

Exploring gender equality across policy areas

The European Union has adopted gender mainstreaming as its official approach to gender equality, alongside targeted action to eliminate discrimination and advance women's empowerment. From 25 to 28 October 2021, the European Parliament's committees and delegations are holding a series of events aimed at highlighting the importance of gender equality and gender mainstreaming across different policy domains.

The concept and implementation of gender mainstreaming

[Gender mainstreaming](#) is not a policy goal in itself but a tool to advance gender equality by ensuring that all legislation, policies and funding programmes make a positive contribution to equality, and consider impacts on women and men that may inadvertently cause or perpetuate inequality. A gender dimension may be more immediately evident in some areas than others, but no intervention can be assumed to be gender neutral. Consequently, a [range of methods](#) including gender [statistics](#), [analysis](#), [impact assessment](#), [budgeting](#), [evaluation](#) and [audits](#) have been developed to put gender mainstreaming into practice. This should result in [better](#) legislation and policy, and [more gender-equal](#) organisations.

The EU's approach to gender mainstreaming

As [defined](#) by the European Commission in 1996, gender mainstreaming means 'not restricting efforts to promote equality to the implementation of specific measures to help women, but mobilising all general policies and measures specifically for the purpose of achieving equality'. It was adopted as the official policy approach in the European Union and its Member States in the Amsterdam Treaty (1997), and the legal basis was strengthened in [Article 8 Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union](#), which commits both to eliminate inequalities and to promote the principle of equality between women and men in all their actions. The specific priorities in the current [EU gender-equality strategy 2020-2025](#) include: taking account of the gender dimension in major climate change and digitalisation initiatives and in specific sectors such as transport, energy and agriculture; introducing an [intersectional](#) approach across EU policies; and ensuring dedicated funding for a gender equal future. The European Parliament's own gender-mainstreaming policy, formally launched in 2003, has [evolved considerably](#) over time. The new [gender action plan](#) adopted in July 2020, and the roadmap for its implementation adopted in April 2021, include a range of measures aimed at ensuring that [Parliament](#) becomes fully [gender sensitive](#), with regard to its legislative activity, [gender balance](#) and culture. One specific objective is to strengthen the [Gender Mainstreaming Network](#), which helps to bring a gender dimension into the work of committees and delegations.

Gender Equality Week in the European Parliament

Parliament's Gender Equality Week is a relatively new initiative, [first](#) held in 2020. Spearheaded by the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality ([FEMM](#)), it complements the longstanding stocktaking held around [International Women's Day](#) on 8 March, by giving all committees and delegations a further opportunity to explore issues relevant to gender equality in their particular areas of competence. This year's [programme](#) spans a broad spectrum of policy areas and sectors. As in 2020, the [gendered impacts](#) of the coronavirus pandemic will be a key focus, exploring how recovery measures, including [EU funding and national recovery plans](#), can promote gender equality and prevent the widening of existing gender gaps. When it comes to long-term challenges, there will also be discussions around how to ensure that both women and men benefit from investment in the [digital](#) and [green](#) transitions and on the potential benefits of EU action for [carers and the care sector](#). Gender issues in specific sectors including [fisheries](#), [agriculture](#), [research](#), [energy](#), [culture](#), [education](#), and [tourism](#) will be another focus, as will humanitarian action, foreign and [security](#) policy and the situation of women in several countries outside the EU, including Turkey and Afghanistan. [Violence against women](#) will also be addressed. The week will offer an opportunity to review progress on equality legislation and present the latest results of the [EIGE Gender Equality Index](#), the EU's main tool for measuring advances in gender equality in the EU over time.

EPRS | European Parliamentary Research Service

Author: Rosamund Shreeves, Members' Research Service

PE 698.756 – October 2021



This document is prepared for, and addressed to, the Members and staff of the European Parliament as background material to assist them in their parliamentary work. The content of the document is the sole responsibility of its author(s) and any opinions expressed herein should not be taken to represent an official position of the Parliament. Reproduction and translation for non-commercial purposes are authorised, provided the source is acknowledged and the European Parliament is given prior notice and sent a copy. © European Union, 2021
epers@ep.europa.eu (contact) <http://www.eprs.ep.parl.union.eu> (intranet) <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank> (internet) <http://epthinktank.eu> (blog)