



TEXTS ADOPTED

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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

European Parliament resolution of 11 March 2026 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 (2025/2038(INI))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Treaty on European Union (TEU), in particular Articles 2 and 3(3) thereof,
- having regard to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), in particular Articles 8, 10, 19, 151, 153 and 157 thereof,
- having regard to the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, in particular its provisions on gender equality (the Charter),
- having regard to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the EU's ratification thereof,
- having regard to Articles 22 and 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,
- having regard to Directive (EU) 2023/970 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 10 May 2023 to strengthen the application of the principle of equal pay for equal work or work of equal value between men and women through pay transparency and enforcement mechanisms¹ (Pay Transparency Directive),

¹ OJ L 132, 17.5.2023, p. 21, ELI:
<http://data.europa.eu/eli/dir/2023/970/oj>.

- having regard to Directive 2006/54/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 July 2006 on the implementation of the principle of equal opportunities and equal treatment of men and women in matters of employment and occupation²,
- having regard to Directive (EU) 2019/1158 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 June 2019 on work-life balance for parents and carers and repealing Council Directive 2010/18/EU³ (Work-Life Balance Directive),
- having regard to Directive (EU) 2022/2381 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 November 2022 on improving the gender balance among directors of listed companies and related measures⁴ (Gender Balance on Corporate Boards Directive),
- having regard to Directive (EU) 2022/2041 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 19 October 2022 on adequate minimum wages in the European Union⁵,
- having regard to the Commission communication of 5 March 2020 entitled 'A Union of Equality: Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025' (COM(2020)0152),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 18 September 2020 entitled 'A Union of equality: EU anti-racism action plan 2020-2025 (COM(2020)0565),
- having regard to the European Pillar of Social Rights and its action plan (COM(2021)0102), in particular the 2030 headline targets and the EU Social Scoreboard,
- having regard to the EU Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030 (COM(2021)0101),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 8 October 2025 entitled 'Union of Equality: LGBTIQ Equality Strategy 2026-2030' (COM(2025)0725),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 7 September 2022 on the European care strategy (COM(2022)0440), the Council Recommendation of 8 December 2022 on access to affordable high-quality long-term care⁶ and the Council

² OJ L 204, 26.7.2006, p. 23, ELI:
<http://data.europa.eu/eli/dir/2006/54/oj>.

³ OJ L 188, 12.7.2019, p. 79, ELI:
<http://data.europa.eu/eli/dir/2019/1158/oj>.

⁴ OJ L 315, 7.12.2022, p. 44, ELI:
<http://data.europa.eu/eli/dir/2022/2381/oj>.

⁵ OJ L 275, 25.10.2022, p. 33, ELI:
<http://data.europa.eu/eli/dir/2022/2041/oj>.

⁶ OJ C 476, 15.12.2022, p. 1.

Recommendation of 8 December 2022 on early childhood education and care: the Barcelona targets for 2030⁷,

- having regard to the Commission communication of 7 March 2025 entitled 'A Roadmap for Women's Rights' (COM(2025)0097),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 20 March 2024 entitled 'Labour and skills shortages in the EU: an action plan' (COM(2024)0131),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 5 March 2025 entitled 'The Union of Skills' (COM(2025)0090),
- having regard to the report by the Commission of October 2024 entitled 'Social Protection Committee Annual Report 2024',
- having regard to the report by the Commission of March 2025 entitled '2025 report on gender equality in the EU',
- having regard to the report of the High-Level Expert Group on the Future of Social Protection and the Welfare State entitled 'The future of social protection and of the welfare state in the EU',
- having regard to the report by Mario Draghi of 9 September 2024 entitled 'The future of European competitiveness' (the Draghi report) and to the report by Enrico Letta of 10 April 2024 entitled 'Much more than a Market' (the Letta report),
- having regard to the 2024 joint report by the Social Protection Committee and the Commission's Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion entitled 'The 2024 pension adequacy report - Current and future income adequacy in old age in the EU',
- having regard to the Council conclusions of 3 December 2024 on ensuring work-life balance and gender equality for all generations in the context of demographic challenges,
- having regard to the Council conclusions of 4 December 2024 on labour and skills shortages in the EU: Mobilising untapped labour potential in the European Union,
- having regard to the Council conclusions of 19 June 2025 entitled 'Advancing Gender Equality in the AI-Driven Digital Age: 6th horizontal review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action by the Member States and the EU institutions',

⁷ OJ C 484, 20.12.2022, p. 1.

- having regard to its resolution of 14 June 2017 on the need for an EU strategy to end and prevent the gender pension gap⁸,
 - having regard to its resolution of 30 January 2020 on the gender pay gap⁹,
 - having regard to its resolution of 21 January 2021 on the EU Strategy for Gender Equality¹⁰,
 - having regard to its resolution of 5 July 2022 towards a common European action on care¹¹,
 - having regard to Rule 55 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the joint deliberations of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs and the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality under Rule 59 of the Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs and the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality (A10-0021/2026),
- A. whereas gender equality is a fundamental value of the EU, enshrined in Articles 2 and 3(3) TEU, Articles 8, 10 and 19 TFEU and Article 23 of the Charter; whereas Article 157 TFEU expressly states that Member States must ensure that the principle of equal pay for male and female workers for equal work or work of equal value is applied; whereas guaranteeing women's economic independence and equal access to financial resources is key to achieving gender equality and combating gender-based violence;
- B. whereas Principle 2 of the European Pillar of Social Rights states that 'equality of treatment and opportunities between women and men must be ensured and fostered in all areas, including regarding participation in the labour market, terms and conditions of employment and career progression' and that 'women and men have the right to equal pay for equal work and work of equal value';
- C. whereas in these uncertain geopolitical times, upholding our EU values requires that the Member States prioritise the defence sector; whereas the Member States must ensure that women working in defence benefit from equal pay, fair career progression and adequate pensions; whereas closing the gender pension gap is both a strategic and moral imperative for the EU;

⁸ OJ C 331, 18.9.2018, p. 60.

⁹ OJ C 331, 17.8.2021, p. 5.

¹⁰ OJ C 456, 10.11.2021, p. 208.

¹¹ OJ C 47, 7.2.2023, p. 30.

- D. whereas the gender pay gap is defined as the difference between the average gross hourly earnings of men and women, expressed as a percentage of the average gross hourly earnings of men; whereas a significant share of the gender pay gap cannot be explained by objective, observable labour market attributes such as age, experience and education, occupation, working time or other measurable characteristics, pointing to persistent discrimination; whereas tackling the pay gap requires a balanced approach that combines equal opportunities, equal distribution of care responsibilities, the fight against gender stereotypes, pay transparency and effective enforcement, with policies that support skills, participation and career progression, while recognising 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;
- E. whereas across the EU, women's earnings are disproportionately lower than men's, and women are over-represented among minimum wage earners; whereas in 2023, the EU gender gap in hourly pay was 12 %, with significant variations across the Member States, with the gap exceeding 18 % in some Member States; whereas this means that women are effectively working without being paid for an average of 54 to 67 days per year when compared to men; whereas despite the fact that the employment rate for women continues to increase, the EU is not on track to halve its gender employment gap of 10 % by 2030, and the gap for women with children is higher, at 16,5 %¹²; whereas according to Eurostat, the gap also differs by industry and is higher in the private sector than in the public sector in a majority of Member States¹³; whereas in 2024, only 7,7 % of men in the EU worked part-time compared to 27,9 % of women, whose main reason for working part-time was care responsibilities; whereas there is a specific correlation between women-dominated sectors and low levels of wages; whereas pay can reflect the value and recognition that society places on particular kinds of work;
- F. whereas pay inequalities do not always reflect the value of, demand for or skills required for the work, but are rather the result of persistent gender inequality; whereas undervaluation of women's work, occupational and sectoral segmentation, the gender gap in leadership, and the unequal division of unpaid care are structural factors in gender pay and pension gaps and require systematic job valuation and sectoral revalorisation exercises at EU and national levels; whereas the gender pay gap is not only a matter of lower earnings, but also reflects broader social, political and cultural

¹² Eurostat, 'Statistics Explained - SDG 5 - Gender equality', Eurostat website, April 2025.

¹³ Eurostat, 'Statistics Explained - Gender pay gap statistics', Eurostat website, March 2025.

inequalities which influence women's economic independence, career opportunities and overall well-being;

- G. whereas awareness-raising and education are essential to acknowledge the existence and seriousness of the gender pay and pension gaps, which continue to be underestimated by the public; whereas the gender pay and pension gaps have a serious influence on women's mental health, influencing not only women's earnings but also their exposure to psychosocial risks in the workplace, with long-term consequences for mental health and well-being over the course of their lives, demonstrated by women over 65 reporting chronic depression at twice the rate of men¹⁴, reflecting the compounded effects of lower income, limited independence and persistent insecurity; whereas fair and decent pay is essential for women's economic independence and enables women to leave situations of domestic violence; whereas addressing these gaps requires legislative and policy measures as well as a shift in societal attitudes, supported by data-driven communication and educational initiatives;
- H. whereas in 2021, 74 % of women did housework and cooking daily, compared with 42 % of men; whereas when all paid and unpaid work is combined, women do eight full-time weeks' more work per year than men¹⁵;
- I. whereas the World Economic Forum recently estimated that, with current rates of improvement, full gender parity will be reached in 134 years; whereas some studies calculate that it will take 90 years to close the gender pension gap; whereas new measures to close the pension gap more quickly are clearly needed;
- J. whereas across the EU, women are more likely to hold lower-paid jobs and to work in the informal economy and in historically undervalued sectors, which limits their earnings and contributes to the gender pay and pension gaps; whereas 3 in 10 women in the EU work in the education, health and social work sectors, while only 8 % of men are employed in these sectors¹⁶; whereas in the EU, women represent up to 80 % of the healthcare and social care workforce, while they make only up to 20 % of workers in STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) fields, exemplifying the persistent gender norms and stereotypes that discourage women

¹⁴ European Parliament, Directorate-General for Citizens' Rights, Justice and Institutional Affairs, Policy Department for Citizens, Equality and Culture, 'The effect of gender pay and pension gaps and new ways of working on women's mental health', September 2025.

¹⁵ European Institute for Gender Equality, 'Gender Equality Index 2021 – Health', 2021.

¹⁶ European Commission, 'Women's situation in the labour market', European Commission – Strategy and Policies website.

from entering certain sectors¹⁷; whereas it is 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;

- K. whereas women remain significantly under-represented in digital studies and careers, and in other fields of science, technology, art, engineering and mathematics (STEAM) and in employment sectors such as defence and aerospace, information and communications technology (ICT) and energy; whereas supporting women's participation in STEAM fields is crucial for closing the gender pay and pension gaps, fostering innovation and ensuring that Europe's digital and green transitions are inclusive and equitable;
- L. whereas women are disproportionately affected by the increasing fragmentation of the labour market, including the rise in non-standard forms of employment such as temporary work, part-time work, platform work and self-employment; whereas women often play essential roles in family farming, agri-business and community life, yet their work is frequently undervalued or informal, leading to lower lifetime earnings and inadequate pension contributions; whereas this disadvantage is further compounded for women facing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination based on factors such as race, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation or disability;
- M. whereas the impact of the gender pay, care and employment gaps are compounded for women in later life, as evidenced by the gender pension gap, which stood at 25 % in 2025¹⁸; whereas this stems from accumulated inequalities throughout the course of women's working lives and from periods of absence from the labour market and lower pay; whereas older women continue to be more exposed to poverty risks than older men in all the Member States¹⁹; whereas in 2024, 16,9 % of retired women were at risk of poverty, nearly double the number of retired men at risk of poverty²⁰; whereas women generally have a longer life expectancy and are more likely to require long-term care in old age²¹; whereas it is imperative to ensure that public social security and social protection systems remain robust and

¹⁷ European Commission, '2025 report on gender equality in the EU', March 2025, <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2838/5262357>.

¹⁸ European Institute for Gender Equality, 'Gender Equality Index – European Union in 2025 edition', European Institute for Gender Equality website.

¹⁹ European Commission, '2025 reports on gender equality in the EU', March 2025, <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2838/5262357>.

²⁰ Eurostat, 'Data Browser – At-risk-of-poverty rate for pensioners – EU-SILC survey', Eurostat website, February 2026.

²¹ United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 'The growing need for long-term care – Assumptions and realities'.

adequately and sustainably funded, so that they can continue to provide reliable support;

- N. whereas women-dominated work, which ensures economic empowerment and increases women's participation in politics and public life, must be grounded in freedom of choice and a wealth of possibilities;
- O. whereas the motherhood pay penalty, namely the pay gap between mothers and fathers as well as between women with and without dependent children, results from a lack of childcare facilities, too few fathers taking parental or paternity leave, working hours that are incompatible with facilities for childcare and social care for older people, the unequal division of informal care at home, and cultural biases penalising mothers in the world of work; whereas women often face reduced earnings, and these do not recover to pre-childbirth levels, and women experience slower career progression after having children, which has a direct impact on their earnings and standards of living at that time and on their ability to accumulate sufficient future pension entitlements; notes that the motherhood pay penalty represents a significant barrier to both full gender equality and long-term demographic and economic stability;
- P. whereas both the Draghi and Letta reports underline that the availability, affordability and quality of care services – including early childhood education and care, long-term care and support for persons with disabilities – are a structural barrier to labour market participation, particularly for women, and reduce the EU's overall productivity potential; whereas investment in care infrastructure and quality jobs is productive social investment that strengthens competitiveness and resilience and fosters the equal participation of women in all areas of society, including employment; whereas the Work-Life-Balance Directive should be thoroughly enforced and its effect evaluated; whereas a more balanced sharing between both parents of parental leave and care responsibilities, including through well-designed non-transferable leave entitlements, is essential to promote equal opportunities for women and men and to contribute to a more gender-equal society and a modern, resilient labour market;
- Q. whereas care is an important pillar of our society; whereas unpaid and underpaid care work for children, the elderly, the sick, people with disabilities, family members or other dependants is disproportionately carried out by women, even after they enter the labour market, and remains a major driver of gender inequalities in income, career progression and pensions; whereas care responsibilities keep approximately 7,7 million women out of the labour market, compared to just 450 000 men; whereas some countries have introduced pension credits for carers, meaning that the time spent caregiving is recognised in pension calculations;

- R. whereas the rate of poverty or social exclusion is higher for women than for men (21,9 % compared to 20 %); whereas time poverty limits women's opportunities to engage in long-term, full-time employment, restricting their earning potential and increasing their reliance on low-wage or part-time jobs, reducing their pension contributions and heightening their financial dependence also in old age, and further exposing them to gender-based violence, in particular domestic violence;
- S. whereas Spain has incorporated several regulations establishing a comprehensive legal system aimed at reducing the gender gap, such as the temporary gender gap supplement granted to women who are entitled to a contributory pension and have been mothers (biological or adoptive), and for which men could be eligible if they can prove that their professional career has been interrupted or affected by the birth or adoption of a child;
- T. whereas women of menopausal age constitute the fastest-growing group in the workforce, according to the International Labour Organization (ILO); whereas this trend is expected to continue and further increase; whereas the topic of menopause in the workplace remains largely invisible;
- U. whereas a more competitive and fairer EU economy, with more and better-quality jobs, combined with proactive measures for women-dominated sectors, will be key to closing the gender pay and pension gaps in a sustainable and growth-oriented way, ensuring the full participation of women in the labour market, with recommendations based on best practice, and will enable women to advance in high-value sectors such as science, technology, engineering, law and finance; whereas best practice, particularly in information campaigns such as the 'orange envelope', help inform people insured by national public pension systems about their savings for their pension;
- V. whereas the Draghi and Letta reports stress that Europe is not fully using its available talent, particularly among highly educated women; whereas the persistence of a 'glass ceiling' in both public and private sectors constrains women's access to senior, managerial and decision-making positions; whereas gender equality must begin with equal opportunities for girls and boys from the earliest stages of education; whereas promoting girls' participation in STEM and digital skills is crucial for building a gender-balanced and competitive European economy;
- W. whereas promoting gender equality in employment and entrepreneurship, and ensuring the balanced participation of women and men in the labour market, are key conditions for sustainable growth, higher productivity, innovation and the sustainable long-term competitiveness of the European economy; whereas promoting

equal opportunities for both women and men contributes to Europe's demographic and economic resilience and could substantially increase the EU's GDP per capita and its fiscal sustainability;

- X. whereas in a dynamic, innovation-driven social market economy, skills, productivity and performance should be rewarded, creating more opportunities for women to advance in high-value sectors such as technology, agriculture, industry, defence, medicine, law and finance; whereas this would encourage and support girls and young women to pursue education and careers in these high-value sectors from an early age, helping to dismantle gender stereotypes and widen future career choices;
- Y. whereas the rate of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion (AROPE) is higher among older people (aged 75 and above), pensioners with disabilities and those who have been out of work for long periods; whereas in 2020, the AROPE rate among retired people in the EU was 15,6 %; whereas this group's gender pay gap, at 13 % in 2020, and its gender pension gap, at 29 % in 2019, is still significant today; whereas many older women have not built up sufficient pension entitlements and often rely on family support or survivors' pensions; whereas women's greater longevity increases the likelihood that they will be living alone on a single income; whereas pensions must remain adequate and be adjusted to the cost of living, while incentives for longer participation in the labour market must be improved, to reduce old-age poverty and dependency;
- Z. whereas labour market imbalances can be reduced by upholding the principle of equal pay for equal work or work of equal value, addressing the undervaluation of women-dominated sectors and removing barriers so that more women can enter high-paying, men-dominated sectors; whereas the gender pay gap is highest in such sectors; whereas society also depends on essential services such as care, which are often underpaid and predominantly carried out by women; whereas pay in these sectors should be fair and sustainable to support women and their families, strengthen workforce participation and improve the status of these professions; whereas the risk of poverty and, to a lesser degree, the risk to women's financial autonomy induced by the gender pay and pension gaps further exposes women to gender-based violence, in particular domestic violence, making it more difficult for them to leave an abusive relationship; whereas according to the UN, almost 35 % of women worldwide experience psychological or sexual harassment in the workplace or harassment with serious consequences in terms of personal and professional aspirations; whereas this damages women's self-esteem and weakens their position for negotiating fairer remuneration; whereas high unemployment, weak pay growth and insecure work can affect women disproportionately; whereas this has an adverse impact on the economic empowerment of women

and on achieving equality between women and men; whereas well-designed labour market reforms, a competitive economy and sustainable public finances can support job creation and opportunity; whereas public services and social support should be targeted and effective, ensuring value for money while protecting the most vulnerable people;

- AA. whereas pension systems across the EU are generally based on three pillars: state pensions, occupational pensions provided by employers, and private savings or investments; whereas women's lower earnings, career interruptions, care responsibilities and over-representation in non-standard forms of work often result in reduced entitlements in all three pillars, thereby exacerbating the gender pension gap and increasing the risk of poverty in old age; whereas in the care economy, most jobs are performed by women, while leadership and decision-making remain disproportionately dominated by men; whereas pay transparency can play a crucial role in ensuring that substantial progress is made in addressing the gender pay gap, as it helps to reveal the undervaluation of women's work and to highlight gender aspects of the labour market segmentation, including through tools providing objective criteria that allow for gender-neutral assessment and comparability of the value of work in different jobs and sectors; whereas the impact of Council Directive 79/7/EEC²² on Member States' possibilities of addressing the gender pension gap must be taken into account; whereas gender-responsive spending reviews can improve value for money in public budgets and can ensure that measures are better targeted to support family and work;
- AB. whereas job evaluation methods that are free from gender bias are essential to enable jobs to be compared on the basis of their scale and complexity, in order to determine the position of one job in relation to another within a given sector or organisation, regardless of whether the jobs in question are held by women or men; whereas women with disabilities face significantly worse labour market outcomes, and consequently have even poorer pension prospects, than both men and women without disabilities;
- AC. whereas gender equality must be pursued through an intersectional approach that recognises how different forms of discrimination and disadvantage – including those based on age, disability, racial or ethnic origin, socio-economic status, sexual orientation and place of residence – can worsen inequalities experienced by women and girls in education, employment and access to social protection;

²² Council Directive 79/7/EEC of 19 December 1978 on the progressive implementation of the principle of equal treatment for men and women in matters of social security (OJ L 6, 10.1.1979, p. 24, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/dir/1979/7/oj>).

AD. whereas collective bargaining is a determinant of the reversal and overcoming of inequalities; whereas it does not suffice to guarantee equal salary for work of equal value in poverty, as equality in salaries should be achieved alongside a general increase in workers' salaries and improvements in their working conditions in order to guarantee them dignity and social justice;

State of play

1. Recalls that equal pay for equal work or work of equal value is a founding EU principle and that the Member States have an obligation to eliminate gender-based discrimination in all aspects of remuneration, working conditions and types of employment contracts; recalls that full implementation of the Pay Transparency Directive will help eliminate gender-based discrimination and bias at work, e.g. in hiring practices and pay structures;
2. Regrets the fact that the gender pay and pension gaps continue to persist in the EU, which has a negative impact on women's social and economic situation and therefore on society as a whole; regrets the fact that, while there has been a modest reduction over the past decade in the average gender pay and pension gaps across the EU, the current pace of change remains insufficient to close the gaps before 2100; regrets that old-age poverty and exclusion remain a challenge for older women, and that these are increasing against the overall trend, underlining the need to strengthen sustainable pension systems and support active ageing; welcomes the announcement of an EU anti-poverty strategy and asks the Commission to ensure synergy between that proposal and the upcoming gender equality strategy to address the gender and intersectional risks of poverty;
3. Recalls that across the EU, women are at greater risk of poverty than men, particularly women experiencing intersectional forms of discrimination, such as single mothers, older women, women with disabilities, third-country nationals, LGBTIQ+ people and women in rural areas; stresses that the gender pension gap is not only the result of accumulating pay inequalities over the course of a lifetime but also of different opportunities on the labour market, unequal distribution of informal care work at home, and gender bias in society; calls for policies that recognise these disadvantages while promoting participation in quality employment and equal opportunities; notes that, as old-age pensions represent on average four-fifths of total income in retirement, and given ongoing demographic challenges, failing to address the gender pension gap could threaten Member States' long-term social cohesion and the sustainability of social protection systems;
4. Underlines that women's individual freedom and economic independence are essential for their personal security and dignity, and that low participation in the labour market increases

vulnerability to abuse, gender-based violence, including domestic violence and violence in public spaces, and economic dependence; calls on the Member States to take targeted measures to prevent and combat gender-based violence and harassment, both online and offline, including through awareness campaigns, enforcement of the Istanbul Convention and ratification of the ILO Violence and Harassment Convention (Convention 190) to ensure effective victim protection mechanisms in the world of work;

5. Notes that women still carry out a disproportionate share of unpaid care and domestic work, which reduces their labour market participation and pension accrual; recognises that the traditional gender roles, biases and unequal division of care responsibilities among women and men creates a motherhood pay penalty and a penalty for caring for -children, family members or other dependants who have disabilities or are older or sick, and that these penalties not only contribute to the persistent gender pay and pension gaps but can also discourage women who want to have children from doing so, at a time when many EU countries are facing demographic decline, as they reduce the opportunities for young women, in particular, in the labour market;
6. Emphasises that insufficient investment in, and the limited availability, high cost and lack of adequate infrastructure for, quality childcare and long-term care services remain a key challenge to, primarily, women's full participation in society and the labour market, and can result in women leaving the labour market prematurely or involuntarily doing part-time work and can hinder their career progression; underlines the need to systematically recognise and reflect unpaid care work in policy design and social protection systems while, at the same time, facilitating opportunities for women to return to the labour market; recognises that care is a cornerstone of society and is, to a large extent, provided by women; recalls that caring for children and for family members or other dependants who have disabilities or are older or sick often represents additional or even full-time responsibilities; highlights the fact that this reality is reflected in labour market patterns, including higher rates of part-time work, lower hourly wages, career interruptions and shorter duration of employment among women; calls for policies that support families in all their diversity, promote work-life balance, and encourage both men and women to share caring responsibilities, while ensuring that care work, whether formal or informal, is respected and fairly valued within society;

Benefits of gender equality for society, economic growth, competitiveness and combating discrimination

7. Stresses that closing gender pay and pension gaps is essential for equality and competitiveness, and should be achieved through evidence-based measures, respecting the prerogatives of the

Member States and the social partners; recalls that gender gaps in pay and employment cost the EU EUR 390 billion in 2023²³ through lost earnings, welfare contributions and the public finance costs of social welfare benefits received by non-working women; notes that closing the gender employment gap could increase productivity, resulting in a 3,2 % to 5,5 % increase in GDP per capita by 2050, while more flexible working conditions, better work-life balance and higher wages encourage more women to enter the labour market, leading to an increase in the productive capacity of the economy²⁴; recognises that the cost-of-living crisis disproportionately affects women, including mothers; calls for measures that ensure that wages reflect the cost of living and incentivise workforce participation, while continuing to respect national labour market frameworks and social partner agreements; stresses that equal participation of women and men in quality employment strengthens the EU's labour supply and its overall economic resilience and aligns with the European competitiveness agenda; encourages the Commission and the Member States to include quantified gains from increased gender equality in economic forecasting and policy impact assessments where relevant;

8. Highlights the fact that in 2023, the pay gap was higher in the private sector than in the public sector in the majority of EU countries²⁵ and that specific efforts are needed to ensure that companies actively encourage non-discriminatory practices and promote equal opportunities and equal pay for work of equal value;
9. Recalls that employees and businesses are the driver of the EU's competitiveness, as recognised in the Draghi report; emphasises that skills and labour shortages, exacerbated by a shrinking working-age population, are seriously hampering EU productivity and growth; points out that improving women's labour market participation and working conditions, particularly in current and emerging sectors linked to the twin transitions, could help alleviate these pressures; calls for gender equality and the combating of gender stereotypes to be mainstreamed in a manner that supports women's participation in the workforce, skills development and competitiveness, and encourages the removal of barriers to opportunity across the EU's competitiveness, industrial, skills and digital agendas;
10. Calls on the EU and its Member States to apply gender equality to programming, public services and, in particular, the provision of

²³ Eurofound, 'Mind the gap! Gender employment gap cost Europe over €390 billion in 2023', Eurofound website, March 2025.

²⁴ European Institute for Gender Equality, 'Economic benefits of gender equality in the European Union – How closing the gender gaps in labour market activity and pay leads to economic growth', 2017.

²⁵ European Parliament, 'Topics – Understanding the gender pay gap: definition, facts and causes', European Parliament website, 2020.

sexual and reproductive healthcare, including access to free, safe and legal abortion;

11. Calls for the development of gender-responsive strategies and policies in the digital sector and for targeted efforts to integrate women more effectively into the labour market;
12. Recalls that objective, merit-based hiring and promotion practices and equal opportunities, supporting services and the rights of all to participate, are the basis of equal treatment leading to fair competition in a functioning labour market, which can reduce the biases that negatively affect women's career advancement and consequently penalise their earnings, including discriminatory behaviours based on gender, race, disability, age and sexual orientation and identity; calls, in this regard, for the full implementation and monitoring of the Gender Balance on Corporate Boards Directive and encourages small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and other non-listed companies to follow best practice on gender balance in management; notes, furthermore, that a resilient, inclusive and sustainable society and growth-driven economy provides well-paid, quality jobs in women-dominated sectors that enable women to build up solid pension entitlements during their careers;
13. Notes the need to ensure that women working in the defence sector do not face any form of discrimination based on stereotypes and that they have access to well-paid, stable careers with adequate pension contributions;
14. Considers that the Member States should focus on reducing barriers to employment and entrepreneurship, supporting work-life balance for families through adequate parental leave policies, flexible working arrangements and the right to disconnect, early childhood education networks, high-quality, accessible and affordable childcare and long-term care services that are compatible with full-time work, and investing in training, reskilling and upskilling programmes helping to address skills shortages, including for single mothers, older women, LGBTIQ+ people, women with disabilities, women in vulnerable situations, third-country nationals and women residing in rural and remote areas and the outermost regions, as they are most likely to have difficulty accessing training and work opportunities; commends women's contribution to the rural economy;

Challenges

15. Highlights the fact that gender segmentation across sectors and occupations is an important structural driver of the gender pay gap; stresses that this segmentation is both horizontal, with women over-represented in low-paying and historically undervalued sectors, and vertical, whereby, within the same sector, women are less likely to

be in better paid senior and management roles; underlines that women-dominated sectors are generally lower paid and undervalued owing to various factors and that this cannot be justified by differences in competence or merit, with more women than men receiving low pay and the minimum wage in nearly all EU Member States despite younger women increasingly outperforming younger men in educational attainment²⁶;

16. Highlights the fact that only 30 % corporate board members are women, while fewer than 1 in 10 board presidents or chief executive officers (CEOs) of large companies are women²⁷, indicating that women remain substantially under-represented in senior roles, leadership and mentorship programmes; notes that the gender pay gap is highest in well-paid jobs²⁸; underlines that persistent glass ceilings in management, research and innovation constrain productivity and competitiveness; stresses that closing the leadership gap is essential to achieving the EU's objectives; emphasises that variable forms of pay, such as company shares or bonuses, are becoming more common and are currently increasing more rapidly among men than women²⁹, underscoring an important opportunity to ensure that the growth of these new compensation models benefits women equally and supports progress towards closing the gender pay gap;
17. Recalls the unique role of carers and the essential nature of care provision in our society, particularly in the light of current demographic trends and an ageing population; stresses that a key factor in the gender pay and pension gaps is the unequal share of care and domestic responsibilities shouldered almost exclusively by women; recalls the fact that women are more likely to be unemployed, work part-time, work in lower paying women-dominated sectors and take career breaks, and that this can be attributed in part to the care penalty, which has a consequent impact on pay and career progression and contributes to the risk of poverty; recalls, furthermore, that periods of absence from employment to take on caring responsibilities do not count towards accruing pension entitlements, despite the costs saved by the state through informal care carried out by women;
18. Recalls the right to parental leave as enshrined in the Work-Life-Balance Directive, and stresses the need for its full and effective implementation; underlines that policy must tackle unequal burden-

²⁶ Eurostat, 'Statistics Explained - Educational attainment statistics', Eurostat website, May 2025.

²⁷ European Institute for Gender Equality, 'Gender Equality Index 2021 - Health', 2021.

²⁸ Eurofound and the European Commission Joint Research Centre, 'European Jobs Monitor 2021: Gender gaps and the employment structure', 2021.

²⁹ Eurofound, 'Gender equality at work', 2020.

sharing between women and men and support the fair distribution of parental leave and care responsibilities between parents to achieve an 'equal earner, equal carer' model; calls on the Member States to promote non-transferable, adequately paid paternity leave and to introduce awareness campaigns and incentives to increase men's uptake of parental leave, and to include measures to monitor and report progress on uptake disaggregated by gender; emphasises the role of employers in making full-time employment compatible with care responsibilities;

19. Calls on the Member States to work closely with the social partners to take active and coordinated measures, including targeted training and mentoring to address the structural gender inequalities that underpin women's reluctance to apply for promotion or to highlight their own achievements; stresses that this reluctance is not a matter of individual choice but stems from entrenched gender stereotypes, occupational segregation and inadequate career guidance, particularly affecting low-skilled and marginalised women; urges the Member States to work closely with the social partners to dismantle these barriers through inclusive workplace cultures, improved career development frameworks and proactive equality strategies;
20. Warns of the steady increase, since 2015, in old-age poverty and social exclusion, affecting older women in particular, and the dramatic poverty rates of women over 75 in several Member States, as a symptom of overall gender inequality in lifetime earnings; emphasises that older women are more likely to spend longer periods of their lives in need of care and support services themselves, the costs of which surpass average pension income in most Member States;
21. Stresses that unconscious gender biases in recruitment, promotion and pay setting contribute to the gender pay gap; emphasises that gender stereotypes, which relegate women into traditionally women-dominated, low-paying sectors, favour men over equally qualified women candidates, and that the 'sticky floor'³⁰ for women's career advancement and the impact of gender norm dynamics in pay negotiations are compounded over the course of women's professional lives;
22. Underlines that it is essential to strengthen care services in order to increase women's participation in the labour market, close gender employment, pay and pension gaps and address skills and labour shortages by generating resilient quality employment; calls on the Commission and the Member States to fully implement the European care strategy and the Council Recommendation on long term care, to set national targets for availability, accessibility and quality of

³⁰ European Institute for Gender Equality, 'Glossary and thesaurus - sticky floor', European Institute for Gender Equality website.

childcare and long-term care coverage and to earmark resources within the European Semester and EU funding instruments for high-quality, affordable, accessible care services; stresses that public investment in care infrastructure should be classified as growth-enhancing expenditure under the revised EU economic governance framework; calls on the Member States to ratify the ILO Domestic Workers Convention of 2011;

23. Stresses that closing the childcare gap remains one of the key opportunities to improve the lives of new parents across the EU; notes that this gap often appears after the birth of a child, once paid parental leave ends and before access to full-time early childhood education and care becomes available; underscores that supporting families during this transition period can significantly strengthen parents' ability to remain in the labour market;
24. Notes that women-led firms often operate in lower-paying sectors and face additional obstacles such as limited access to finance, gender bias and regulatory hurdles;
25. Points out that in the EU, around 6,8 million people work as undeclared paid care workers in the personal and household services sector, of whom 90 % are women, and the majority of whom are middle-aged and migrants³¹ and therefore not encompassed by labour rights or social security;
26. Stresses that financial insecurity and inequality are closely linked to psychological well-being and that the mental health impact of pay inequality should not be overlooked; notes that women are more likely than men to experience mental health problems, such as burnout and chronic depression, especially in sectors characterised by low-paid and emotionally demanding work;

The way forward

27. Welcomes the Commission's continued efforts to promote gender equality and calls on it to put forward a new, detailed, result-oriented and ambitious EU gender equality strategy, building on previous progress and best practice, and to propose a dedicated action plan to eradicate the gender pay and pension gaps, through evidence-based measures, adopting a cross-sectoral approach and with EU-level quantitative and time-bound goals ensuring that gender equality policies, which are a precondition for healthy, prosperous societies, also contribute to sustainable economic growth, competitiveness, entrepreneurship, innovation and family well-being and work-life balance;

³¹ Eurofound, 'Undeclared care work in the EU: Policy approaches to a complex socioeconomic challenge', 2025.

28. Calls, furthermore, for the action plan to 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; stresses the need for an approach that respects national competences and the diverse realities of women across the EU;
29. Calls on the Commission to work with the Member States and the social partners 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; notes that this should be done across sectors and by ensuring collective bargaining rights; stresses that fair valuation enhances job quality, motivation and competitiveness without undermining labour market flexibility; encourages the Commission and the Member States to continue providing training, where appropriate, to better support gender-neutral recruitment and evaluation processes;
30. Calls on the Commission to put in place a European care deal, as announced during the 2024 parliamentary hearings; calls for this deal to include a set of policies, programmes and recommendations, combined with a specific care investment package, aimed at fostering a transition towards a care economy that recognises care as a right, and values it as the backbone of our society; calls, in this context, for the creation of a dedicated funding stream under the 2028-2034 multiannual financial framework to roll out services to support informal carers;
31. Calls on the Member States to reward work and promote solutions that strengthen families in all their diversity while ensuring fiscal responsibility and support for enterprises, such as expanding flexible working arrangements for parents and individuals and the right to disconnect, offering tax incentives for caregiving years and benefits for single parents, and investing in the provision of high-quality, affordable and accessible childcare and long-term care services that are compatible with full-time employment and gender-equal parental leave policies; calls, furthermore, on the Member States to encourage actions, through social dialogue and collective bargaining, to facilitate women's full participation in the labour market and reduce their rates of career breaks and part-time work, which are higher than men's; calls for dedicated measures to facilitate women's return to work after long career breaks with reintegration measures and targeted incentives such as reskilling schemes;
32. Calls on the Commission, while respecting national competences, to issue guidelines to help identify and address tax arrangements, such

as joint taxation schemes, that may discourage secondary earners from participating actively in the labour market, in order to ensure that national tax policies support gender equality and women's broader participation in the labour market and to facilitate the exchange of best practice;

33. Highlights the importance of fostering women's entrepreneurship and the role of women-led businesses in improving economic empowerment and potential earnings over a lifetime; stresses the need for better support at both EU and national levels, in particular as regards business development, mentorship programmes, access to finance and venture capital, and improved financial literacy for women, supported by InvestEU, the European Innovation Council and the Enterprise Europe Network, with targeted measures for under-represented groups, including women in rural areas and STEAM sectors; calls on the Commission to address these aspects in the next gender equality strategy and underlines the importance of early entrepreneurship and financial literacy education for girls to nurture future women entrepreneurs;
34. Underlines that more women should be encouraged to put themselves forward through leadership, development, mentorship and support for work-life balance; notes the Commission's inclusion of a gender dimension in its quality jobs roadmap, and stresses the need to ensure that related initiatives address the fair recognition of work typically performed by women across sectors, and to improve job quality and working conditions, thereby contributing to a more productive workforce and a stronger, more competitive European economy;
35. Stresses the need to break down occupational gender segmentation by recognising the value of women-dominated sectors such as education, healthcare and social services in terms of pay and working conditions and by enabling more women to participate in high-paying sectors such as ICT, STEAM and finance, as well as in senior management and workplace leadership roles, e.g. as CEOs, and in public and political life; highlights the need to ensure that more gender-sensitive and dynamic career guidance is mainstreamed across all education and training levels so that silos are brought down as early as possible; encourages the Member States and employers to provide gender-sensitive career guidance from an early stage and to promote balanced representation in senior and decision-making positions;
36. Stresses the importance of ensuring that all subjects across all levels of education and training are equally accessible to women and girls; underlines the need to eliminate cultural and gender bias and stereotypes in curricula, teaching materials and career guidance and in training for educators, in order to prevent the channelling of women and girls into a limited number of study areas or occupational

sectors; encourages the Member States to promote better access for girls to traditionally male-dominated fields; calls for the promotion of gender-responsive educational policies that encourage and support girls to pursue studies and careers in all fields, including STEAM;

37. Emphasises the need to better financially value work done in women-dominated sectors, to guarantee the right to equal pay for work of equal value, to provide information on workers' individual pay levels and average pay levels, and to improve working conditions, particularly pay and career progression, which improves women's financial independence and reduces their risk of poverty; stresses that improving conditions in women-dominated sectors will also reduce gender segmentation and address worsening labour shortages; calls on the Commission to include a strong gender dimension in the forthcoming initiative on a framework to address long-term care and workforce challenges and in all actions under the Union of Skills and in the upcoming Quality Jobs Act; calls on the Member States to take concrete measures to ensure equal pay for equal work, while encouraging policies that support fair wage growth linked to productivity, competitiveness and economic sustainability;
38. Emphasises that persons with disabilities, in particular women with disabilities, continue to face multiple and intersecting barriers to accessing employment, training and entrepreneurship; calls on the Commission and the Member States to promote equal access to quality jobs, vocational education and funding opportunities, in line with the European disability rights strategy, making full use of existing EU and national instruments; stresses that inclusion and accessibility are essential components of Europe's social market economy and competitiveness;
39. Calls on the Member States, together with the social partners, to design multi-year, fiscally responsible career and pay paths in essential public and care services (healthcare, social care, education) to improve quality, skills and retention; invites the Member States to make targeted use of the European Social Fund Plus and, where appropriate, the Recovery and Resilience Facility for training, upskilling and retention, avoiding permanent distortions in wage dynamics;
40. Encourages the Commission and the Member States 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;
41. Stresses the importance of ensuring fair remuneration in women-dominated sectors, while maintaining wage-setting autonomy for the

social partners and respecting national traditions of collective bargaining;

42. Underscores how formal work with good-quality working conditions, particularly in women-dominated sectors, can strengthen tax bases and ensure that women workers are recognised and protected under the law; notes that tackling the informal economy through targeted reforms, such as simplifying the administration of tax requirements and supporting entrepreneurship, can better ensure a level playing field for women in the labour market; calls, therefore, on the Member States to simplify access to the formal economy, promote measures to combat the grey economy and formalise work contracts to protect workers in informal sectors, such as domestic work, personal care, agriculture and seasonal jobs, to combat undeclared work, strengthen fair competition and ensure that women can contribute to social protection systems and access training and other labour-related rights and protections; calls on the Commission and the Member States to step up their work on combating in-work poverty, which negatively affects the standards of living of women, including informal workers who often lack good salaries and access to social security;
43. Acknowledges the long-term financial impact that extended periods of unpaid care can have for women; calls on the Member States to ensure robust gender-sensitive social protection systems, including for those who take career breaks to care for dependants; emphasises, while recognising that pension systems are primarily a national competence, the importance of adequate national minimum pensions and care credits for pension entitlements for those who take career breaks to care for dependants; highlights the need to ensure adequate protection and income support for informal carers and to ensure the inclusion of part-time workers in second-pillar pension provision; highlights the need to integrate gender pension gap indicators into the EU Social Scoreboard and to integrate measures to combat gender-related pension risks into the country-specific recommendations, starting from the 2026 European Semester cycle; encourages the Member States to explore fiscally responsible and work-oriented solutions that support caregivers' return to the labour market, provide information on accessing public and private pension savings, and strengthen family and community-based support systems; calls on the Commission, in cooperation with the Member States, to place strong emphasis on the economic empowerment of pensioners and to assess the possible proposal of minimum EU standards for care credits that would enable caregiving years to count towards pension entitlements; calls on the Member States to ensure that the implementation of the Council Recommendation on minimum income³² is gender-responsive and

³² Council Recommendation of 30 January 2023 on adequate minimum income ensuring active inclusion (OJ C 41, 3.2.2023, p. 1).

aimed at supporting the needs of women living in poverty, to give them financial freedom, independence and opportunities;

44. Recognises the role that automatic enrolment into occupational pension schemes can play in encouraging more participation by women in retirement savings, helping to mitigate the gender pension gap and supporting long-term financial security; notes that the European Insurance and Occupational Pensions Authority supports the use of pension dashboards, tracking tools to monitor effectively the gender pay and pension gaps, and gender-neutral remuneration policies and practices in occupational pensions; calls on the Member States to promote non-discriminatory access to supplementary and occupational pension schemes for all workers, including part-time workers;
45. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to protect third-country migrant women, who are often employed in low-skilled, insecure and underpaid jobs in sectors such as domestic care, cleaning and catering³³, from discrimination and exploitation; stresses that ensuring fair wages, labour law protection and adequate social security contributions is essential to closing the gender pay and pension gaps;
46. 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; stresses that informed workers and employers are key to enforcing current legislation effectively;
47. Calls on the Member States to recognise grandparental care – when grandparents regularly look after their grandchildren to enable the child’s parent(s) to enter, remain in or return to work – as being eligible for care credits, with clear eligibility and verification criteria;
48. Stresses the importance of removing practical obstacles in workplaces, including through digital accessibility, reasonable accommodation and flexible working arrangements; encourages the Member States to provide targeted incentives to employers who invest in accessibility, skills development and inclusive recruitment, while avoiding additional administrative burdens, in order to promote both equality and competitiveness in line with the principles of the social market economy;
49. Highlights the key role of social dialogue and the involvement of the social partners in designing, implementing and monitoring equality and pay strategies to help eradicate the gender pay gap; encourages the social partners to include measures to promote equal

³³ European Parliament, Directorate-General for Parliamentary Research Services, ‘Migrant women and the EU labour market – Overcoming double discrimination’, May 2023.

opportunities and combat harassment, pay inequality and gender biases in collective agreements, and to extend collective bargaining coverage for non-standard workers, especially in women-dominated and low-paid sectors, in line with Article 152 TFEU; calls on the Commission and the Member States to meaningfully involve the social partners in developing new policies to close the gender pay gap in the next gender equality strategy and to further support the social partners;

50. Calls on the Member States to support institution-building at local, regional and national levels to monitor the implementation and progress of national gender equality strategies; underlines, equally, the importance of actively engaging and listening to women, across a multitude of sectors and workforces, in the formulation, implementation and evaluation of policies aimed at closing the gender pay gap, including researching aspects that potentially impact women's earnings and workforce participation but on which data is lacking, such as mental health, menopause or menstruation; strongly encourages the Member States to address occupational issues related to endometritis and menopause, including women's early exit from the labour market;
51. Reiterates the need for gender mainstreaming in EU and national policies, including employment, health, disability, pensions and sport, and in policy decision-making, ensuring that equality objectives are incorporated into all stages of policy formulation and budget implementation; calls for gender mainstreaming to be strengthened within the next multiannual financial framework and for dedicated EU resources aimed at eliminating the gender pay and pension gaps, strengthening care services and infrastructure, and supporting gender-sensitive mental health services; recalls that integrating equality objectives into EU funding improves the effectiveness and transparency of public investment; highlights, in this regard, the possible role of EU funding mechanisms such as the European Social Fund Plus, the European Regional Development Fund, the Recovery and Resilience Facility, the Citizens', Equality, Rights and Values programme and Horizon Europe in providing financial support for gender-related objectives;
52. Calls for the improved collection, comparability and publication of gender-disaggregated data on gender pay and pension gaps across all sectors to better monitor progress in closing the gender pay gap, making full use of existing reporting systems and digital tools to avoid increased administrative costs for businesses; stresses that reliable and harmonised data is essential to design evidence-based policies and monitor progress toward closing gender gaps; stresses the key role of the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) and Eurostat in supporting the collection of comparable and high-quality data across the EU to inform targeted policies; asks Eurostat

to complement the official gender pay gap indicator with a standardised gender time gap indicator;

53. Calls for the swift transposition and implementation of the Pay Transparency Directive, and of the Gender Balance on Corporate Boards Directive, which 10 Member States have not yet transposed, and urges the Commission to ensure the robust enforcement of both directives; encourages SMEs and other non-listed companies to consider established best practice on gender balance in management; calls on the Commission to ensure that the Pay Transparency Directive, as the EU's key piece of legislation to tackle the gender pay gap, is not included in any forthcoming omnibus simplification packages, while also preventing duplication or overlaps in relation to new non-legislative and legislative acts addressing the gender pay gap;
54. Urges the Commission and the Member States to ensure robust enforcement and, where possible, the strengthening of current EU and national legislation to guarantee equality in career development, especially after maternity leave; stresses that workers should be protected from any form of disadvantage, including demotion, extension of probation or adverse changes in working conditions attributable to taking such leave;
55. Emphasises that the administrative burden for microenterprises and SMEs could negatively affect women's entrepreneurship, which is crucial for women's financial independence and gender equality;
56. Invites the Member States to ensure that pay transparency rules and complaint mechanisms are both digitally and physically accessible for workers with disabilities, and that job evaluation methods are checked to prevent bias against women, especially in women-dominated jobs and among women with disabilities;

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57. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and the Commission.