

Follow-up to the European Parliament non-legislative resolution on the gender pay and pension gap in the EU: state of play, challenges and the way forward, and developing guidelines for the better evaluation and fairer remuneration of work in female-dominated sectors

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- 2. References:** 2025/2038(INI) / A10-0021/2026 / P10_TA(2026)0074
- 3. Date of adoption of the resolution:** 11 March 2026
- 4. Competent Parliamentary Committee:** Committee on Employment and Social Affairs, Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality
- 5. Brief analysis/ assessment of the resolution and requests made in it:**

The resolution emphasises the EU's commitment to gender equality as a fundamental value, underscored by the Treaties, Directives and European Pillar of Social Rights aimed at addressing the gender pay and pension gaps and promoting equal opportunities. It states that “guaranteeing women’s economic independence and equal access to financial resources is key to achieving gender equality and combating gender-based violence”. The Parliament recognises that “disadvantages are compounded for women facing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination based on factors such as sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation”.

The Parliament emphasises the essential role of awareness-raising and education to acknowledge the gender pay and pension gap and notes that the gender pay gap does not “reflect the value of, demand for or skills required for the work, but are rather the result of persistent gender inequality”. It calls for more information by national public pension systems to insured persons about their pension savings. Concerning the gender segregation at work, the Parliament considers it “imperative to recognise the value of traditionally women-dominated sectors such as care, healthcare, education and social work, as they are essential for society, and to encourage men to enter these sectors”. It also emphasises the need to support women’s participation in high value sectors such as STEAM¹, defence, aerospace, ICT², law, finance,

¹ Science, technology, art, engineering and mathematics.

² Information and communications technology.

agriculture, industry, medicine and entrepreneurship. The Parliament calls for proactive measures in this direction.

The resolution emphasises the unequal division of informal care at home, which penalises women at work. The resolution deplores the lack of childcare facilities, which are incompatible with working hours, the fact that too few fathers take parental or paternity leave and the lack of quality and affordable formal long-term care services. The Parliament recognises that this represents a significant risk for long-term demographic and economic stability in the EU. The Parliament calls on the Commission to put in place a **European care deal with a specific care investment package and a dedicated funding stream under the 2028-2034 multiannual financial framework..** It calls for the inclusion of a **strong gender dimension** in the forthcoming European Care Deal to address **long-term care and workforce challenges**, in the **Union of Skills** and in the **Quality Jobs Act**.

The resolution strongly calls for the thorough **implementation of the Work-Life Balance Directive, the Pay Transparency Directive and the Gender balance on Corporate Boards Directive** to combat gender inequalities in pay and pensions. The Parliament also calls on the Commission to “develop guidelines and a European pilot project for **gender-neutral job evaluation and classification systems**, allowing for an EU-wide comparison of work of equal value and the definition of **clear criteria for fairly assessing the value of work and for merit-based pay systems** in women-dominated sectors, while avoiding unnecessary regulatory or financial obligations on employers”. The Parliament encourages the Commission to “**create voluntary incentive mechanisms**, such as simplified administrative procedures, public recognition or priority access to EU funds, for employers who implement gender equality plans and best practice in pay transparency”.

The Parliament deplores a higher risk of poverty or social exclusion for women than men and an even higher risk of poverty for retired women, which is twice more important than for men. It assumes that this further exposes women to gender-based violence. The resolution calls on the Commission to **combat in-work poverty** and to “assess the possible proposal of **minimum EU standards for care credits** that would enable caregiving years to count towards pension entitlements”. In that regard, the Parliament emphasises also the need for Member States to ensure a **gender-responsive implementation of the Council recommendation on Minimum Income**. The Parliament stresses the need for specific measures targeting the employment and risk of poverty of **women with disabilities and third-country migrant women**.

The resolution urges the Commission to “propose a **dedicated action plan to eradicate the gender pay and pension gaps, through evidence-based measures**”. The Parliament specifies that this plan should “include targeted measures to **improve working conditions and fair pay in women-dominated sectors**, to support families and to **prioritise investment under the next multiannual financial**

framework that strengthens work-life balance and a reliable care sector”. It also calls on the Commission to **issue guidelines to help identify and address tax disincentives** that may discourage secondary earners from participating actively in the labour market.

The Parliament calls on the Commission to **foster women’s entrepreneurship and women-led businesses** in its Gender Equality strategy thanks to early entrepreneurship, business development, mentorship programmes, access to finance and venture capital. It also emphasises the need for an improved financial literacy for women, supported by InvestEU, the European Innovation Council (EIC) and the Enterprise Europe Network, with targeted measures for under-represented groups, including women in rural areas and STEAM sectors. The resolution also calls on the Commission to meaningfully involve and support the **social partners** in developing new policies to close the gender pay gap in the next gender equality strategy.

The resolution invites the Commission to develop **EU-wide awareness and education campaigns on pay transparency, equal treatment and the available EU instruments for promoting equality in employment**.

6. Response to requests and overview of actions taken, or intended to be taken, by the Commission:

To address the gender pay gap, the Gender Equality strategy 2026-2030 adopted on 5 March 2026, in line with Principle 3 of the Roadmap for Women’s rights on Equal pay and economic empowerment, commits to support Member States in the **effective and timely implementation of the Pay Transparency Directive**. To further support Member States in the implementation of the Pay Transparency Directive, the Commission also published, together with the European Institute for Gender Equality, a **toolkit on gender-neutral job evaluation and classification** in March 2026. The toolkit includes tailored tools to help small and medium-sized companies to carry out these processes in-house, without the need for external consultancy. The Commission provided also **additional funding to support social partners in its implementation in 2024 and 2026** and organised a **workshop for social partners** in April 2026 on how they can support its implementation.

Adequate minimum wages that provide for a decent standard of living contribute to combating in-work poverty and reducing the gender-pay gap. In this regard, the Commission is closely monitoring the correct and complete implementation of the Minimum Wage Directive by the

Member States. A first monitoring report on the data reported by Member States on minimum wage protection and on their action plans to promote collective bargaining will be sent by the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council in 2026.

To address the **gender employment gap**, which is particularly pronounced for **mothers, migrant and Roma women, women with disabilities and women in rural areas**, the Commission will implement the European Pillar of Social Rights through **gender-sensitive and intersectional approaches**, which includes increasing women's labour market participation. Under the **2021-2030 European Education Area strategic framework**, which promotes equal access to high-quality and inclusive education and training for all, the Commission will continue to support Member States in ensuring access and dismantling barriers especially for girls and boys from underrepresented groups, including those with a racial or ethnic minority background, lower socio-economic or migrant background, and children with disabilities. In the framework of the **European Semester**, the **Country specific recommendations and Country reports issued by the Commission address tax disincentives** that may discourage secondary earners from participating in the labour market. The Commission also analyses how features of the tax system may impact on women's labour market participation and economic outcomes.³ The **European Social Fund Plus (ESF+)**, as well as some **national recovery plans** (such as those of Italy, Spain, Belgium, Germany and France), provide funding for Member States to implement reforms that reduce tax burdens on secondary earners, aiming therefore to reduce the gender employment gap.

To close the **gender investment gap**, which is key for the relaunch of the EU's competitiveness, the Commission will propose, in collaboration with the European Investment Bank (EIB), to further expand **gender-smart targets in the context of future funding programmes**. The Commission will also continue actions to **improve access to finance for women entrepreneurs in the EU**. Together with the EIB, the Commission will take further measures to **increase female representation in the financial sector**. The Gender balance on corporate boards directive aims to increase female role models in the financial sector and aims to increase the overall female representation in this area. In this context, the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) Supernovas Programme and the joint EIT-EIC European Prize for Women Innovators promote **equality in entrepreneurship and innovation** by strengthening the participation of women entrepreneurs and investors in investment ecosystems and by enhancing the visibility of women innovators respectively. In addition,

³ See for example European Commission: Directorate-General for Taxation and Customs Union, *Annual report on taxation 2023 - Review of taxation policies in the European Union*, Publications Office of the European Union, 2023, <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2778/982557>

under the Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) Education Strategic Plan, the EU will train one million girls by 2028, notably through programmes such as **EIT Girls Go STEM**.

As highlighted by the **Intergenerational Fairness Strategy**, inequalities in employment, pay and care responsibilities widen gender gaps in income security and pensions in later life. Reflecting the European Parliament's demand to address the gender pension gap, the Commission will map and support exchanges of **good practices in addressing the gender pension gap** and explore ways to address its drivers. The Commission will also enhance the monitoring of the gender pay and pension gaps. This will include monitoring its root causes under the **Social Scoreboard** and putting forward recommendations under **the European Semester**. The Commission will provide an analysis of the situation of older women and the gender gaps in pension benefits and poverty in the **2027 Report on Adequate Social Protection in Old Age**.

Reflecting the European Parliament's demand to combat women's poverty, the Commission integrated a strong **gender perspective in the EU's Anti-Poverty Strategy**, adopted on 6 May 2026. The Commission also proposed a **Council Recommendation on fighting housing exclusion**. This Recommendation promotes policy approaches that are person-centred, housing-led and integrated, while focusing on persons and households struggling to secure or retain housing, as well as those who are homeless, including vulnerable families and single parents. Moreover, the Commission will publish a **study on housing inequality and discrimination, taking an intersectional approach**. Finally, the Commission will organise an **exchange of best practices on measures to effectively combat menstrual and menopause poverty at national level**.

In line with Roadmap's Principle 4 on Work-life balance and care, in the Gender Equality strategy, the Commission commits to publishing a report on the implementation of the **Directive on Work-Life Balance**, by 2028. This report will be accompanied by two **studies on the rights to family leave for self-employed persons, and on interactions between the leaves provided for in the Directive and other types of family-related leaves**. The Commission will also address **persistent stereotypes that lead to the lack of uptake of leaves by men and support the monitoring of men's uptake of leaves** by encouraging Member States to adopt the **work-life balance indicator framework**, jointly developed in the advisory committees to the Employment and Social Affairs Council. In this regard, the Commission will promote a "Boys in HEAL" (Health, Education, Administration, Literacy) approach. Moreover, the EU Demography Forum will address **gender equality aspects of demographic developments**, drawing on data from the Demography Report. To review progress achieved under the **European Care Strategy**, the Commission will conduct an **Implementation Dialogue on Care**. This dialogue will review progress in the provision of early childhood education and care services, long-term care services, fair working conditions and training in the care sector. The dialogue will

inform the **European Care Deal**, which will integrate a strong gender perspective, including a comprehensive set of measures **improving the working conditions and career development of carers and the affordability, accessibility and quality of care**. The Care Deal will also **promote more equal participation of men and women in formal and informal care** and look at **investment in care**, exploring opportunities brought by digitalisation and different business models, to promote fair employment and high-quality care. Finally, by 2027, the Commission will report on the implementation of the **Council Recommendation on early childhood education and care** and of the **Council Recommendation on long-term care**.

In line with Roadmap's Principle 5 on Equal employment opportunities and adequate working conditions, in the Gender Equality strategy, the Commission committed to present a **comprehensive assessment of the Gender Balance on Boards' effectiveness and efficiency by 2029**. The Directive sets targets for large EU-listed companies to be met by June 2026. Additionally, in 2026, the Commission will report on measures adopted by Member States that are equally effective and allow to suspend the application of the merits-based selection procedure set out in the Directive. In the framework of the **Quality Jobs Act**, the Commission will also consider **action to better address sexual harassment in the workplace**. In 2026, the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA) will also launch a **Healthy Workplaces Campaign on mental health at work** and preventing psychosocial risks, including **sexual harassment and violence**.

The Commission will continue offering funding to combat gender-based violence through the Daphne strand of the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values (CERV) programme, and intends to continue doing so under the proposed AgoraEU programme in the 2028-2034 multiannual financial framework (MFF).

Considering the available EU funds supporting gender equality in employment, the most significant EU fund is the **ESF+**, which directly targets women's access to jobs and skills. The ESF+ Regulation (Art. 6) requires the Member States and the Commission to support specific targeted actions to increase the participation of women in employment as well as conciliation between working and personal life, and combat the feminisation of poverty and gender discrimination in the labour market, education and training.

Almost EUR 85 billion of Union contribution under the ESF+ 2021-2027 as planned by the Member States contributes to gender equality through gender mainstreaming. EUR 4.3 billion supports actions directly targeting gender equality, of which EUR 2.1 billion is programmed under the Specific Objective 4.3 Gender balance labour market participation.

The **Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF)** and **European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)** support national and regional structural reforms and infrastructure that enables parents to combine work and family life. In addition, programmes like the **Citizens,**

Equality, Rights and Values (CERV) fund support awareness, anti-discrimination efforts and civil society actions towards gender equality in employment. **Horizon Europe, as the Union flagship Programme for Research and Innovation (R&I)**, promotes gender equality in research careers and innovation sectors, including the integration of the gender dimension in the R&I content⁴. Instruments like **InvestEU** improve access to finance for women-led businesses, and **Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) funds** support women's employment in rural areas. All these funds are available in the [EU funding programmes website](#) and the Commission organises frequent online info sessions to invite stakeholders to submit proposals under these funds.

The proposed **Performance Regulation** makes **gender equality a horizontal principle for most EU funding programmes**, including the National and Regional Partnership Plans. The Performance Regulation also introduces a consistent framework for mainstreaming gender equality across the budget through a methodology to track EU expenditure supporting gender equality and through disaggregation by gender of performance indicators. The Commission intends to present technical guidance on the tracking methodology by the end of 2026. Moreover, gender equality will continue to be addressed in the European Semester, to identify and tackle pressing gender equality challenges.

⁴ See Article 7 (6) of the Horizon Europe Regulation.