% in Latvia.

The coronavirus pandemic has disproportionately affected women in the [economic sphere](#). It is likely to have long-term adverse effects on [gender equality](#).

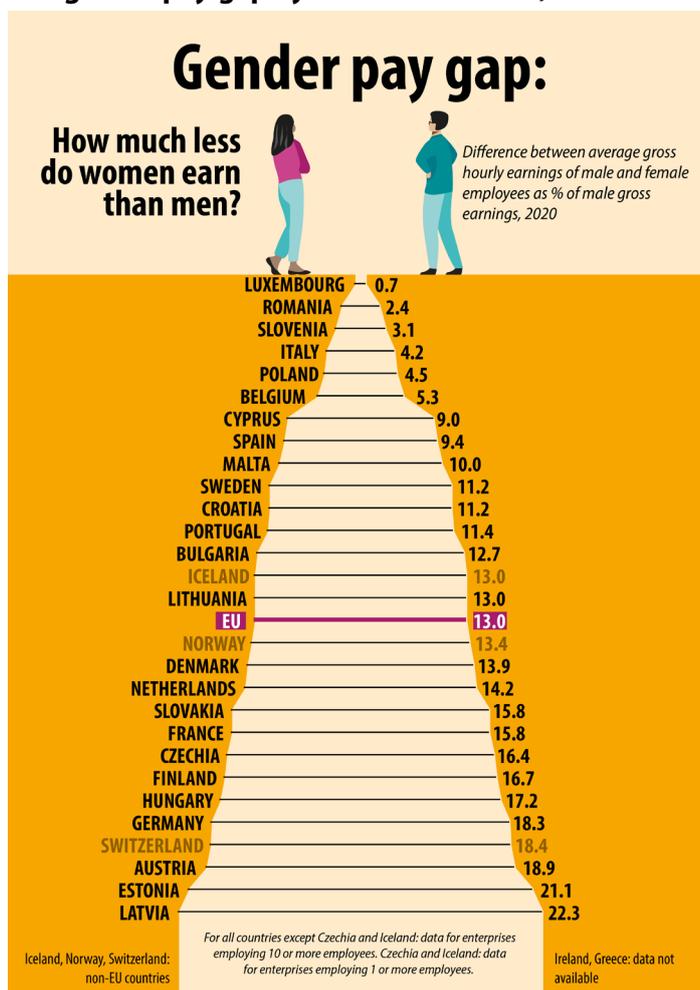
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The United Nations' commitment

Mainstreaming the gender perspective is key to the implementation of the United Nations (UN) [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#). Since 2015, the 'equal pay for work of equal value' principle has been recognised as one of the priority areas of the [United Nations sustainable development goals](#) (UNSDGs), as mentioned in [target 8.5](#): 'By 2030, achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value'.

This is an update of an 'at a glance' note from September 2021.

The gender pay gap by EU Member State, 2020



#InternationalWomensDay

ec.europa.eu/eurostat

Source: Eurostat, [Gender pay gap statistics](#).



In 2017, under the leadership of the International Labour Organization (ILO), the UN entity for gender equality and the empowerment of women ([UN Women](#)) and the [Gender Initiative](#) of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), and together with governments, labour organisations (e.g. [ITUC](#)), employers' organisations (e.g. [IOE](#)) and other dedicated agencies, the Equal Pay International Coalition ([EPIC](#)) was launched for the effective and swift achievement of the principle.

On 15 November 2019, the UN General Assembly adopted a [resolution](#) proclaiming 18 September as International Equal Pay Day. The resolution was introduced by the Equal Pay International Coalition (EPIC) with the support of Australia, Canada, Germany, New Zealand, Panama, South Africa and Switzerland. The day is intended to promote further action towards the achievement of equal pay for work of equal value.

The first International Equal Pay Day – 18 September 2020

On 18 September 2020, the [first International Equal Pay Day](#), international leaders committed to taking affirmative action to narrow the gender pay gap. EPIC called on participants to put pay equity at the heart of COVID-19 recovery efforts by introducing [integrated policy responses](#) aimed at mitigating job and income losses resulting from the pandemic and ensuring that women do not end up disproportionately shouldering these job losses and reductions in incomes.

The 2022 Equal Pay Day

This year's [celebration](#) will focus on pay transparency measures as an [effective tool](#) for identifying existing gender pay differences, closing the gender pay gap and reducing broader gender inequalities in the labour market. The event will gather leaders from various countries, as well as representatives of employers' and workers' organisations, to discuss the pros and cons of some pay transparency measures currently in place in the world.

European Union initiatives

Equal pay for equal work is one of the EU's founding principles, enshrined in [Article 157 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union](#). However, implementing and enforcing this principle remains a [challenge](#). Since then, there have been initiatives to address the gender pay gap at both [EU](#) and [Member State](#) levels. Although this [gap has been narrowed](#) to some extent in most EU countries, it remains an issue.

In her [political guidelines](#), the European Commission President, Ursula von der Leyen, announced that she would introduce a proposal on binding pay transparency measures in order to address the gender pay gap and ensure application of the principle of equal pay for equal work. Accordingly, the Commission adopted a [legislative proposal](#) to this end on 4 March 2021. Furthermore, equal pay is one of the key priorities in the [EU gender equality strategy 2020-2025](#). The proposed directive would strengthen the application of the principle of equal pay for equal work or work of equal value between men and women through pay transparency and enforcement mechanisms. To achieve this, it would focus on two aspects of equal pay: measures to ensure pay transparency and better access to justice for victims of pay discrimination. On 5 April 2022, Parliament adopted a decision to enter into negotiations with the Council on the legislative proposal. A first trilogue meeting took place on 30 June, the last day of the French Presidency. The presidency's presentation focused on the importance of proportionality and on the need for Member States to retain their flexibility and to avoid financial or administrative burdens for enterprises, notably for SMEs.

European Parliament position

Parliament has been calling for stronger measures on pay transparency and equal pay for a number of years. In its resolution of 8 October 2015 on [Equal opportunities and equal treatment of men and women in matters of employment and occupation](#), Parliament asked the Commission to draw up a legislative proposal on equal pay, incorporating measures on strengthening pay transparency, together with effective means of enforcement, such as mandatory pay audits for large companies. Parliament's resolution of 30 January 2020 on the [Gender pay gap](#) urged the Commission to ensure that the forthcoming pay transparency legislation applies to both the public and private sectors, promotes the role of the social partners and collective bargaining, and includes strong enforcement policies for those failing to comply. Parliament's resolution of 21 January 2021 on the new [EU gender equality strategy](#) stresses that binding measures are necessary to close the gender pay gap. In its 15 December 2021 resolution on [Equality between women and men](#), Parliament called on Member States to develop an action plan with clear objectives to tackle the gender pay and pension gaps.

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