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Gender and Poverty in Europe

EAPN BRIEFING NOTE

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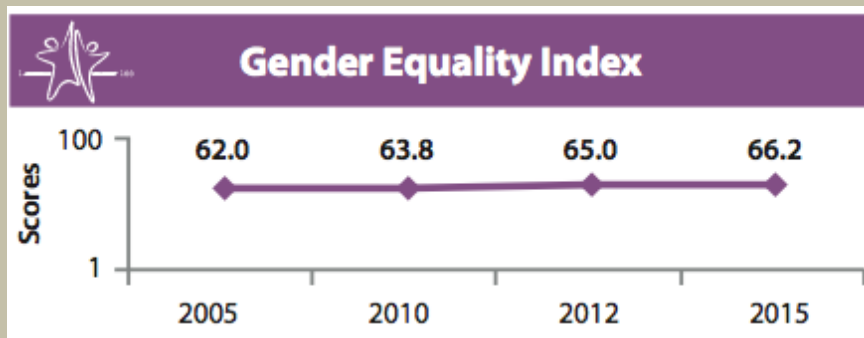
GENDER AND POVERTY IN EUROPE

Why is it important to focus on gendered aspects of poverty?

Both poverty and gender inequality are two forms of social injustice. They undermine human rights; the wellbeing of individuals, and their capacity to develop their full potential in life (as emphasized in the human development approach¹). Despite efforts made to make progress in gender equality, women are still in an underprivileged position in our societies, and therefore at higher risk of poverty. Women experiencing poverty are exposed to twofold risk and injustice – based on gender and based on their poverty status. Monitoring gendered aspects of poverty is necessary to understand the gender-specific forms and causes of poverty and - in accordance with this - to advocate for appropriate policies and measures that can eliminate or prevent them.

How big are gender inequalities across Europe?

Gender inequalities are monitored in the EU through the Gender Equality Index, a tool designed and used by the Gender Equality Institute. The index measures both the level of achievement and gender gaps in certain domains. This means that a score reflect the level of women’s employment and the gender gap in employment, for example. Higher values (from 1 to 100) reflect higher achievements and lower gender gaps.



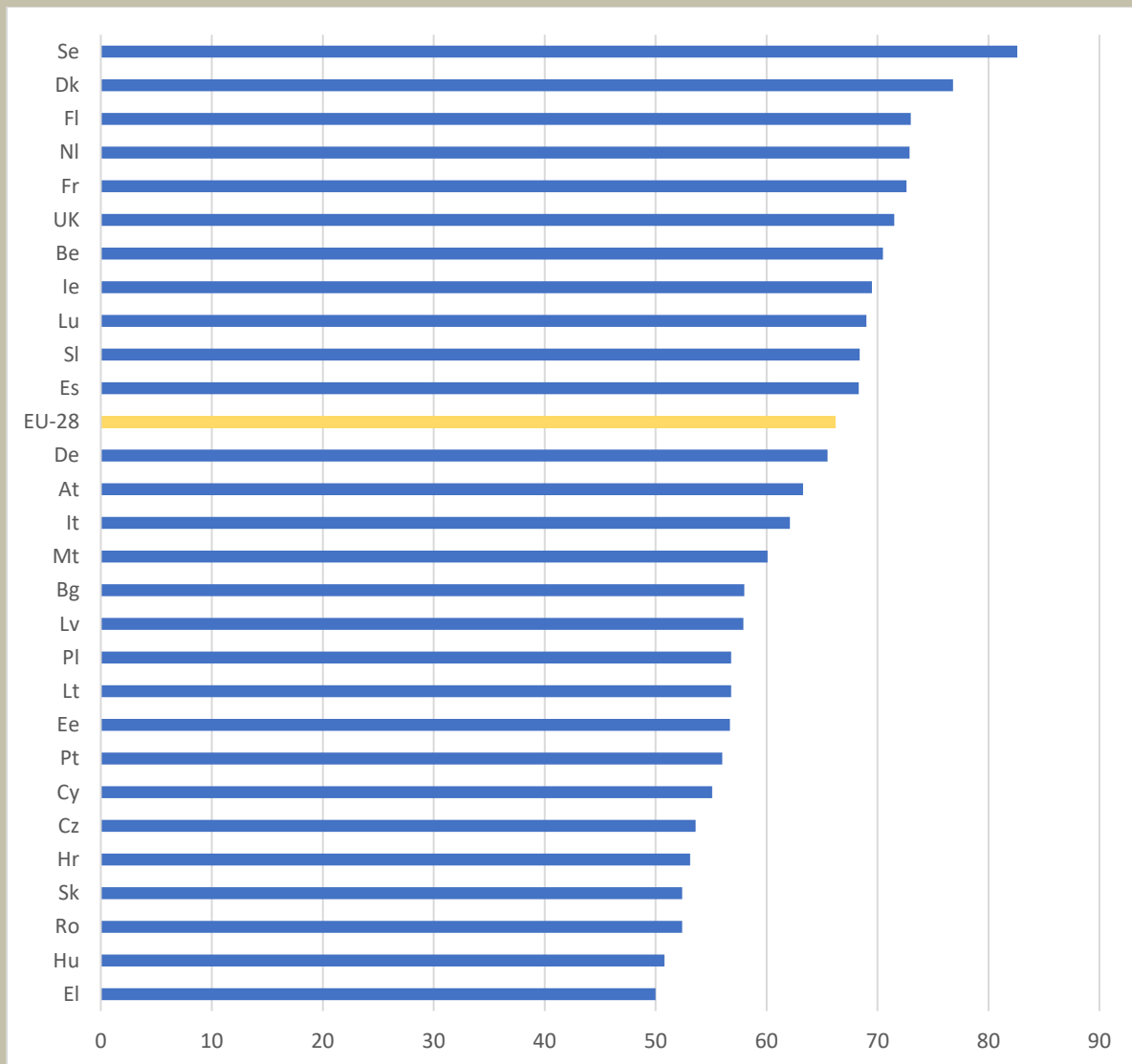
According to the Gender Equality Index for 2017, gender inequalities are still prominent and compared with the situation ten years ago there is very little progress in achieving gender equality. The EU’s

score is just four points higher than ten years ago (66 out of 100 as opposed to 62). There are huge differences between Member States, with Sweden as the top performing country (score 82.6) and Greece with the lowest performance (50). The domain with least progress and even some backward trend is the domain of time, since women still do most of the housework.

Gender Equality Index 2017

¹ The Human Development approach is grounded in the theory of Amartya Sen, a Nobel prize winning economist who developed a specific theory of social justice and introduced new views on development as the process that enables individuals to develop their full potential, living in freedom to make choices ('Development as Freedom'). This approach is the conceptual ground for Human Development approach of the UN which is the foundation of the current global development framework up to 2030, embodied in the Sustainable Development Goals.

"Women and Poverty" Informal Group, 2017



Source: [Gender Equality Institute](#)

Feminization of poverty

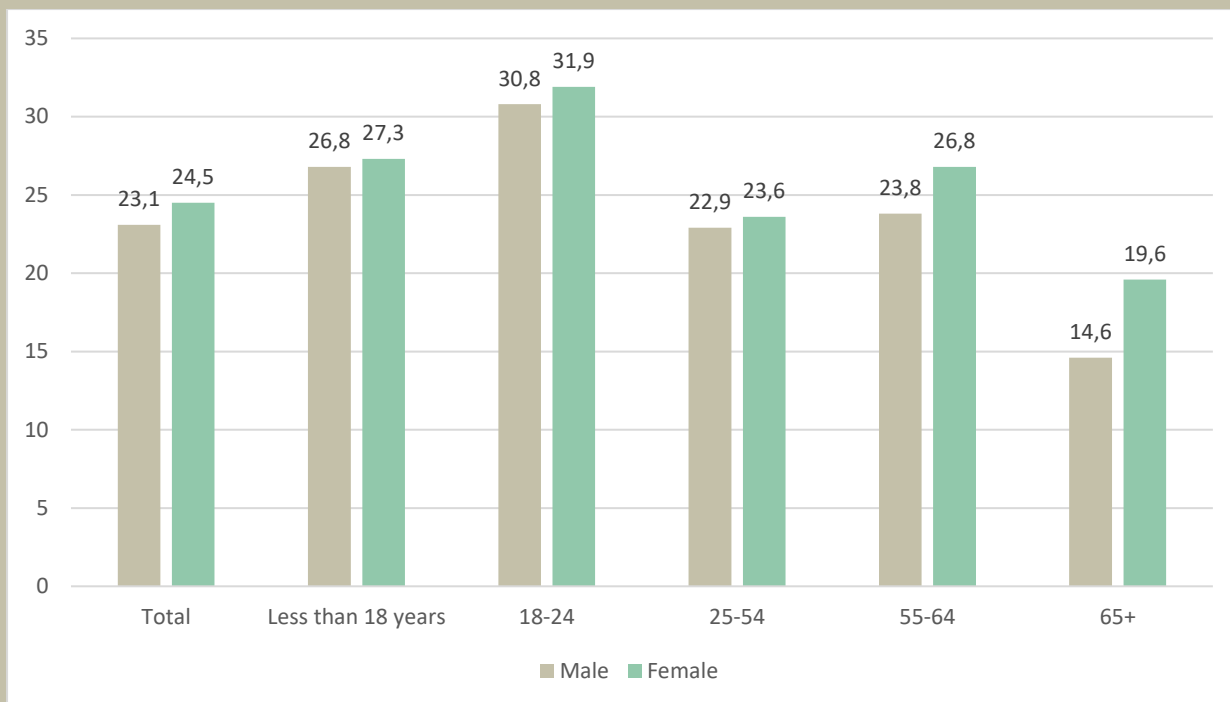
Poverty and gender are related. Over the last decade, the term ‘feminization of poverty’ has been more frequently used, because the proportion of women amongst people in poverty is increasing. This is usually linked to the trend of an increased share of households headed by women.

In 2015, women were more likely to experience poverty or social exclusion than men by 1.4 percentage points (the rate for women was 24.4 %, while for men it was 23.0 %).

Eurostat data from 2015 also tell us that almost 50 % of all single parents were at risk of poverty or social inclusion. Women are particularly effected as they make up almost 85% of all one-parent families in the EU.

People at risk of poverty or social exclusion, by sex and age group, EU-28, 2015 (% of population)

“Women and Poverty” Informal Group, 2017



Source: Eurostat

The gender gap in poverty is present in all countries except Finland.² In the majority of countries the at-risk-of-poverty rate is higher among women - only in Spain, Poland and Serbia, is the at-risk-of-poverty rate higher among men. The gender gap in poverty is higher among older age groups and reflects inequalities rooted in the labour market. Women have less chances to achieve an adequate pension due to lower employment rates, more frequent part-time employment than men, and lower wages.

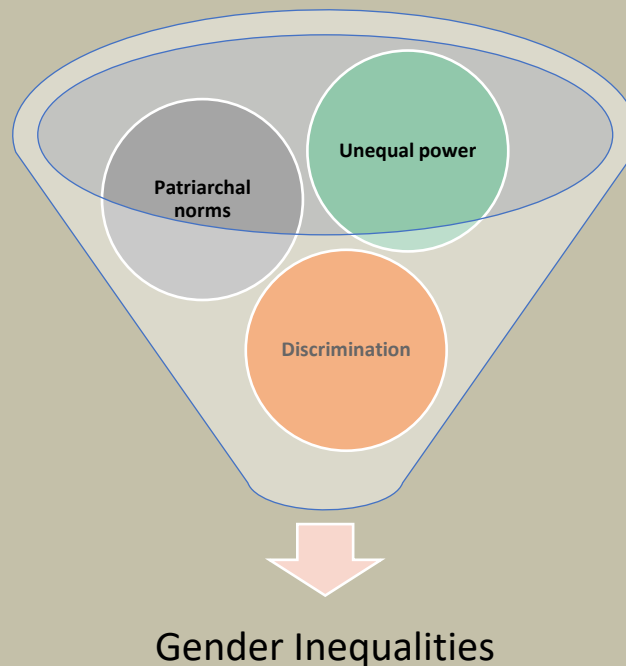
It is important to keep in mind that the current poverty data reveals only a part of the gender gap, as at-risk-of-poverty indicators are measured based on household data. Internal distribution of resources within the household is not revealed, yet in societies with prominent gender inequalities, intra-household distribution and access to financial and other resources which are important for satisfaction of needs, is often unequal, defined by patriarchal norms.

What are the causes of higher risks of poverty among women?

The reasons are numerous and some have already been mentioned, such as lower employment of women, wage gaps and intra-household distribution of resources guided by patriarchal values. To this list should be added unequal access to property, career interruptions due to lack of child care, segregation in education and later in the labour market which leads to women occupying jobs that are less well-rewarded (i.e. jobs in social services vs. jobs in IT technologies), unequal share of duties related to the maintenance of household and family care, etc. But what is the root of these inequalities? Basically, these factors that generate higher poverty of women are rooted in unequal

² In Finland, women live longer than men; men face higher rates of long-term unemployment, as well as low education attainment in relation to work.

power relations that are institutionalized in the key institutions of our societies: political institutions (the EU-28 share of women among members of national parliaments is only 22%³), economic organizations (in the EU-28 there are only 16% of women among companies' board members)⁴, but also in the sphere of private relations in households and families (women perform 77.1% of all domestic activities in the EU-28)⁵. These power relations are deeply rooted in the norms and values of society and are reproduced through mechanisms of discrimination.



What is gender discrimination?

Gender discrimination is defined as “Any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on the basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field” (United Nations (1979). Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) – Article 1).

Discrimination can stem from law (de jure) or from practice (de facto). The CEDAW Convention recognises and addresses both forms of discrimination, whether contained in laws, policies, procedures or practices (EIGE).

³ <http://eige.europa.eu/gender-statistics/gender-equality-index/2015/domain/power/1>

⁴ <http://eige.europa.eu/gender-statistics/gender-equality-index/2015/domain/power/2>

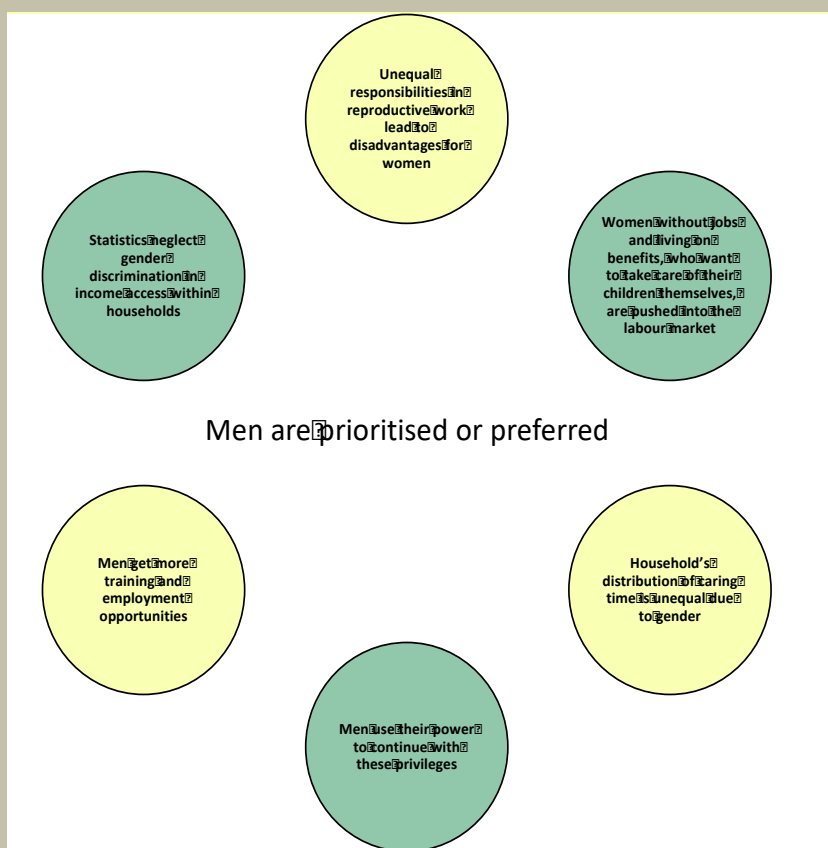
⁵ <http://eige.europa.eu/gender-statistics/gender-equality-index/2015/domain/time/1>

“Women and Poverty” Informal Group, 2017

Europe is indisputably one of the world's leaders when it comes to women's rights and gender equality, however the reality is that we are only half way towards achieving gender equality and the current rate of progress is actually very slow. This situation stems from a patriarchal society, where women are in practice responsible for traditional reproductive chores and duties, and to gender discrimination, meaning the social prejudices, preferences, selections and attitudes based on these roles.

How does gender discrimination work as a mechanism for the generation of higher poverty among women?

There are different ways in which discrimination produces higher poverty among women:



... Men are prioritised or preferred: On a world-wide scale, women face discrimination in education, employment and access to goods and services, in both developing and developed countries: young male children have a preference to access, compared to young female children. Although this is not so evident in the European Union regarding education (as women tend to access and to even succeed more in education), it is a fact regarding the labour market, top positions and income levels.

... Unequal responsibilities in reproductive work lead to disadvantages for women:

Employers and institutions tend to discriminate against women for the best paid jobs, promotions or the most empowering tasks, as they know that they “are more dedicated to tending their families and their home chores”.

... Women without jobs and living on benefits, who want to take care of their children themselves, are pushed into the labour market: If a woman has to or wants to take care of her children, everybody (her social worker, her work coach, even minimum income and benefits conditions) will tell her that her children are a burden to her, a negative influence on her professional position and economic independence. And that she must become a “productive” member of society through the labour market, whatever her family preferences. This means that the tradition of home childcare is replaced, and children are put into early school facilities, although many disagree with the benefits of this system.

“Women and Poverty” Informal Group, 2017

... **Household's distribution of caring time is unequal due to gender:** In the EU, women dedicate more time than men to reproductive work. In many EU countries, like Spain or Italy, women tend to choose between their jobs/ careers and their maternity, as lack of conciliation facilities and the unequal distribution of the reproductive work act against them. Women living in poverty, often with children from an early age, do not have a choice in this, unless they have access to good care facilities, and only in the case where earned wages compensate the whole process of getting into work.

... **Men use their power to prolong these privileges:** Power is established to retain advantages and privileges, if needs be by exercising violence and using other sanctions, within families and in societies at large, sometimes using religion as argumentation. One in three women in the EU, or 62 million women, has experienced physical and/or sexual violence since the age of 15.

... **Men get more training and employment opportunities:** The photographs used to illustrate poverty often feature a woman. However, analysis and strategies aimed at eradicating poverty tend to focus on men. Women are more present in assistance programs, but less in social interventions directed to improve skills and labour insertion.

... **Statistics neglect gender discrimination in access to income within households:** 'The breadwinner's income - often a man's - is "evenly distributed" amongst the family members'. This is not true in many families, where men manage income with their own distribution criteria. See for example, EUROSTAT's Survey of Living Conditions.

Empirical evidence on discrimination

EUROSTAT gender statistics specify some critical areas of concern representing the main obstacles to women's advancement, requiring concrete action by governments and civil society. We see for instance, that the gender pay gap, which refers to the difference between average gross hourly earnings of male and female employees as a % of male gross earnings, is 37,4%.

The latest [Eurobarometer survey](#) on Discrimination in the EU in 2015, carried out in 28 EU Member States, revealed that there is widespread support among Europeans for training employees and employers on diversity issues (80%), monitoring recruitment procedures (77%) and monitoring the composition of the workforce (69%).

FEMININE POVERTY AND GENDER DISCRIMINATION IN THE EU

51%
women

Life expectancy
Women
83.6
years
Men: 78.1
years

Women
9.5
more times
than Men in
Tertiary
education

Some 260,000,000 women live in the European Union



Higher at risk of poverty rate (17.7% of women compared to 16.9% of men).
Higher percentage of households with low employment intensity (11.1% of women compared to 10.2% of men)



Higher Material Deprivation (8.1% of women compared to 8% of men).
Higher AROPE rate (24.4% of women compared to 23% of men).

THE FEMINIZED OCCUPATIONS HAVE WORSE WAGES, MORE PRECARIOUS CONTRACTS AND INVOLUNTARY PART-TIME DEDICATION. 32% OF WOMEN WORK PART-TIME, COMPARED TO ONLY 9% OF MEN.

THE ECONOMIC CRISIS AND AUSTERITY POLICIES HAVE INVOLVED A "DOUBLE PUNISHMENT" FOR WOMEN: HIGHER PRECARIETY, LOWER WAGES AND HIGHER POVERTY AND EXCLUSION.

OTHER PROBLEMS AFFECTING WOMEN IN THE EU (EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, 2018): "IRREAL" FAMILY MODEL; CRYSTAL CEILING; SEXUAL DIVISION OF OCCUPATIONS; MALE BUSINESS MANAGEMENT; STEREOTYPES AND HYPERSEXUALIZATION; IMBALANCE IN FAMILY RESPONSIBILITIES; PHYSICAL AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND TRAFFICKING OF WOMEN.

Regarding the question of "having a woman in the highest political office", the vast majority of respondents (92%) say that they would be at ease with a woman being in the highest elected position in their country; 82% would be comfortable (score of 7-10 out of 10), with a further 10% indifferent. Just 3% said they would be uncomfortable with this scenario. The proportion that is comfortable or indifferent is higher than was recorded in the previous survey in June 2012 (increase from 85% to 92%).

Other findings are:

- 20% said that Gender is not reflected sufficiently in the media.
- 27% said that Gender is widely seen as a factor that could put job applicants at a disadvantage.
- More than half of European workers feel that enough is being done to promote diversity in their workplace in terms of gender (58% in 2015 vs. 26% in 2012).
- Around one in five respondents (21%) said that, in the 12 months preceding the survey, they personally felt discriminated against or harassed on the basis of one or more of the following grounds: being over 55 years old (5%), their gender (4%), ethnic origin (3%), religion or beliefs (3%), disability (3%), being under 30 years old (2%), sexual orientation (2%), gender identity (1%) or for another reason (6%). In total, 5% of respondents said that they felt discriminated against on multiple grounds.



Donald Tusk, President of the Council

THE COUNCIL



EUROPEAN COMMISSION – 2017

8 WOMEN, 19 MEN

Testimonies



Ana, Spain, "Our ceilings are not of glass, they are of methacrylate"

"Women and Poverty" Informal Group, 2017

"Women must get into everything: You have to be a great professional, succeed as a mother, as a wife ... I am overwhelmed because everything has to be done well".

Paula, Spain, "I was downgraded in my job when I had an abortion"

"When I first had a pregnancy, I had a more responsible position than I do now, but I had an abortion. I had to tell them, because I was hospitalized, and when I returned to the company, I was informed that "my duties had changed". As if they suddenly had discovered that I was a woman and not an angel, they could not confide in me certain responsibilities any longer. Pregnancies were going to make travel impossible...With a male parent this issue is never raised; it's unimaginable".

Anonymous, Spain, "When I told them I was pregnant my contract was abruptly 'not renewed'"

"My employer has been phasing out permanent employees for several years and replacing them with "self-employed" employees on a rolling monthly contract. Your job role and responsibilities remain exactly the same, but classing you as self-employed allows the employer to avoid any eligibility for holiday pay, sick pay/leave or maternity pay/leave. There's officially no job security but it's well known that everyone is effectively treated as a permanent employee and your "self-employed" status is just a fiddle so they can save money by not paying any benefits. Nobody is happy about this but any job is better than none.

I've worked there for five years. When I told them I was pregnant, my contract was abruptly "not renewed" at the end of the month, without notice or reason. I can't even claim maternity pay on a self-employed basis because now that I no longer work there I'm no longer classed as self-employed. I've explored all avenues and it appears that I'm not eligible to claim a single penny from any source".

Consuelo, Spain, "Employers would rather hire a 18 year-old boy, than me"

Consuelo's last job in dignified conditions dates to 2009. Since then, she has spent six years in which the maximum she gets is replacements for a few days and almost always in the summer. Trained as a primary school teacher, she has always worked as an administrative accountant. She is registered in every Employment Office. "My case is serious," acknowledges this mother of a 10-year-old girl, who has had to bring her own father to live with them, so he can rent his flat and help with the rent. The unemployment benefit has long since ended, including child support. Women over 45 years old have specific barriers to re-enter the labour market, but it is worse if they have children of their own. When she goes to a job interview, Consuelo believes that companies look more at the applicant's age than at her resume. "They do not look at my resume, or my skills". Consuelo has worked substitutions in the last six year that only last between 5 and 15 days. She recalls more experiences of discrimination by gender. "Those who were



Unfortunately, in these last years, overwhelmed by the crisis and a widespread return towards male-oriented policies, gender policies are at a standstill. This is a heavy price for society to pay since as asserted by most experts, by the women themselves and by APN members who experience this directly every day in their groundwork, the less gender equality, the more poverty among women".

"W

promoted were always men. I did not understand why they promoted a partner if he and I knew the same, or if I was even better trained".

What has the EU been doing to address poverty from a gender perspective?

The EU has really made a difference for women since its beginning. The EU has done a lot to alleviate women's lot and help them in their fight for equality in many fields: equal pay for equal work, services, health, education, political representation. Many of the rights we enjoy now in our member states stem from EU Directives, Recommendations, roadmaps, reports. Steps forwards (at least in those countries where women's role is traditionally family-oriented) that would have been impossible to come by without the women's mobilization and the strong support of the EU.

Equality between women and men is a founding value of the EU (Article 2 of the [Treaty on European Union](#)) as well as a fundamental right (Article 23 of the [Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union](#)). Following the 1995 conference in Beijing, the European Council requested an annual review of how EU Member States were implementing the Beijing Platform for Action. In regards to poverty, it should be kept in mind that combating poverty and social exclusion is a competence and responsibility of the member states, and the role of the EU is limited to working with the Member States in the areas of social inclusion, healthcare and long-term care, pensions (social Open Method of

Coordination), and to providing some funding.

Historical background

In **1975 – 1994**, the European Economic Community conducted a series of very interesting pilot projects and programmes designed to combat poverty and social exclusion. Given the lack of a legal basis, some member states continually contested these projects and finally managed to stop the Community actions.

The situation changed in **1999** when the **Treaty of Amsterdam** enshrined the eradication of social exclusion as an objective of the Community's social policy. Article 153 of the Treaty of the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), establishes that the Union shall support and complement the activities of Member States in several areas which, inter alia, are relevant in addressing the situation of women and poverty.

Many of the programmes implemented are geared towards employment but with a very strong bias towards gender equality: NOW, HORIZON, INTEGRA....

Important Directives were also adopted between 1999 and 2010:

- Racial Equality Directive (2000/43/EC);
- Employment Equality Directive (2000/78/EC);
- Directive (2004/113/EC) on equal treatment in the access to and supply of goods and services;

"Women and Poverty" Informal Group, 2017

- Equal Treatment Directive (2006/54/EC), consolidating the existing directives on gender equality;
- Directive 2010/41/EU on equal treatment in self-employment.

In **2000**, the **Lisbon strategy**, followed immediately by the Nice European Council, created guidelines for the Member States asking them to prepare National Action Plans against poverty and social exclusion to be based on the Open Method of Coordination (OMC), combining national action plans and Commission initiatives. As for gender policies, the strategy put in place **for the first time the “gender mainstreaming approach”, an approach that is still operative.**

In 2006, **Directive 2006/54/EC on the implementation of the principle of equal opportunities and equal treatment of men and women in matters of employment and occupation applies to the following three principles: 1) equal wages; 2) equal treatment in social and security fields; 3) equal treatment in access to employment, vocational training and promotion, and working conditions.**

Following the gender mainstreaming approach, the **Lisbon Treaty in 2009** requires that in defining and implementing its policies and activities, the EU takes account of requirements linked to the promotion of a high level of employment, the guarantee of adequate social protection, the fight against social exclusion, and the provision of a high level of education, training and protection of human health.

Gender mainstreaming involves the integration of a gender perspective into the preparation, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies, regulatory measures and spending programs, with a view to promoting equality between women and men, and combating discrimination. It implies the analysis of the current situation with the aim of identifying inequalities and develop policies to readdress inequalities and undo the mechanisms that caused them.

At present, the Treaty of Lisbon is the legal basis for EU action in this field. **Equality between women and men is part of the Charter of Fundamental Rights.**

The Commission also issued a recommendation in March 2009 on **Pay Transparency**. Its aim is to offer measures for Member States to improve wage transparency in companies, such as

improving conditions for employees to obtain wage information or introducing a wage management system and gender-neutral job classification systems for companies.

In March 2010, on the 15th anniversary of the Beijing conference, the European Commission adopted the [Women’s Charter](#). In this charter, the European Commission reiterated its ‘commitment to making equality between women and men a reality’ by strengthening the gender perspective in all its policies and by bringing forward specific measures to promote gender equality.

With the **Europe 2020 strategy**, the EU for the first time sets a poverty reduction target (at least 20 million Europeans out of poverty by 2020) and an employment target (75 % employment rate for those aged 20-64) but the gender dimension is not integrated in the strategy even if the linked Employment Guidelines for Member States’ economic policies emphasize the need to integrate gender

However, the **European Economic Recovery Plan** made no mention of ‘gender’, ‘women’ or ‘equality’. The absence of gender mainstreaming is symbolic of a low sensibility towards gender equality in responding to the crisis.

equality into all relevant policy areas, improve the situation of women in the labour market and combat discrimination in order to increase women’s labour force participation.

Monitoring progress and ensuring the active involvement of EU countries are key elements of Europe 2020. This is now done through the European Semester, an annual cycle of macro-economic, budgetary and structural policy coordination. Although over time the Commission published some Country Specific Recommendations related to gender, the Semester fails to integrate a gender dimension.

Between 2010 and 2013 the EU took two further initiatives to fight poverty: the **European Platform to fight poverty and social exclusion** (COM (2010)0758 - one of the seven flagship initiatives of Europe 2020) in **2010** and the **Social Investment Package** (SIP) in **2013**. The **Platform** supports gender mainstreaming in policy-making through the key initiative of promoting economic independence while the SIP has no direct focus on poverty among women but a reference to equal opportunities, better access to the labour market and better social protection especially for retired women.⁶

Of particular importance is the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention), and its **article 3 defining ‘gender’ as ‘the socially constructed roles, behaviours, activities and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for women and men’.**

Some of the key Council Conclusions include: 5-6 June 2014 on preventing and combating all forms of violence against women and girls, including female genital mutilation (09543/2014), and 7 December 2015 on equality between women and men in the field of decision-making (14327/2015).



In December 2015, the European Commission adopted the [Strategic engagement for gender equality 2016-2019](#). In this work programme, the Commission reaffirms its commitment to continue its work to promote equality between men and women. This means maintaining the focus of gender-equality policy on the five existing thematic priority areas:

- increasing female labour-market participation and the equal economic independence of women and men
- reducing the gender pay, earnings and pension gaps and thus fighting poverty among women
- promoting equality between women and men in decision-making
- combating gender-based violence and protecting and supporting victims

⁶ COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL A European Economic Recovery Plan, Brussels, 26.11.2008 COM (2008) 800 final – According to an EC Report published in 2013, gender was not a concern for the EU authorities in relation with the crisis, and the adjustment policies which were implemented. See: **BETTIO, Francesca et al (2013), The impact of the economic crisis on the situation of women and men and on gender equality policies.** http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/files/documents/130410_crisis_report_en.pdf

- promoting gender equality and women's rights across the world.

After a period of slow progress with regards to social and gender policies, the Commission launched

the **European Pillar on Social Rights** in **2016** which was endorsed in 2017. The Pillar **sets out a number of key principles and rights to support fair and well-functioning labour markets and welfare systems**. The Pillar includes important elements which reiterate already established principles: *equality of treatment and opportunities between women and men to be ensured and fostered in all areas, including regarding participation in the labour market, terms and conditions of employment and career progression; continued support for equal pay for work of equal value; equality of opportunity between women and men when it comes to acquiring pension rights.*

The Pillar is a framework of principles rather than binding obligations that guarantee rights, particularly for the most vulnerable, and initially it is only focused on the Eurozone, one of its major limitations. It remains to be seen how this will be effectively translated in practice.

The **European Parliament** has also repeatedly adopted resolutions with the goal of strengthening the fight against poverty and improving living conditions. The most important are:

- **Resolution of 20 October 2010**, calling for adequate minimum income and decent wage levels, acknowledging women's risk of poverty and the need for sustainable jobs for all throughout the life-cycle.
- **Resolution of 15 November 2011** on the European Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion makes a strong statement that poverty reduction is the main avenue towards economic growth and preventing further social inequalities - combating poverty and social exclusion therefore has to be placed at the forefront of national policies. **The European Parliament deplores the fact that the Platform ignores gender aspects of poverty and social exclusion and gives particular visibility to the needs of young, older and migrant women in the fight against poverty.**
- The most recent report, ***Report on poverty: a gender perspective*** (European Parliament, 2016b), stresses that education, both formal and informal, is instrumental in overcoming marginalization and multiple forms of discrimination and that any education policy put in place to address the intersection of gender equality and poverty must have a special focus on women and groups suffering from multiple discrimination.

On 13 June 2014 the Council of the European Union signed the **Council of Europe Convention on the Prevention and Fight against Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence** (Istanbul Convention), the most important international legal instrument to combat gender violence against women. In order to strengthen the role of the Union in the fight against gender violence and in view of the reluctance of a number of member states' governments to ratify it (to date only 14), the European Parliament and the Commission have long been proposing **accession to the Convention**. The signature is the first step to be followed by the ratification by the Council of the EU so that all Member States align their laws and policies to the common rules of the Convention. This signature is an important step towards the creation of a coherent European system that is more effective in combating gender violence against women that in the EU affects one in three women over the age of 15.

EXAMPLES OF ACTIONS AND GOOD PRACTICES

The '[Business Case for Diversity](#)' shows that diversity management - whereby employers recognise, value and include women and men of different ages, abilities, ethnic origin, religion or sexual orientation - makes good business sense. Therefore, managing diversity and promoting inclusion increasingly form part of the business world's strategic agenda in response to a more diversified society, customer base, market structure and overall business environment. The European Commission has encouraged employers to put diversity management more firmly on their strategic business agendas while also supporting their activities across the EU through numerous actions over the last few years.

[Melissa Network](#) in Greece, is a migrant women organisation that helps female refugees to build new lives in Athens. It is a "sanctuary" run by migrant women who teach female refugees how to code, speak Greek, find employment – and fight for their rights in court. The not-for-profit opened in July 2016 and has become a home away from home for women from the Middle East and Africa. Most of the women here have made difficult journeys from Syria, Afghanistan, Iran, Somalia and a host of other countries. Melissa is known as one of the few organisations in Athens catering specifically to refugee women.

Online platform – "[Pregnant, then Screwed](#)" is a safe space for mothers to tell their stories of pregnancy or maternity discrimination and to receive the support and protection they need. The movement gives free legal advice or the chance to apply for a mentor to support the woman who is undergoing this discrimination, through an employment tribunal.

Campaign – "[Against Pregnancy Discrimination](#)" is a Dutch campaign to combat discrimination against pregnant women in the workplace, launched in March 2017. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment calls on employers to treat pregnant women differently than others. They want employers to raise awareness of possible pregnancy discrimination and point out the talent that they may lose. The campaign is part of the action plan for pregnancy discrimination which consists of radio spots, online ads and actions on social media such as LinkedIn, Twitter and Facebook. The [campaign gives tips](#) on how employers and employees can come together to make good arrangements.

Good Practice – Policy – Iceland

Equal Pay Bill

In April 2017, Iceland's parliament presented a bill that would require public and private businesses to prove they offer equal pay to employees, in what would be the first such requirement in the world. The bill entails that companies and institutions of a certain size, 25 or more employees, undertake a certification of their equal-pay programmes. The legislation would also apply to discrimination based on race, national origin, religion, disability, age, sexual orientation and gender identity. The new law aims to close a seven percent wage gap between men and women in the island nation of more than 323,000 people.

Good practice – Measure – The Netherlands

Special leave days of care

When a person must give special care to her partner, child or parents, the Netherlands offer part of the solution by giving the worker the entitlement to special leave days for care. This is also an investment towards a good labour market, since a worker without troubles does a better job.

Good practice – Awareness-raising – Slovakia

Equal Pay Day

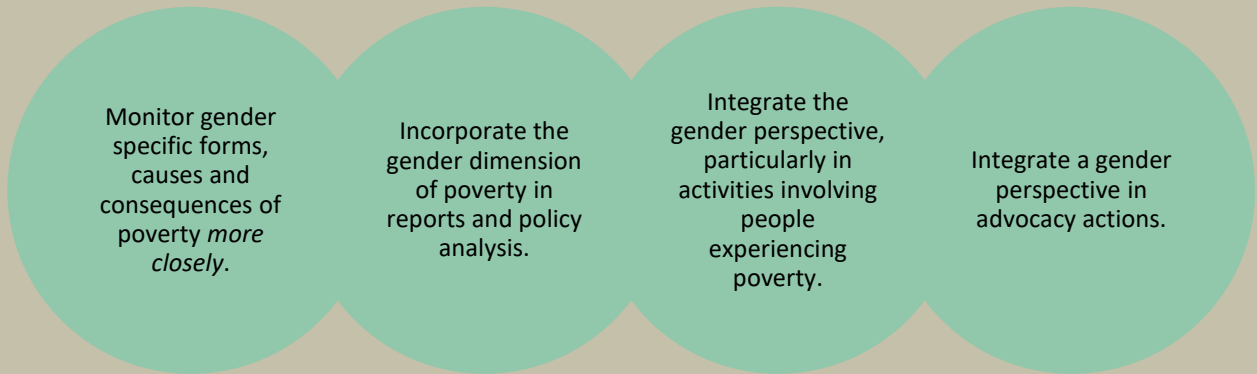
In order to raise public awareness, April 5th was proclaimed as "Equal Pay Day". Together with other measures, such as gender audits at workplaces in the public sector, training and certification of gender audits in cooperation with the International Labour Organisation (ILO), and a media campaign, the Slovak authorities address discrimination against women in the labour market in Slovakia.



EAPN's position

What should EAPN be doing regarding this topic?

EAPN should integrate the gender perspective in its core work:



More specifically, EAPN should:

Demand that the EU, national and local governments, other institutions and companies:

1. Cease gender discrimination of women in the labour market and in institutions due to their attributed gender role in society.
2. Increase female labour participation and the economic independence of women, providing affordable child care facilities.
3. Eliminate gender pay, earnings and pension gaps and thereby fight poverty among women.
4. Sanction any discrimination process against women.
5. Combat gender-based violence, protect and support victims.
6. Support maternity and child-caring as a key role in society, if this is a free decision made by women.
7. Provide reconciliation measures for both parents.
8. Promote equality in decision-making within households.
9. Support single parent households.
10. Target specific anti-poverty measures to specific vulnerable groups of women, such as trafficking victims, refugees, and ethnic minorities.

Propose educational changes through campaigns and political advocacy to:

1. Eradicate gender stereotyping.
2. Promote girls' careers in all-male professional areas.
3. Promote equal distribution of child-caring and household chores since early age.
4. Teach a non-violent masculinity model, particularly among children and adolescents.

FURTHER READING

"Women and Poverty" Informal Group, 2017

- BETTIO, Francesca et al (2013), [The impact of the economic crisis on the situation of women and men and on gender equality policies](#)
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- European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (EUROFOUND) (2016), **The gender employment gap: challenges and solutions**. <https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/publications/report/2016/labour-market/the-gender-employment-gap-challenges-and-solutions>
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- [European Diversity Charters in action, Video](#) (2013)
- European Women’s Lobby (2015), [Cracks in the glass ceiling or just a trick of the light?](#)
- Malgesini, Graciela and Cesarini-Sforza, Letizia (2015), [More visibility to Women in Europe 2020](#). EAPN report

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