



# EU CONSULTATION ON THE NEXT GENDER EQUALITY STRATEGY

Input from UN Brussels Team  
(Gender Working Group)

**August 2025**



UNITED  
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General Principles

The UN Brussels Team invites the EU to adopt an ambitious, forward-looking Gender Equality Strategy that is explicitly premised on international norms and standards,<sup>1</sup> in particular the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, the ILO International Labour Standards, particularly those related to gender equality and non-discrimination (Conventions Nos 100 and 111), family responsibility and maternity protection (Conventions Nos 156 and 183), violence and harassment in the world of work (Convention No 190), and domestic workers (Convention No 189) and the Sustainable Development Agenda, and the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence.

The next EU Gender Equality Strategy (GES) represents a critical opportunity to urge EU member states to ratify these instruments when they have not yet done so, respect and fulfill the legal obligations emanating from them and protect against any rollback of women's rights and gender equality.

We further encourage the European Commission to stipulate in the Gender Equality Strategy that all EU-funded programmes should include gender equality objectives, indicators, and dedicated resources for their implementation and monitoring.

We further appeal to the European Commission to guarantee internal - external policy coherence, by ensuring consistency between the Gender Equality Strategy and the Gender Action Plan III and making explicit the Women, Peace and Security Agenda.

We seize this opportunity to underscore the need for regular robust and transparent gender impact assessment of all EU legislation, policies and programmes, including the Digital Services Act, the AI act, the Democracy Shield, the Clean Industrial Deal and other regulations related to the clean and just green transition to ensure inclusive, gender-responsive climate resilience and adaptation that leave no one behind.

Recommendations

*Recalling the EU's commitment as a co-lead of the Generation Equality Action Coalition on Gender Based Violence, their accession and ratification of the Istanbul Convention against violence against women and domestic violence, and the adoption of the EU Directive on ending Violence against Women,*

*Recalling the Women on Boards Directive, the Work-Life Balance Directive and the Pay Transparency Directive of the previous mandate,*

*Recalling the AI and Digital Services act, the Audiovisual Media Services Directive and the Declaration on the Digital Rights and Principles for the Digital Decade of the European Union*

*Recalling the Care Strategy, the Council Recommendation on early childhood education and care, and the Council Recommendation on access to affordable high-quality long-term care, as well as Principle 11 of the European Pillar of Social Rights,*

*Recalling the Green Deal and climate net zero targets of the previous mandate, as well as the current Clean Industrial Deal, fit for 55 package, and the Affordable Energy Action Plan,*

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<sup>1</sup> See commitments in EU Council Conclusions of 23 June 2025 on EU Priorities at the United Nations during the 80th session of the UN General Assembly.

*Recalling the Council Conclusions of 19 June 2025, of 23 June 2025,*

*Recalling the 2021 Special Report on Gender Mainstreaming and the EU Budget of the European Court of Auditors,*

*Recalling the relevant Jurisprudence related to Gender Based Violence in regards to protecting Women and Girls in the Asylum Procedure, as consolidated by the EU Agency for Asylum,*

*Considering the role of the European Semester in monitoring the contribution of economic and employment policies in delivering on gender equality,*

*Recalling the commitment of the EU to continue its leadership role in the follow-up and implementation of the Global Digital Compact,*

*Considering the upcoming Democracy Shield and the Civil Society Strategy,*

*Recognizing the commitment of the current EU Commission to develop a Gender Action Plan IV post 2027, the development of a Fragility Strategy, Pact for the Mediterranean and increased strategic focus on accession of the Eastern Neighbourhood Partnership Countries, as well as the development of a 360 approach to Global Gateway,*

*Recalling the WYDE programme, the ACT to end Violence Against Women programme, and the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values (CERV) programme, the EU #EndGenderStereotypes Campaigns,*

*Considering the recent decision at COP 29 to extend the enhanced Lima Work Programme on Gender (LWPG) for an additional 10 years, and to initiate the development of a new UNFCCC Gender Action Plan,*

*Recognizing the continued support of EU Member States to the CEDAW Committee,*

*Recalling Women Peace and Security (WPS) as one of the priorities outlined in the Gender Equality Compact on WPS and Humanitarian Action, as well as a renewed focus will be placed on encouraging and supporting the WPS partnership in the UN-EU Partnership on Peace and Security: 2025-2027 Joint Priorities. These Joint Priorities also underline the UN-EU collaboration on gender-responsive leadership, increasing women's representation and leadership in peace operations and achieving gender parity within missions and operations; and the prevention and response to conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV),*

*Acknowledging the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework's (GBF) including the objective for full, equitable, inclusive, effective, and gender-responsive participation and representation in decision-making (Target 22), as well as the need to ensure gender equality in implementation through a gender-responsive approach that enables all women and girls to equally contribute to the three objectives of the Convention (Target 23),*

*Recalling the recently approved ECOSOC Resolution on Mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the UN System of June 2025,*

*Considering the 7 Women Empowerment Principles as an integrated framework and powerful network for companies and private sector stakeholders, to advance and strengthen gender equality and women's empowerment in the workplace, marketplace and community, generating positive outcomes for businesses and society as a whole,*

*Considering the ILO Resolution on Decent Work and the Care Economy, adopted at the International Labour Conference in 2024, which provided guiding principles and recommendations for advancing decent work in the care economy, as well as the ILO Resolution concerning the third recurrent discussion on fundamental principles and rights at work, adopted at the International Labour Conference in 2024, which includes as an area of focus the promotion of gender equality in pay and labour market participation. Considering the report of UN Women and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank of 2025, the ILO report*

*of 2022 on Care at work: Investing in care leave and services for a more gender equal world, and of 2021 on the Benefits of investing in transformative childcare packages towards gender equality and social justice,*

The UN Brussels Team puts forward the following recommendations, following the outline of the European Commission's Roadmap on Women's Rights, that the next Gender Equality Strategy of the European Union:

### **Freedom from gender-based violence (Principle 1)**

- **Legal and policy frameworks**
  - Applies a zero-tolerance policy in the response to gender-based violence, with particular attention to accountability measures, and aims for a zero gender-based violence EU.
  - Supports and urges Member States to strengthen the EU Directive on Violence against Women, and to develop and implement strong laws and accountability measures to prevent violence against women, including through a consent-based definition of rape and sufficient resources.
  - Outlines concrete measures to ensure the full implementation of the EU directive on Violence against Women and the Istanbul Convention, including attention for stronger and accessible survivor-centred support services and effective access to justice.
- **Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence**
  - Prevents and effectively responds to address technology-facilitated gender-based violence, for both interpersonal and systemic harms.
  - Strengthens the governance of digital platforms and supports risk assessments and standards of content moderation actively focused on hateful content, online misogyny and violent behaviours.
  - Promotes systems of accountability and regulation, including for algorithms and social media platforms, and standards of safety, and enhances the participation of women in regulatory bodies.
  - Calls for the adoption of national cyber violence action plans.
- **Prevention and Social Norms Change**
  - Includes strategies on the engagement of men and boys to challenge harmful masculinities, femininities, and champion positive gender norms.
  - Advocates for and supports investments to tackle harmful social norms that perpetuate gender-based violence across EU Member States and online.
- **Accountability, Justice, and Due Diligence**
  - Addresses accountability gaps and due diligence obligations to prevent, investigate, punish, and remedy gender-based violence, including the limited funding and capacity constraints for the adequate investigation, prosecution, sanction and reparation of GBV.
- **Data, Monitoring, and Evidence-Based Programming**
  - Commits to the integration, collection and improvement of data, disaggregated by sex, race, ethnicity, migration status, education, age, disability status, and type of violence and harassment, and the comparability of this data to inform evidence-based response and prevention programming and policy, as well as the development of standardized methodologies for data collection, analysis, including qualitative research.
- **Inclusive and intersectional Protection Systems**
  - Urges Member States that gender-based violence prevention and response systems are inclusive of all women and girls, including migrants, forcibly displaced and stateless women and girls, irrespective of legal status, as well as migrant sex workers, undocumented migrants, and those with spouse-dependent residence status and those likely to experience discrimination based on based on age, race, ethnicity, disability, HIV and indigenous status . This includes their access to survivor-centred services such as safe spaces, case management, Mental Health and

Psychological Support (MHPSS), and legal support, in both humanitarian and national service contexts. These protections should align with the Istanbul Convention's provisions on non-discrimination, support services, and residence rights.

- Promotes safe, regular, and gender-responsive pathways, including for survivors of GBV and human trafficking.

- **Conflict-Related Sexual Violence**

- Includes attention to the specific and disproportionate impact on women and girls in the increasing militarization of conflicts, the widespread use of heavy weaponry in densely populated civilian areas, conflict-related gender-based violence, and the weaponization of both humanitarian aid and technology.

### **Highest Standards of Health (*Principle 2*)**

- **Access to Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights and Services**

- Reaffirms the EU's commitment to universal, affordable access to modern methods of contraception, maternal health, including safe pregnancy and childbirth, and where permitted by law, safe and legal abortion services.
- Ensures equitable access to sexual and reproductive health services for all women and girls within EU territory, including migrants, asylum-seekers, refugees, and stateless persons. This requires removing linguistic, legal, financial, and administrative barriers and promoting inclusive policies across national systems.
- Commits to the removal of institutional and financial barriers, and supports the freedom to make informed decisions about sexual and reproductive health matters free from discrimination, coercion, and violence, and regardless of migration status.

- **Non-Discrimination and Inclusive Health Policies**

- Addresses discrimination of all forms in the health sector, and guarantees to full and equal access to health care services, including reproductive health care, information and education in line with the competences mandated by the treaties, and supports action by the Member States.
- Supports research, quality gender-disaggregated data collection and policies to uphold non-discrimination and strengthens explicit efforts to meet health needs of women and girls in all their diversity.

### **Equal Pay and Economic Empowerment (*Principle 3*)**

- **Normative Frameworks, Regulation, and Implementation**

- Prioritizes the effective implementation and enforcement of existing legislation supporting women's economic empowerment such as the Women on Boards Directive, the Work-Life Balance Directive and the Pay Transparency Directive.

- **Private Sector**

- Expands its focus to include targeted measures to support women-led businesses, promote gender-responsive investments, and gender-responsive procurement and supply chains, as well as innovative and gender-responsive financing such as gender bonds.
- Pursues targeted and gender-specific approaches to private sector development and women's participation in the private sector, including through the promotion of the Women's Empowerment Principles, ratification and implementation of ILO International Labour Standards, and inclusive dialogues on labour and economic policy development.

- **International Economic Agreements and Cooperation**

- Ensures gender mainstreaming and gender budgeting in all stages of Global Gateway programming and Team Europe Initiatives, and urges systematic and transparent gender impact assessments and review for all projects and initiatives.
- Urges the EU Commission and the EU Member States to include strong provisions on gender equality, in compliance with relevant ILO and UN conventions, as highlighted in GAP III, in new trade agreements.

### **Work-life balance and Care (*principle four*)**

- Prioritizes the development and effective implementation of an ambitious and forward-looking Care Directive, including through inclusive consultations and dialogue.
- Addresses gaps in care services, such as the availability, affordability, adequacy, and accessibility of care services and infrastructure, including early childhood care and long-term care.
- Makes the support of the Union for an inclusive care economy more visible, in particular through the reform and implementation of parental leave policies, family friendly policies and flexible work arrangements, measures targeting time poverty, and the redistribution of unpaid care and domestic work.
- Invests in care infrastructure and services to ensure this sustained visibility and redistribution, and to increase decent work and qualitative opportunities in the care sector.
- Address the unequal gender distribution of paid and unpaid work, and promote women's economic inclusion and autonomy beyond caregiving, including by changing social norms and gender stereotypes around caregiving roles.
- Promote the voice and representation of, and consult with, care worker organizations, including those of domestic workers, community health and care workers, and migrant workers, organizations of employers of care workers and unpaid family carers, where these exist

### **Equal Employment opportunities and adequate working conditions (*principle five*)**

#### **● Labour Market Inclusion**

- Prevents and addresses violence and harassment in the world of work through the ratification and implementation of ILO Violence and Harassment Convention (No.190) and adoption of comprehensive strategies including access to remedies and support for victims, integrating violence and harassment into occupational safety and health measures.
- Ensures safety, particularly in male-dominated fields, and creates workplace environments that attract and retain women and supports the re-entry of victims and survivors of violence and harassment.
- Addresses gender inequalities in the world of work and decent work deficits through promoting gender responsive and inclusion employment policies, ensuring equal pay for work of equal value, tackling vertical and horizontal segregation, enhancing women's leadership and representation in social partner organisations and expanding fiscal space through implementing gender-responsive tax policies, the expansion of domestic borrowing and official development assistance.
- Integrates measures to target biases in the workplace, including in hiring processes and upward mobility, gender gaps in the labour market and the gendered division of labour;
- Supports gender-responsive social protection systems, with particular attention for the gendered nature of the informal economy and diverse forms of work arrangements, and provides measures to target the gender pay gap, gender saving gap and the gender pension gap.
- Leverages the development potential of remittances and diaspora engagement to support the economic resilience of migrant women and their communities of origin, including through financial inclusion, investment facilitation, and skills transfer.



- **Digital Transformation, Technology, and Innovation**

- Promotes a gender-equal technology economy and invests in the elimination of systemic barriers and in the meaningful inclusion and participation of women and girls in all aspects and stages of technology, in particular AI, from supporting better access to STEM education and skills development, to the research, inception, design, development, leadership, oversight and usage of products and systems, especially in high-level positions.
- Includes concrete and targeted measures to close the gender digital divide and ensure access to digital technology and literacy for women and girls in all their diversity.
- Supports women's access to digital tools, information and communications technology, and equal participation in digital innovation, science and green technology development.
- Ensures consultation and inclusion of gendered considerations in the design of tech regulation and development, designed in partnership with women's, child- and youth-led organizations, and in consideration of the algorithmic biases of AI and technologies reproducing and augmenting existing biases and stereotypes.

- **Enabling Equal Employment Opportunities**

- Invests in data collection and research to address remaining gaps in the availability of gender and sex-disaggregated data on access to productive assets and services, climate-change adaptation and resilience, and nutrition, with a special focus on multiple forms of discrimination.
- Ensures transport services, public infrastructure design, and urban planning which respond to women's safety and mobility patterns, including through the active and meaningful involvement of women and girls in design and development.
- Recognizes and addresses the gender gaps in climate financing.

## **Quality and Inclusive Education (*principle six*)**

- **Gender Transformative Education Systems**

- Supports member states in education-related efforts, including the development and use of gender-transformative pedagogies, learning content and resources, and efforts to address gender gaps in key fields such as girls and women in STEM, or men and boys in fields traditionally dominated by women (for example, early childhood educators and teachers, caring professionals).
- Mandates age-appropriate comprehensive sexuality education.
- Supports Member States in the development of programmes to support the successful engagement of boys in education processes and participation at school, as educated boys and men are more likely to support gender equality, respect diversity, and challenge discriminatory behaviours.
- Invests in research on gender norms, engaging men in gender equality work, and masculinities, femininities, and gender stereotypes to inform evidence-based and truly gender transformative interventions, including on gender norms and expectations that affect boys' disengagement from education.

- **Education for Economic Empowerment**

- Prioritizes the critical role of lifelong and life-wide education and training, including upskilling and reskilling, to close gender gaps and promote gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.
- Supports the economic empowerment of migrant women through skills recognition, access to decent work, and entrepreneurship support.
- Ensures women and girls can reach their full potential and gain full access to the labour market, through skill building, financial literacy programmes and measures to dismantle stereotypes and barriers in fields of study and work, particularly in the field of science.

## **Political Participation and Equal Representation (*principle seven*)**

- **Leadership, Representation, and Decision-Making Power**
  - Addresses gaps to the substantive representation, gender parity, and meaningful participation, leadership and decision-making power of women, girls, feminist leaders in all their diversity in all levels of decision making, including private sector, civil society, and law and enforcement, public institutions.
  - Commits to addressing the underrepresentation of women among negotiators, mediators and signatories of peace agreements, in line with the WPS agenda.
  - Promotes and expands feminist, gender transformative, intersectional approaches to decision-making and leadership, which acknowledge, analyze and challenge existing power relations and advance inclusive, gender transformative and rights-affirming laws and policies.
  - Includes commitments on how the EU will lead by example.
- **Safe and Enabling Environments for Participation**
  - Addresses the safety of women in public office, women journalists and content creators, who face disproportional and specific threats online and offline.
  - Addresses sexism, xenophobia, racism, and hate speech against migrant communities through public awareness and education initiatives that foster social cohesion, challenge discriminatory narratives, and promote respect and inclusion.
- **Sector-Specific Participation and Leadership**
  - Includes agency, visibility and leadership of women and girls in climate action, including in climate funding and the energy sector and transition, and ensure investments are gender-responsive recognizing the specific needs of women and girls.
  - Develop and supports policies that consider the differentiated impacts of pollution and toxic substances on women and girls, particularly in the context of waste and chemical management, and encourages women's leadership in green and circular economy sectors.
  - Promotes the full and meaningful participation of women and girls in ocean governance and safe working conditions on – and offshore.
  - Promotes inclusive and equitable participation of women and girls in climate action, including the energy sector and environmental decision-making, and addresses barriers to access and control over land, natural resources and environmental benefits, especially for marginalized and underrepresented groups, including LGBTQI+ communities.
- **Media Representation and Influence**
  - Strengthens media plurality, which is essential to the functioning and oversight of European democracy, including through supporting women and minority-led media outlets.
  - Prioritizes women and minority representation in the media, especially in high level positions, and through the media, by addressing gender perspectives in an ethical way and free from gender stereotypes.
  - Includes attention to the influence and impact of media representations and advertisements on harmful social norms and gender stereotypes.
- **Norms, Gender Stereotypes and Culture**
  - Expands on social norms campaigns to include narratives of caring and pluralistic masculinities, tailored to different target groups and specific contexts, as well as initiatives aimed at addressing stereotypes, including the internalization of gender stereotypes and narratives of femininity by women and girls.
  - Integrates a dual, integrated approach which not only focuses on male engagement, but includes a focus on systematic narratives of masculinities and femininities, and the role of institutions.



- Supports the development of gender-responsive sports programmes, designed to increase access, visibility and support for girls and women, and break down gender stereotypes
- Includes promotion of male allyship and engagement, pushback of anti-gender narratives, the manosphere, and male-victim narratives.
- Ensures gender equality in biodiversity and nature protection, by recognizing and integrating the role of women as custodians of biodiversity and traditional knowledge in nature-based solutions and conservation efforts.

### **Institutional mechanisms that deliver on women's rights (*principle eight*)**

#### **● Legislative, Reporting, and Accountability Frameworks**

- Commits to systemized and regular gender impact assessments of EU laws and policies and establishes transparent accountability systems to monitor the effectiveness and effective implementation of gender equality provisions and policies, and gender indicators in EU legislative and operational policies.
- Urges member states to strengthen and implement national laws and gender equality frameworks and standardizes and protects the rights of all women across the European Union, including through an EU Charter of Women's Rights.
- Considers relevant international normative frameworks and guidelines, including the CEDAW Committee's General Recommendations, statements, views on individual communications, inquiry reports and other guidance in their elaboration of priorities and actions.
- Ensures political support, and urges the EU Member States to this end, to the effective functioning of the treaty body system, including to the work of the CEDAW Committee.
- Urges EU Member States to continue their full cooperation with the CEDAW committee on the elaboration of its General Recommendations as normative frameworks on the rights of women and girls.
- Commits to working with Member states to ensure that the development and implementation of the EU Integrated Fragility Approach, Pact for the Mediterranean, WPS Strategic Approach, as well as other EU strategies, serves the best interests of women and girls.

#### **● Building Institutional Capacity and Coordination**

- Supports independent national gender equality bodies in the EU and its Member States.
- Strengthens the impact and reach of the Task Force on Equality of the European Commission in its coordination role.
- Urges strengthening the position/team of EU Ambassador for Gender & Diversity, allowing the EU to show commitment at highest-level to the issues of Gender and Diversity in its external action while leading by example.
- Ensures that all implementing partners, including civil society and service providers, are equipped with the capacity and resources to apply gender-responsive approaches.

#### **● Gender Mainstreaming Across Sectors**

- Invests in institutional capacity building to ensure effective systematic and intersectional gender mainstreaming and gender responsive budgeting throughout all EU policies, through increasing technical and dedicated expertise across all EU bodies and institutions, proper financing and strengthening awareness to cultivate a culture of political will in all sectors of EU policy.
- Urges gender equality is strongly integrated as a significant or principal objective in all areas related to accession, as a necessary precondition for a stable expansion of the Union.
- Places gender mainstreaming as a core objective in migration partnerships and development cooperation, with a focus on protection, empowerment, and participation of women and gender-diverse persons in partner countries, across all environmental policies, from climate change to biodiversity and pollution, as well as climate action and policies, particularly in climate-resilient agriculture, energy access and disaster risk reduction.

- Prioritizes and strengthens its focus on intersectional and Gender Transformative Approaches (GTAs) which have demonstrated strong potential in shifting discriminatory gender norms across diverse sectors, are cost-effective, and yield high social and economic returns.
  - Strengthens gender responsiveness along migration routes and in addressing mixed movements, where growing numbers of vulnerable women, often traveling alone or pregnant, and unaccompanied and separated children (UASCs) face heightened risks and require targeted protection and support.
  - Supports the design and implementation of gender-responsive voluntary return and reintegration policies, which promote sustainable reintegration, strengthen social cohesion, and reduce vulnerability to trafficking and other risks in countries of origin.
  - Ensures that forcibly displaced and stateless women and girls are included in EU-funded external actions, including humanitarian and development programming, in alignment with the Women, Peace and Security agenda and the Global Compact on Refugees.
- **Data Collection and Evidence-Based Policy**
    - Strengthens the collection and use of quality disaggregated data and cross-cutting research, including active dialogue and consultation with women and girls in all their diversity, to ensure evidence-based and targeted interventions and policies, from an intersectional disaggregated perspective recognizing women and girls face multiple, intersecting forms of discrimination which can often remain invisible in data and policy development, such as for gender-diverse migrants, yet require tailored responses.
    - Supports data collection bodies and agencies such as EIGE, and urges Member States to this end.
    - Promotes the use of practical tools (such as IOM's Intersectional Gender Analysis Toolkit) to guide programming and policy development.
- **Resourcing, Funding, and Financial Mechanisms**
    - Ensures access and availability of dedicated funding mechanisms for gender equality and women's empowerment, and for women's rights organizations.
    - Supports specific and ambitious gender targets and indicators across all EU funding mechanisms and budgets.
    - Prioritizes and ensures adequate funding for women-led and women's rights organizations, feminist movements and activists.
- **Partnership and Civil Society Engagement**
    - Reaffirms the partnerships with key multilateral organisations, and in particular the UN System.
    - Prioritizes direct engagement with women's civil society organizations and networks, and supports the efforts of feminist activists in all their diversity, including the elimination of barriers to feminist action, organizing and mobilization.
    - Protects and expands civic space, including online, including support to feminist and women's movements, networks and organizations defending civic space.
    - Recognizes and supports the leadership and participation of refugee- and migrant-led women's organizations as key actors in advancing gender equality, GBV prevention, and social cohesion, and ensures their increased access to EU funding and formal consultation mechanisms.
    - Strengthens and safeguards structures and processes to ensure full, meaningful and inclusive participation of women and girls in all their diversity in dialogues and consultations on EU law and policy making.
    - Leverages diaspora communities to drive transformative approaches to gender equality, including leadership and advocacy, to challenge harmful gender norms and foster inclusive, rights-based social change.