



TEXTS ADOPTED

P10_TA(2026)0158

Women's entrepreneurship in rural and island areas and outermost regions

European Parliament resolution of 30 April 2026 on women's entrepreneurship in rural and island areas and outermost regions (2024/2124(INI))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to Articles 8 and 349 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU),
- 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 occupation¹,
- 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 mechanisms²,
- 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 the Commission communication of 5 March 2020 entitled 'A Union of Equality: Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025' (COM(2020)0152),

¹ OJ L 204, 26.7.2006, p. 23, ELI:
<http://data.europa.eu/eli/dir/2006/54/oj>.

² OJ L 132, 17.5.2023, p. 21, ELI:
<http://data.europa.eu/eli/dir/2023/970/oj>.

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

- having regard to the Commission communication of 7 March 2025 entitled 'A Roadmap for Women's Rights' (COM(2025)0097),
- having regard to the European Investment Fund's (EIF) and European Investment Bank's (EIB) Group Strategy on Gender Equality and Women's Economic Empowerment,
- having regard to Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021 laying down common provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund Plus, the Cohesion Fund, the Just Transition Fund and the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund and financial rules for those and for the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, the Internal Security Fund and the Instrument for Financial Support for Border Management and Visa Policy⁴,
- having regard to the Commission communication of 30 June 2021 entitled 'A long-term Vision for the EU's Rural Areas - Towards stronger, connected, resilient and prosperous rural areas by 2040' (COM(2021)0345),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 3 May 2022 entitled 'Putting people first, securing sustainable and inclusive growth, unlocking the potential of the EU's outermost regions' (COM(2022)0198),
- having regard to the European Institute of Innovation and Technology's and the European Innovation Council's Women Leadership Programme,
- having regard to the European Research Area's gender equality plans,
- having regard to its resolution of 3 May 2022 on reaching women's economic independence through entrepreneurship and self-employment⁵,
- having regard to its resolution of 14 September 2021 towards a stronger partnership with the EU outermost regions⁶,
- having regard to the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea,
- having regard to Article 174 TFEU,

⁴ OJ L 231, 30.6.2021, p. 159, ELI:
<http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2021/1060/oj>.

⁵ OJ C 465, 6.12.2022, p. 54.

⁶ OJ C 117, 11.3.2022, p. 18.

- having regard to its resolution of 7 June 2022 on EU islands and cohesion policy: current situation and future challenges⁷,
 - having regard to the Council Recommendation of 8 December 2022 on early childhood education and care: the Barcelona targets for 2030⁸,
 - having regard to the UN Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas of 28 September 2018,
 - having regard to European Court of Auditors special report No 10/2021 of 26 May 2021 entitled ‘Gender mainstreaming in the EU budget: time to turn words into action’,
 - having regard to Rule 55 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the opinion of the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Women’s Rights and Gender Equality (A10-0058/2026),
- A. whereas women in rural and island areas and outermost regions play a key role in the dynamism of local economies, the viability of the agricultural sector, and the preservation of cultural heritage, constituting a fundamental pillar for territorial cohesion, social sustainability and economic resilience in rural areas; whereas, despite this indispensable contribution, they continue to face legal, financial, cultural and infrastructural obstacles that limit women’s entrepreneurship and the full achievement of their economic independence; whereas in many Member States, women in rural areas are disproportionately affected by the lack of access to affordable childcare, adequate transport links, digital infrastructure, and gender-sensitive support systems and leisure opportunities, which limits the possibility of full labour market participation and contributes to poor mental health; whereas a large part of the work carried out by women in rural areas remains informal, unpaid and often unrecognised in official statistics, which accentuates the invisibility of their contribution to economic and social development; whereas rural areas are an integral part of the European way of life, reflecting a unique balance between traditional heritage and progress, whose continuity depends on the recognition and effective integration of women in rural development processes; whereas around 30 % of the EU population lives in rural areas, which account for approximately 83 % of the EU’s total territory; and whereas these

⁷ OJ C 493, 27.12.2022, p. 48.

⁸ OJ C 484, 20.12.2022, p. 1.

regions are vital for the EU's economic stability, social cohesion and competitiveness⁹;

- B. whereas it is the EU's responsibility, when carrying out all its actions, to promote equality between women and men in accordance with the Treaties; whereas gender equality is a fundamental value of the EU, a fundamental right, and a key principle of the European Pillar of Social Rights as enshrined in Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union; whereas Article 8 TFEU lays down the principle of gender mainstreaming, which stipulates that the gender equality perspective must be integrated across all policies and programmes; whereas no Member State has so far achieved full gender equality, and progress remains slow, with Member States scoring an average of 67.4 out of 100 on the EU's 2019 Gender Equality Index, representing an improvement of only 5.4 points since 2005;
- C. whereas women's economic well-being and success cannot be decoupled from the respect for fundamental rights, including the right to live free from gender-based violence and the right to bodily autonomy through access to sexual and reproductive health and rights, including access to safe and legal abortion care throughout the EU; whereas ensuring safe and respectful working environments, free from harassment and gender stereotypes, strengthens women's career opportunities and fosters a culture of mutual respect, responsibility and dignity; whereas, consequently, women's economic independence contributes significantly to their safety and protection from gender-based and domestic violence;
- D. whereas the employment gap between men and women in rural areas is around 13 percentage points (compared to 10 percentage points in cities), exceeding 20 in some Member States, with women's participation in the workforce being only 31.6 % in 2022, according to Eurostat data; whereas the economic loss due to the gender employment gap amounts to around EUR 370 billion per year, while improving gender equality could raise EU GDP by up to EUR 3.15 trillion by 2050;
- E. whereas demographic decline poses particular challenges for rural, island, mountainous and outermost regions and represents both a challenge and an opportunity to make entrepreneurship more attractive and to enable both business creation and sustainable living in those areas, as the emigration of young people and women in search of better opportunities undermines generational renewal, community vitality and long-term economic development; whereas in the EU the number of relatively young women leaving rural areas tends to exceed that of relatively young men, which may be a

⁹ According to the 2018 LAU (Local Administrative Unit) level modelling by the JRC Eurostat demography data, [Atlas of demography](#),.

consequence, among other reasons, of barriers such as isolation and a limited range of education and employment opportunities; and whereas these demographic trends may hinder the socio-economic development of some rural areas;

- F. whereas women farmers continue to face inequalities, particularly in access to land, training and financing; whereas statistics show that women entrepreneurs face more difficulties than men in raising finance and capital; whereas 30 % of entrepreneurs are women in the EU, but they only receive 2 % of the non-bank financing available; whereas this figure seems to have dropped to 1 % during the pandemic¹⁰; whereas data show that women entrepreneurs generate more revenue despite receiving lower financial backing¹¹; whereas targeted practical support, for example microloans, mentoring and administrative simplification, can be effective tools to promote entrepreneurship;
- G. whereas women in border, mountainous, outermost and remote regions face intensified challenges and barriers on account of isolation, ageing populations and limited services; whereas the employment rate for women is almost consistently lower in outermost regions than the EU average, with the highest difference reaching 38.5 percentage points in 2020; whereas youth unemployment is also extremely high in some outermost regions¹²;
- H. whereas women living in island areas and outermost regions face additional difficulties and specific obstacles resulting from geographical isolation, low population density, demographic ageing, and the scarcity of essential public and private services, factors which exacerbate socio-economic disparities and limit access to employment, training, and entrepreneurship opportunities; whereas support for women's participation in digital and innovative entrepreneurship strengthens economic development and competitiveness; whereas women in rural areas of the eastern border regions are further confronted with the consequences of the war in Ukraine, including security threats, supply chain disruptions and hybrid risks, which hinder entrepreneurship and access to services and finance; whereas addressing these combined challenges requires targeted and differentiated European public policies, in accordance with Article 349 TFEU, as well as dedicated measures reflecting the

¹⁰ European Commission and EIB, [Funding women entrepreneurs. How to empower growth](#), June 2020,

¹¹ Women in VC, Experior Venture Fund and Unconventional Ventures, *Funding in the CEE Region – Through the Lens of Gender Diversity and Positive Impact*, 2021, <https://ceereport2021experiorvc.unconventional.vc/>.

¹² Commission staff working document entitled '[Outermost regions at a glance – assets, challenges and opportunities](#)' (SWD(2022)0133).

specific vulnerabilities of border regions, in order to ensure the full economic, social and political inclusion of women in these territories;

- I. whereas women living in Europe's mountainous regions often face specific challenges that limit their entrepreneurial potential, including challenging transport connections and limited access to digital infrastructure, childcare services, training opportunities and financial support; whereas women in Europe's mountainous regions should be empowered not only as workers or entrepreneurs but also as co-owners and decision-makers in local economic ventures; whereas the creation of special purpose vehicles and cooperative ownership structures can enable women to jointly own, manage and benefit from community-based enterprises; whereas such models, as demonstrated by numerous private sector initiatives, promote inclusive governance, strengthen economic independence and help retain value within mountain areas, thereby fostering collective entrepreneurship, shared responsibility and sustainable regional development for women and girls;
- J. whereas women make up 52 % of the European population and represent 34.4 % of the self-employed in the EU, and only 30 % of start-ups are founded by women¹³, showing both their growing participation and the untapped potential for female entrepreneurship; whereas women in business not only generate economic growth and employment but also drive more sustainable and inclusive business models, scoring higher on environmental, social and corporate governance indicators and being more likely to offer training opportunities to their workforce (EIB, 2021); whereas diverse decision-making groups deliver better, more inclusive and more sustainable outcomes;
- K. whereas women in rural areas are often disproportionately vulnerable to sexual violence during times of war, invasion and conflict due to isolation, limited access to protective services and weaker security infrastructure;
- L. whereas women in rural areas are often under-represented in decision-making processes and governance bodies, such as agricultural cooperatives, social partners and municipal governments¹⁴; whereas women in leadership and decision-making positions serve as crucial role models for the next generation;
- M. whereas access to reliable, comparable, gender- and territory-disaggregated data is an essential condition for accurately understanding the situation of women in rural areas and accordingly,

¹³ Global Entrepreneurship Monitor, special report, [Women's Entrepreneurship 2020/21: Thriving Through Crisis](#), London, 2021.

¹⁴ Institute for European Environmental Policy, [What is the link between gender equality and agriculture sustainability?](#), September 2021.

for designing, implementing and evaluating effective public policies that adequately address women's needs and help reduce inequalities as the full integration of women in agriculture and economic life contributes to achieving the EU's objectives regarding economic, social and territorial cohesion, gender equality and sustainable development;

- N. whereas so-called traditional gender roles and stereotypes still influence the division of labour at home and in society; whereas the reconciliation of professional life, particularly entrepreneurship, with family life remains difficult and continues to represent a significant challenge, particularly for women; whereas this difficulty is especially acute in rural, mountainous and island areas, and outermost regions, where the availability of public services, notably education, healthcare, mobility and childcare, are limited; whereas this lack of infrastructure and support mechanisms undermines equal opportunities, creates obstacles for women to fully develop their business potential, restricts women's full participation in the labour market, and exacerbates disparities between urban and rural areas; whereas women developing small businesses in rural areas help reduce village depopulation; whereas women's entrepreneurship should be promoted through intersectional and holistic measures, ensuring their equal participation in the labour market, closing gender pay gaps and tackling gender-based discrimination in labour markets and, more broadly, eradicating gender stereotypes, harassment and discrimination in the world of work and beyond; whereas gaps in access to social protection for self-employed women and assisting spouses, including pensions, sickness and family leave, exacerbate gender pay and pension gaps and discourage entrepreneurship; whereas unpaid care and domestic work are mostly carried out by women, impacting their employment and career progression and contributing to the gender pay and pension gap; whereas the unequal distribution and undervaluation of care and household work, alongside discrimination and gender stereotypes, continue to constrain women's time and mobility and access to social rights and opportunities in rural and remote areas, leading to lost entrepreneurial potential and poorer work-life balance;
- O. whereas all forms of gender-based violence, including domestic and sexual violence, psychological, economic and online abuse and stalking constitute a violation of human rights, including the right to bodily autonomy and integrity, and the right to live free from discrimination; whereas women and girls living in rural and remote areas face additional barriers in accessing justice, protection, support services and sexual and reproductive healthcare when experiencing gender-based violence, due to factors such as geographical isolation, lack of infrastructure, limited access to specialised services, digital divide and social stigma; whereas these barriers often lead to underreporting, increased vulnerability, lack of

access to support services and impunity for perpetrators; whereas they hinder the full participation of women in the social, economic and political life of rural areas owing to a lack of protection networks and specialised services, combined with the persistent weight of traditional gender roles, and increase women's vulnerability, perpetuate situations of exclusion, and limit their ability to exercise fundamental rights; whereas the removal of these barriers is an essential condition for the promotion of gender equality, the strengthening of social cohesion and the harmonious development of rural areas; whereas young women in rural areas face higher rates of violence than their urban counterparts and, according to a study by the World Health Organization, one in three women worldwide has experienced physical or sexual violence, with a disproportionately high burden on young women in rural settings;

- P. whereas significant disparities between men and women in terms of employment in rural areas persist, amounting to around 13 % (compared with 10 % in urban areas); whereas in certain Member States these disparities exceed 20 percentage points; whereas such disparities have remained relatively stable at EU level since 2012; whereas in more than half of the Member States gender inequalities are more pronounced in rural areas than in cities; whereas many women also find themselves in situations of greater vulnerability due to precarious employment conditions, such as seasonal work, or in other cases, through performing 'invisible', unpaid roles on family farms as assisting spouses, which often results in a lack of access to social protection or maternity benefits; whereas women in rural and disadvantaged regions are more likely to engage in entrepreneurship and self-employment than those in urban and economically prosperous regions; whereas self-employment can be a form of work that helps to create jobs and reduce unemployment for women, but requires the development of adequate social protections; whereas in rural areas, the share of women in self-employment is 38 %; whereas women are over-represented in precarious types of self-employment; whereas women are at the same time a key driving force for economic prosperity and social inclusion in rural areas, notably through entrepreneurship, the promotion of which is a strategic priority for the sustainable development of the EU;
- Q. whereas entrepreneurship requires knowledge and skills; whereas rural women face more obstacles in accessing education than men; whereas in the EU, the proportion of rural inhabitants with at least basic digital skills in 2019 was 14 % lower than that of urban residents (48 % vs 62 %); whereas digital inclusion is an essential requirement to ensure that women and girls have access to quality education and training, and the labour market, for example through the diversification of agricultural activities, remote work, innovation and employment opportunities, whether on-site or remote, and benefit from technological and business innovation dynamics; whereas the promotion of women's full access to all levels of

education, including but not limited to science, technology, engineering, art and mathematics (STEAM) and financial education is crucial, taking into account that, as evidenced in the report by Mario Draghi on the Future of European Competitiveness, published in September 2024, there are twice as many male as female science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) graduates, disparities that are further exacerbated in occupational choices after schooling, where there are almost four times as many men as women working in information and communication technology (ICT) occupations, and thus education can play a key role in closing gender gaps, diversifying professional skills and strengthening the economic and social competitiveness of rural areas; whereas women's digital integration contributes to their economic autonomy, territorial cohesion and the modernisation of the agricultural sector and the business fabric;

- R. whereas education is a key tool to foster women's economic independence, close gender pay gaps and tackle gender-based discrimination in labour markets; whereas there is an urgent need for the provision of comprehensive and age-appropriate education regarding sexuality and relationships across the EU, as an essential means to challenge gender stereotypes and promote equality from an early age; whereas, although women are on average more educated than men, they remain under-represented in STEAM professions and often leave these sectors due to persistent discrimination and stereotyping; whereas there is a need for increased EU investment in education and upskilling and reskilling programmes to create a level playing field in STEAM fields and to ensure that emerging sectors such as artificial intelligence (AI) do not reproduce existing gender biases; whereas mentoring programmes, women-led business hubs and support for non-governmental organisations working to empower women in STEAM fields are important; whereas gender mainstreaming is important across all policies and aspects of the EU budget, including adequate funding for EU-level awareness-raising campaigns about available programmes and funding opportunities;
- S. whereas the number of women in farming has been slowly increasing in recent years; whereas only 30 % of farms across the EU are managed by women and whereas these farms tend to be smaller than those managed by men and have lower incomes and less access to financial support; whereas this number hides significant differences in the representation of women in farming among Member States; whereas women often share farm management responsibilities with their partners without benefiting from the status or social protections associated with that work;
- T. whereas women, at least at the level of farm leadership or management, receive proportionately less support from either pillar of the common agricultural policy (CAP) than men; whereas this is due to women tending to manage smaller farm businesses, owning

less land and having less access to formal and specialised education¹⁵; whereas women meet more obstacles than men in accessing land, as the 'from father to son' model remains widespread in rural areas; whereas the smaller size of women's farms on average, as well as the generally more environmentally focused and diversified models of production they engage in, also renders their access to bank loans more difficult¹⁶; whereas these characteristics, however, make their farms more resilient to climatic and market variations, and easier to transmit;

- U. whereas women with disabilities can find it more difficult to start their own businesses; whereas entrepreneurship among older women is not being promoted, although they should be seen as having valuable and unused potential for economic growth, especially in rural areas where the population is ageing more quickly than in urban areas; whereas the promotion of entrepreneurship among migrant women can offer great opportunities for their integration in the labour market and foster their economic independence and empowerment;
- V. whereas agriculture plays a crucial role in rural areas in terms of conserving natural resources, ensuring food security, promoting economic and employment development, and supporting communities; whereas the active involvement of women throughout the food value chain – from production to processing, distribution and innovation – is a key factor in the competitiveness, quality and sustainability of the sector;
- W. whereas the number of women in farm ownership roles is increasing across the EU, but they still remain a minority; whereas in 2020, only 31.6 % of farm owners in the EU were women¹⁷, managing on average only 12 % of utilised agricultural area; whereas farms managed by women tend to be smaller than those managed by men and have lower incomes and less access to financial support; whereas these statistics hide significant differences in the representation of women in farming across Member States;
- X. whereas most women working in the agriculture or agri-food sectors are employed through non-standard or part-time contracts; whereas farmers under the age of 40 manage only 12 % of all farms in the EU, and of these only 3 % are young women farmers;

¹⁵ Casares Guillen, B., 'Women in Rural Development: Integrating a gender dimension into policies for rural areas in Europe', European Evaluation Society, Rotterdam, 2021.

¹⁶ Camille Tourtelier, Monica Gorman, Saoirse Tracy, 'Influence of gender on the development of sustainable agriculture in France', Journal of Rural Studies, 2023.

¹⁷ Eurostat, '[Farmers and the agricultural labour force – statistics](#)',.

- Y. whereas in rural areas, where local traditions and close-knit communities are often the cornerstone of society, equipping young people – especially girls – with practical, future-oriented skills will help ensure that they can thrive and carry forward the strength of their heritage into the digital age; whereas the legal recognition of and social security support for women in farming, traditional crafts and creative sectors contribute to local economic resilience and development, cultural preservation and generational renewal; whereas women in rural areas often receive lower pay than men, and ensuring equal pay for equal work is essential to make entrepreneurship more attractive and to enable both business creation and sustainable living in rural areas;
- Z. whereas from artisanal preserves to farm-fresh catering and innovative food products, rural women are often at the forefront of blending local heritage with entrepreneurship, thereby creating strong and sustainable enterprises that nourish their communities and preserve local food culture for future generations;
- AA. whereas the LEADER programme, by engaging local stakeholders in the design and delivery of strategies, decision-making and resource allocation for the development of their rural areas, has been a particularly efficient tool to support rural women leaders and entrepreneurs;
- AB. whereas support for women’s participation in digital and innovative entrepreneurship strengthens economic development and competitiveness, particularly in island areas and outermost regions, by helping to overcome barriers created by geographical isolation;
- AC. whereas empowering women in European agriculture and the rural economy is not only essential for achieving gender equality, but also for fostering sustainable rural development, in line with UN Sustainable Development Goal 5 on gender equality;
- AD. whereas rural women play a vital role in preserving and enriching classical and traditional clothing;
- AE. whereas women in the EU currently receive only 1-2 % of venture capital funding, highlighting the need to strengthen gender-responsive financing instruments and to ensure equal access to investment opportunities;
- AF. whereas gender-disaggregated data and stakeholder consultation are essential for developing rural entrepreneurship policies that effectively address the specific needs of women; whereas to address the specific challenges faced by women in agriculture, the Commission and the Member States must take better account of the impact of agricultural policies on women;

Empowerment of women entrepreneurs

1. Stresses that women entrepreneurs, including those from remote and outermost regions, are key drivers of innovation, cohesion and competitiveness in rural, island and outermost regions; calls for improved access to all funding, particularly innovation funding, tailored support programmes for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), and opportunities within the green and digital economies, ensuring that women entrepreneurs can participate fully in emerging markets; calls for the scaling up of access to private investment, and the promotion of free-market opportunities; stresses that women entrepreneurs must fully benefit from the EU's 'Competitiveness Compass' strategic roadmap, which aims to restore Europe's dynamism and turbocharge its economic growth by creating a supportive environment for young innovative start-ups, promoting industrial leadership in high-growth sectors based on breakthrough technologies, and encouraging the diffusion of technologies within established companies and SMEs; urges, to that end, a greater EU policy focus on adopting a cross-cutting and integrated approach to the reality and challenges of the outermost regions in all European public policies, where appropriate; insists that every person in Europe should have the right and opportunity to build a fulfilling life in their home region – namely the right to stay;
2. Stresses that gender equality is fundamental to achieving the EU's economic competitiveness and prosperity agenda, as the full and equal participation of women in the labour market, entrepreneurship market and innovation system enhances productivity and fosters inclusive and sustainable growth, which overall strengthens the EU's global competitiveness; underlines that the lack of accessible and affordable childcare services remains one of the main barriers to women's full participation in entrepreneurship and employment in rural, remote and island areas; calls on the Member States to prioritise investment in early childhood education and care in programmes funded by the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF); urges the Commission and the Member States to strengthen support mechanisms for women's entrepreneurship in rural areas, in particular by facilitating access to credit, innovation and appropriate financial instruments, thereby promoting women's economic autonomy and the diversification of agricultural activities;
3. Calls for the development of programmes that ensure women have access to education in fields such as digitalisation, finance and business administration, including through market-driven initiatives and private sector partnerships; calls also for the promotion of entrepreneurship and innovation through structured mentorship networks and peer-learning platforms, particularly in areas such as digitalisation, finance and administration; further emphasises the importance of awareness-raising initiatives to promote the availability and benefits of these networks and platforms among female farmers, thereby fostering greater participation and

empowerment of women agricultural workers; highlights the potential value of results-oriented EU support to help establish locally driven initiatives such as, but not limited to, business networks that strengthen women's entrepreneurship and community engagement in rural areas, while encouraging private sector cooperation for all rural citizens, including women; notes that running a business can create jobs and income and thus added value for business and society as a whole; notes the success of projects that promote mentorship and peer learning among women entrepreneurs; calls on the Commission to build on and learn from such successful initiatives when designing and expanding structured mentorship and peer-learning programmes across the EU, in order to ensure that women entrepreneurs can fully benefit from knowledge sharing and support structures; underlines the importance of acting from an early stage of education to tackle gender stereotypes that still limit women's access to certain economic sectors and leadership positions, in order to ensure equal opportunities and strengthen women's contribution to the economic and social dynamism of rural and island areas and mountainous and outermost regions;

4. Stresses the importance of equal support for women's entrepreneurship with dedicated support and resources, whether it be in STEAM, ICT, the social economy, transport services, crafts and care-related enterprises and others; emphasises the importance of supporting young women in rural areas who are entering traditionally male-dominated vocational fields, recognising their growing success and the increasing openness of many enterprises to talent and innovation from women, while continuing to promote inclusive and supportive workplace cultures; calls on the Commission and the Member States to promote mentoring and training programmes for female entrepreneurs, with a particular focus on mothers returning to the labour market after maternity or parental leave and parents of young children in rural areas, so as to make participation in these programmes possible while fulfilling care responsibilities and in order to reduce the disproportionate burdens faced by women;
5. Encourages the Commission and the Member States to develop programmes supporting women-led enterprises, including entrepreneurship and management training, local business networks, and sectoral knowledge-sharing in key industries, paying particular attention to rural and island areas and outermost regions; calls for enhanced training on EU single market rules, the use of e-commerce online platforms, and participation in international trade fairs; stresses that improving women entrepreneurs' access to export markets will increase the competitiveness, resilience and added value of rural economies; notes that by expanding access to affordable internet services, providing tailored training programmes that build on women's strengths, and fostering policies that promote equal participation, rural women are increasingly poised to

overcome barriers and take on active, leading roles in the digital economy;

6. Encourages the creation of networks of women's cooperatives and associations in the agri-food sector, promoting sustainable, circular and local value-added business models, with a particular focus on organic farming, artisanal processing and direct sales;
7. Welcomes the Commission's commitment to establishing a 'women in farming' platform, as a forum for discussion and the exchange of good practice, to strengthen participation and to promote equal opportunities in the agri-food sector; calls on the Commission to submit an annual report to Parliament on the activities and outcomes of the platform; calls, furthermore, on the Commission to ensure that the work of this platform is duly taken into account in the preparation and development of future policy initiatives in the fields of agriculture and rural development;
8. Urges the Member States to promote and highlight success stories featuring female entrepreneurs in rural and outermost regions through awareness campaigns, including in traditional media and social media, in order to boost visibility, confidence and community engagement; notes with this context in mind the importance of developing financial literacy, particularly targeting women, as a gender gap exists in financial knowledge – on average, in the EU, men scored 18 percentage points higher than women in a financial knowledge survey conducted by the European Commission¹⁸; calls for measures aimed at engaging women in their communities to use local and bottom-up approaches, as well as promoting, among other initiatives, networks to promote women's involvement; calls for targeted campaigns that portray modern images of women in agriculture in order to attract young women to entrepreneurial activities in the agricultural sector;
9. Calls on the Commission, the Member States and the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), in cooperation with social partners, to continue to analyse key barriers to women's employment and entrepreneurship, including in outermost, island and remote regions, and to propose inspiring actions to overcome these obstacles to growth and prosperity; calls on the Commission and the Member States to support women-led enterprises, by providing legal and technical advice, through exchange of best practices, by helping women entrepreneurs overcome isolation in rural areas and strengthening their competitiveness and by increasing the share of women entrepreneurs and self-employed women in rural areas within the EU;

¹⁸ European Commission, '[Monitoring the level of financial literacy in the EU](#)', Flash Eurobarometer 525, 2023.

10. Calls on the Member States to build on EIGE's analyses and findings on women's entrepreneurship and self-employment across all Member States, ensuring good quality, comparable data collection and coherent metrics for access to finance, business survival rates, growth, sectoral representation and innovation, to publish comparative annual scorecards at EU and national level to monitor progress, identify lagging regions (including remote, island, outermost and rural areas) and promote transparency, to identify and scale up good practices and business success stories documented by EIGE – such as mentoring networks, inclusive investment programmes, women's business hubs, and peer-to-peer networks – and disseminate them in rural contexts, to propose targeted financial instruments, guarantee schemes and capacity-building initiatives based on EIGE-identified barriers (e.g. network deficits, bias in funding decisions, lack of role models) to close the implementation gap, and to provide technical support and capacity-building to national and regional authorities to integrate gender mainstreaming into entrepreneurship programmes, ensuring alignment with EIGE methodology, best practices and the Gender Equality Index framework; calls on the Commission and the Member States to collect gender-disaggregated data in order to ensure the comprehensive overview of the socio-economic position of rural women and to take the gender dimension into account when designing, implementing and evaluating policies and programmes in the field of rural development; highlights the importance of impact assessments regarding the design of such proposals in helping to achieve gender mainstreaming goals in rural areas; urges the inclusion of gender-disaggregated data in EU programme evaluations in order to ensure that public investment effectively supports women's entrepreneurship and contributes to closing the gender gap in access to finance and economic opportunities;
11. Supports the Commission's strategy for the savings and investments union and the creation and expansion of inclusive financial instruments, including a labelled EU investment savings account to increase and facilitate access to finance for women-led EU companies, and notes that the strategy should include gender mainstreaming; to that end, welcomes the launch of 'Finance Europe', a label for EU long-term investment and savings products investing 70 % of their assets in European companies;
12. Calls on the Commission to introduce a 'female founders fund', to provide targeted financial support and investment opportunities for female-led businesses; underlines that such a fund would expand the EIF's capacity to support private equity and venture capital funds while also contributing to closing the gender funding gap, and to achieving competitiveness across the EU; calls for measures, in line

with the Women on Boards Directive¹⁹, to address gender bias in access to finance, including a European network of investors aware of the important need for gender balance, and dedicated instruments and targets (e.g. microfinance, guarantees and equity) tailored to women-led rural SMEs;

13. Highlights how rural women entrepreneurs have the power to transform local ideas into cross-border success stories within the EU; welcomes the advancement of modern digital tools and the freedom of movement and trade within the EU, which facilitate women-led rural businesses, allowing them to connect with new markets, collaborate across borders, and share their authentic, locally made products and services with customers throughout Europe; notes that while some local roots have untapped continental reach, some Member States lack the geographical ability to participate in this cross-border economic activity;
14. Recognises the growing momentum and strong commitment towards making investments in digital infrastructure, skills development and inclusive digital policy frameworks – thereby creating exciting opportunities to empower rural women and ensure they fully benefit from the digital transition; highlights the importance of and calls for targeted investments in digital infrastructure, upskilling and reskilling opportunities, skills development and inclusive digital policy frameworks that ensure rural women and especially women from island areas and outermost regions can take part fully in the digital transition; calls on the Commission to reduce administrative burden; stresses that gender equality is essential for a successful digital transition, as the full participation of women in digital sectors enhances innovation and economic resilience; calls on the Commission to ensure that gender equality is integrated into the objectives of all digital policies and skills programmes, to ensure that women benefit equally from opportunities in the evolving digital economy;
15. Calls on the Member States to ensure that national education systems, including vocational and tertiary education and systems serving rural and remote areas, provide robust access to digital skills and STEM education, in ways that empower both girls and boys to pursue their full potential; stresses the need to promote entrepreneurial career choices – in a non-stereotypical way – and to include gender equality and finance education into school curricula; underlines the importance of mentorship programmes, female role models, and partnerships between schools, universities, businesses, and civil society organisations to inspire girls to pursue STEM

¹⁹ 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 measures (OJ L 315, 7.12.2022, p. 44, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/dir/2022/2381/oj>).

careers; calls for the inclusion of gender equality objectives in the Digital Education Action Plan and for targeted EU and national funding to support women and girls in emerging digital fields such as AI, data science and clean technologies;

16. Calls for targeted measures to improve women's access to upskilling and reskilling opportunities, as well as to information on entrepreneurship training, EU-funded programmes and business financing schemes in rural and island areas and outermost regions;
17. Calls for programmes promoting innovation in rural areas to explicitly include measures aimed at reaching women as a target group, for example through low-threshold information services, women-specific innovation workshops and active outreach to female farm managers;
18. Encourages Member States to recognise and support the traditional skills of rural women, such as clothing production and basket weaving, as vital cultural assets that preserve heritage and create economic opportunities, particularly given women's key roles in agritourism, craft industries, artisan food production, direct marketing and regional value chains; calls for investment in vocational training programmes tailored for rural women and girls, enabling them to generate sustainable income and maintain family livelihoods; underscores, in addition, how women can help bridge the digital divide and unlock their immense potential as innovators, entrepreneurs, and community leaders, paving the way for more inclusive, vibrant and resilient societies;
19. Underlines that when venture capital backs a woman-led rural business with the aim of ensuring the full inclusion and empowerment of women in all their diversity, it sends a strong signal of trust, boosting the entrepreneur's confidence and giving her greater visibility in the business ecosystem; also notes the potential of business angels who can step in even earlier, offering seed funding to help entrepreneurs get off the ground; notes how business angels are willing to take a chance on new or unproven ideas, especially when they see potential in the founder's vision and dedication; underlines how this kind of support is essential in rural areas, where businesses may not fit traditional funding criteria; recalls how large-scale venture capital is urban-focused, with venture capitalists often city-based, while business angels are often more engaged locally, with a personal interest in supporting rural communities and empowering women as a force for local economic renewal;
20. Calls for targeted measures to improve women's access to land, finance, education and training, including flexible options, especially for aspiring female farmers and business owners; underlines the need to tackle structural and institutional barriers, including

difficulties in obtaining legal status for farm businesses, tax and social welfare rules that disadvantage women in farming couples, and administrative obstacles in farm ownership that disadvantage women; emphasises that women who wish to pursue entrepreneurial activity should be encouraged to take this step, since the running of a business can create jobs and incomes and thus added value for society; calls on agricultural cooperatives and producer organisations funded under the CAP to successively introduce gender representation benchmarks in their governing bodies, ensuring equal access for women to decision-making structures; stresses that such participation will enhance the competitiveness of rural enterprises by harnessing women's innovative potential and management skills;

21. Highlights that women in a precarious situation, such as migrant workers, notably migrant farm workers, women with disabilities, women with a long history of unemployment and older women, should be specifically targeted by programmes supporting the access of women to entrepreneurship and self-employment in rural areas;
22. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to promote women's entrepreneurship, including specific networks for business succession and mentorship, and to design funding programmes or support measures, including one-stop guidance, in such a way that smaller businesses and stakeholders are eligible to access them, and that the administrative burden is kept proportionate to the business size, given that women's enterprises and farms are on average smaller than men's; calls on the Commission and the Member States to ensure that individuals or smaller organisations are also able to obtain an overview of funding opportunities and apply for them, and are given assistance in doing so; calls on the Commission to propose specific measures to support young female farmers and agri-food entrepreneurs, including financial incentives, and initiatives to address barriers to land access and farm succession; highlights that generational renewal is key to maintaining and developing agricultural activity, which ensures both food security and vibrant rural communities; calls on the Commission, in particular, to propose specific measures aimed at young female farmers under the CAP;
23. Encourages the Member States and regional and local authorities to make use of EU structural and investment funds to target and promote women entrepreneurs and self-employed women; stresses the need for awareness-raising and information campaigns on current and future EU funding opportunities for women entrepreneurs in rural areas;
24. Calls for the establishment of a 'fast track' for access to finance and public procurement for micro and small enterprises led by women in rural areas; stresses that this mechanism should include a reduction of administrative burdens and simplification of procedures, as well as

the introduction of start-up advances enabling the launch of business activities; highlights the important role of microcredits in improving women's financial inclusion by making the most of market and social opportunities for inclusion in the financial markets; welcomes public and private funds that implement gender equality, diversity and inclusion policies; applauds examples where private funds have committed to measuring and tracking gender representation and to reporting annually and in public on their findings;

25. Calls on the Commission to earmark adequate funding within relevant programmes to support women-led enterprises in rural and remote areas, particularly in innovative sectors and the tourism sector, through appropriate measures within relevant programmes where possible; calls on the Commission and the Member States to address the issue of disproportionate under-representation of persons with disabilities, especially women, in the labour market by introducing specific measures, including adequate incentives and support measures for employers and companies that recruit persons with disabilities, taking into account the capacity of micro and small companies; stresses the need to promote the employment of women with disabilities also within SMEs and through self-employment, by means of targeted incentives, as well as workplace targets for persons with disabilities and training paths tailored to the needs of persons with disabilities;
26. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to ensure that women's entrepreneurship in rural and island areas and outermost regions is adequately supported under the post-2027 multiannual financial framework (MFF), including funding through relevant programmes such as the CAP, including POSEI, Horizon Europe, the LEADER programme and Digital Europe; underlines the importance of facilitating access to EU funding for women-led rural enterprises, cooperatives and community-based projects; calls, furthermore, for gender mainstreaming across all policy areas and budgets, as this would enable EU policies to truly serve all women, especially women entrepreneurs; reiterates the need for a comprehensive EU strategy for women's entrepreneurship in rural and island areas and outermost regions and calls for dedicated financial resources and funding mechanisms to be allocated expressly to this strategy; calls, additionally, on the Commission to maintain or increase the ring-fencing of the budget dedicated to the LEADER programme; calls on the Commission and the Member States to reinforce the LEADER programme by reducing the administrative burden on local authorities and simplifying access, promoting the local ownership of community-led development projects and encouraging women's participation in Local Action Groups;
27. Regrets the insufficient access to childcare and care services for women entrepreneurs in rural areas; encourages investment in care infrastructure and the promotion of family-friendly policies for

families in all their diversity to support work-life balance for women entrepreneurs; encourages the Member States and the regions to develop specific policies for the outermost regions, in accordance with Article 349 TFEU, taking into account isolation, population ageing and the scarcity of services, and ensuring measures that are adapted to the reality of women in these territories;

28. Notes the importance of simplification for competitiveness; calls on the Commission and the Member States to simplify administrative and reporting requirements, including the use of one-stop guidance, so that small women-led businesses, cooperatives and community initiatives can access funding without a disproportionate burden, and to ensure targeted access to financial support through EU funding programmes to promote women's entrepreneurship, including specific networks for business succession and mentorship;

Gender mainstreaming

29. Calls on the Member States to ensure comprehensive, age-appropriate education, the inclusion of digital skills and subjects, including those serving rural and remote areas, and to provide robust access to digital skills and STEAM education, in a gender sensitive way that combats stereotypes and empowers girls to pursue their full potential; calls on the Commission to ensure comprehensive and age-appropriate education for boys and girls regarding sexuality and relationships that challenges gender stereotypes and teaches about consent and rights, ensuring inclusive education based on mutual respect and non-discrimination, while simultaneously fostering the full empowerment of young women to participate on equal terms in society and the labour market, as economic empowerment is key to fostering a more competitive and resilient economy;
30. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to ensure the systematic collection, analysis and dissemination of reliable, up-to-date, and disaggregated statistical data by gender, age, territory and sector, as a basis for evidence-based public policies, in close cooperation with Eurostat, national statistical institutes and regional observatories; acknowledges the importance of impact assessments of the design of such proposals in helping to achieve gender mainstreaming goals in rural areas;
31. Highlights the transformative potential of AI, online platforms and remote work tools in facilitating women's economic participation in rural settings;
32. Urges the Member States to provide gender-sensitive training, emergency services and infrastructure to mitigate the impact of crises on rural, remote and outermost communities;

33. Calls on the Commission to ensure that in its response to crises menstrual hygiene kits are included as a standard element in all of its emergency responses;
34. Recalls that, in its special report No 10/2021 on gender mainstreaming in the EU budget, the European Court of Auditors found that the Commission had not adequately implemented gender mainstreaming and had made insufficient use of sex-disaggregated data and indicators; highlights, in particular, that the European Court of Auditors regretted that the CAP direct payments system left 'no scope for positive action regarding women' and noted that there was 'a clear need for a gender analysis of income support paid to farmers through direct payments, including income distribution and its relation with land ownership, eligible land, and recipients of payments'; notes that, as women's farms are on average smaller than men's, a surface-based direct payment system necessarily disadvantages women farmers; is deeply concerned that next to no improvements have been made in this regard, neither in the current CAP, nor in the draft published on 16 July 2025;
35. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to promote awareness campaigns and capacity-building programmes on the social and labour rights of women, particularly in rural and remote areas, including rights to social protection, maternity, health and workplace safety, with a view to strengthening their full and informed participation in economic and social life;

Traditional culture and craft

36. Applauds communities that preserve local heritage and tradition, and that promote and embrace initiatives enhancing women-led local farming, as well as the preservation and promotion of traditional craftworks, often developed and maintained by local women's associations, including rural women's organisations, cultural groups, monuments and museums; recognises that these activities make an essential contribution to economic diversification, the preservation of cultural and intangible heritage, the strengthening of sustainable tourism, and foster cultural recognition within the local community, which is an often unseen and undervalued dimension of rural economies; stresses, further, that the active involvement of women in these practices reinforces social cohesion, territorial identity and the attractiveness of rural areas;
37. Underlines the role of organised women farmers' and rural women's associations as the backbone of entrepreneurial, social and cultural development in rural areas; calls for these organisations to be structurally strengthened and involved in the implementation of gender equality measures, in particular in the delivery of training and mentoring programmes, healthcare and start-up advice;

38. Highlights the huge potential of traditional crafts and local circular economies, especially for women in precarious circumstances including elderly women, women with disabilities, migrant women and women living in poverty; calls on the Commission and the Member States to support intergenerational and multicultural entrepreneurship and craft-based value chains through training, funding and visibility actions;
39. Emphasises that many women-led businesses in rural areas are small-scale and often based on multiple activities and on the multifunctionality of agriculture, e.g. combining agriculture with tourism, crafts or social services; calls for support programmes that explicitly take these combinations into account;
40. Underlines how women, through their involvement in the crafting of traditional garments, embroidery, weaving, and their knowledge of local materials and patterns passed down through generations, serve to keep cultural heritage alive while adding their own creativity and innovation; recognises that women's contribution not only sustains techniques but also inspires new generations to value authenticity, quality and identity in fashion for women in all their diversity;
41. Encourages the promotion of lifelong learning programmes targeting women in rural areas and ensuring continuous opportunities to update knowledge and acquire new skills; stresses the importance of formally recognising prior learning in order to value experience gained outside of formal educational contexts and to facilitate integration or reintegration into the labour market; recommends, also, the implementation of specific digital inclusion initiatives for elderly women in rural and remote areas and outermost regions, aiming to reduce the generational and territorial digital divide, while strengthening their autonomy, social participation and full inclusion in the digital transition;
42. Notes that grassroots efforts not only sustain time-honoured agricultural methods and artisanal crafts but also serve as vibrant expressions of cultural heritage, often paying homage to women and girls' accomplishments for community and humanity at large;
43. Stresses the importance of promoting lifelong learning opportunities in rural areas, in order to promote a positive standard of mental health among elderly rural women;
44. Calls for more visible examples that showcase the talents and dedication of women artisans and farmers, as these communities create unique attractions that draw tourists, thereby generating sustainable economic opportunities and tangible examples of rural, cultural legacies;
45. Calls for greater support in maintaining centuries-old handicraft traditions, such as weaving, embroidery, pottery, artisanal food

production and on-farm food processing, as well as local value chains and agritourism, as has been fostered by numerous, rural women-led associations; recognises the important role of rural women's organisations in preserving cultural heritage and fostering social cohesion, noting the success of Irish examples such as the Irish Countrywomen's Association and local women's sheds in promoting skills, community engagement and economic opportunities for rural women; calls on the Commission to support and recognise such initiatives across the EU as a means to strengthen rural economies, maintain traditional crafts and empower rural women;

46. Supports the creation of a specific thematic sub-programme for women in rural areas within the framework of the CAP Strategic Plans, financed by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development, which promote female employment and entrepreneurship through opportunities related to agritourism, the development of 'digital villages', and the promotion of sustainable agriculture, by improving women farmers' access to land, credit, financial instruments, skills development, and professional performance through training programmes and advisory services, as well as strengthening women's participation in Local Action Groups and territorial partnerships developed under the LEADER programme;
47. Calls for the integration of rural women's textile and craft industries into Member State and regional economic development plans, emphasising the role of private sector partnerships to expand market access;
48. Calls on the Commission to raise awareness in island and remote areas and outermost regions about the financial and other instruments available at EU level that promote entrepreneurship, encouraging women in these areas to engage in entrepreneurial projects and fostering self-employment opportunities;
49. Encourages the promotion of voluntary labelling for small-scale producers in peripheral island regions to highlight products that have been largely produced, processed or marketed by women; proposes developing these labels, particularly in the context of community processing initiatives, to strengthen women's businesses in local value creation and marketing; recommends linking such labels to existing regional brands and initiatives to facilitate implementation and acceptance;

Agriculture, fishing and the agri-food supply chain

50. Celebrates the resilience of women in farming and fisheries and the associated contribution they make to feeding our society, growing local economies and building strong communities throughout the EU and in particular in rural and island areas and outermost regions;

51. Stresses the need to consistently promote the visibility, recognition and appreciation of women's contribution to agriculture and rural development, including on family-run farms; calls on the Member States to remove practical barriers to women's land ownership and succession in order to guarantee gender-equal access to land, credit, CAP funds, cohesion policy funds, advisory services, innovation support and succession rights; stresses that the CAP must be more closely aligned with the principles of gender mainstreaming and gender equality; underlines the importance of ensuring that the CAP support measures offer targeted, gender-responsive support for women farmers, including farm advisory services and guidance on occupational health and safety, maternity and carers' leave, mental health and access to healthcare services; invites representative organisations to promote and highlight the involvement of female representatives and spokespersons who accurately reflect the presence of women in agriculture and rural areas; calls for the farm work done by women, especially work done to assist spouses and partners, to be taken into account to ensure greater appreciation of women's work and rights; stresses that even though many women work for years, this valuable experience does not culminate in leadership or key decision-making roles;
52. Stresses that management positions on farms continue to be predominantly held by men, highlighting the marked under-representation of women in leadership roles within the agricultural sector; considers that this situation underscores the urgent need for public policies and specific instruments that promote women's access to managerial and decision-making positions, ensuring equal opportunities, the recognition of women's skills and encouragement of generational renewal; stresses that women in rural areas, including women with disabilities, play a key role in sustaining local communities through both economic and social activities, yet they remain under-represented in decision-making structures; recommends that agricultural and rural development support programmes include clear targets for the balanced participation of men and women in management roles on farms and within primary sector organisations;
53. Points out that many spouses working on farms are not adequately protected in the event of divorce, separation or the death of their spouse; calls on the Commission and the Member States to work with agricultural interest groups to develop models that take greater account of social security, co-entrepreneurship and inheritance rights;
54. Calls on the Member States to collect gender-disaggregated data on land ownership, agricultural leadership and the informal contributions of women, so as to empower women and work towards informed policy decisions, which reflect women's strength and talent; welcomes the Commission's plan to launch an EU Observatory

on Farmland; welcomes the proposal by Commissioner Hansen in his Vision for Farming and Food to create a European Land Observatory and highlights the need for this observatory to collect gender-disaggregated data; calls on the Commission to assess the policy gaps that act as barriers for women when it comes to acquiring or inheriting land and issue policy recommendations to counteract this; calls on the Commission to propose, in particular, specific measures aimed at young female farmers under the CAP;

55. Calls on the Commission to propose specific measures to support young female farmers and agri-food entrepreneurs, including financial incentives and initiatives to address structural and cultural barriers to land access and farm succession; highlights that generational renewal is key to maintaining and developing agricultural activity, which ensures both food security and vibrant rural communities; calls for an increase in the share of the CAP budget allocated to measures specifically supporting female farmers, with a view to promoting gender equality in rural areas, and enhancing the socio-economic inclusion of women in agriculture; calls on the Commission, in particular, to propose specific measures aimed at young female farmers under the CAP, as it is currently impossible to prioritise women within the European Agricultural Guarantee Fund's young farmer's scheme;
56. Advocates, in particular, the inclusion of specific measures for young women farmers in the future CAP budget, in particular in the outermost regions, that facilitate access to credit, land and innovation, in order to ensure generational renewal in areas particularly vulnerable to agricultural abandonment;
57. Calls for the Member States, as well as regional and local governments, to specifically inform, train and support women in rural areas to participate in places of decision and deliberation in their areas, such as municipal, school, cooperative or trade union boards;
58. Urges gender-responsive selection criteria and dedicated measures under both CAP pillars to support women farmers and women-led rural businesses, with ring-fenced outreach and advisory services;
59. Calls on the Commission, the Member States, and regional and local authorities to ensure greater social and economic inclusion in rural areas, ensuring equal opportunities and the active participation of women and the most vulnerable groups; stresses the importance of, and calls on the Member States to ensure that, EU funds are used to develop resilient, sustainable and well-connected territories capable of guaranteeing universal access to safe, accessible and high-quality public and private goods and services, including education, healthcare, mobility, digital infrastructure and social services, in order to strengthen local economic development and regional

cohesion, the attractiveness of rural areas, and their contribution to the well-being of society as a whole;

60. Stresses that good connectivity in rural areas is essential not only for economic development but also for safety and health, noting that reliable communication networks can intervene in situations of gender-based violence, ensure timely access to medical care in emergencies and enhance overall safety and well-being; calls on the Member States to prioritise investment in digital and transport connectivity as part of efforts to create inclusive and secure rural communities;
61. Reaffirms the need to strengthen the attractiveness, especially for women, of professions related to agriculture, livestock, fisheries, the maritime sector and the environment in the outermost regions, due to their organisation role at the economic, social and environmental levels, with sustained support aimed at younger generations;
62. Stresses that the design of most equipment, tools and materials used in agriculture is based on average male characteristics, which limits the possibility of women using them safely and efficiently; expresses regret that this lack of gender-sensitive design contributes to the excessive physical demands made on women and discourages them from farming; calls on the Commission and the Member States to support the development and distribution of ergonomic equipment and materials tailored to women's needs;
63. Stresses the need to make the farming profession more attractive, especially for younger generations and for women; considers it essential to remove the stigma of farming as a profession by recognising that modern agriculture also means entrepreneurship, innovation and providing added value; calls on the Commission and the Member States to include in their strategies and initiatives measures that promote agriculture as a viable career with good prospects, and one which combines traditional and entrepreneurial dimensions;

Equal access to infrastructure, services and social protection

64. Stresses that equitable access to infrastructure and high-quality services, such as high-speed internet, reliable and sustainable transport, water services, childcare and education services, care services for elderly people and people with disabilities, timely access to essential medical and social services, as well as other basic services, such as postal and banking services, is essential to enable women living in islands, rural areas, and remote and outermost regions to participate in economic, educational and civic life; recognises the importance of ensuring that there are local schools in rural areas; calls on the Member States to consult with local populations concerning the eventual closure of public schools and to

propose valid alternatives in such cases; urges the adoption of gender-sensitive rural mobility policies, including safe, reliable and affordable public transport, demand-responsive services, safe stops and routes, and measures to prevent and address harassment; calls on the Commission to develop policies and instruments that ensure the connectivity of these regions, specifically in the case of the outermost regions, through a POSEI-Transport funding programme, in order to guarantee the right to stay, creating conditions for all, and especially for women, to stay in these regions and to create and expand opportunities in education, employment, and entrepreneurship;

65. Recognises the importance of making equal sharing of domestic and care responsibilities possible in order to achieve the work-life balance necessary for women to engage in entrepreneurship and self-employment; calls on the Member States and regional and local authorities to invest in social enterprises, cooperatives and care-related business models that empower rural women while addressing local needs, and to provide appropriate childcare, eldercare and community well-being; calls on the Member States to implement the Barcelona targets, ensuring the coverage of these needs through investment in accessible and affordable high-quality care services; welcomes actions already taken by some Member States on this matter, urges them to fully transpose and implement the Work-Life Balance Directive, and calls on the Commission to monitor it effectively;
66. Underlines how women's entrepreneurship in Europe's mountainous and depopulated regions adds vitality to high-altitude communities, serving to keep mountain villages vibrant, protect fragile ecosystems, and ensure that living at points of high elevation remains full of opportunity and pride, with good access to women-specific resources and services;
67. Notes how seasonal economies, involving activities such as harvesting and tourism, and depopulation further increase the isolation and vulnerability of women and girls; underlines how addressing these barriers through better connectivity, targeted funding and local support networks is essential to unlocking the full potential of women entrepreneurs in mountainous areas;
68. Notes that the inadequacy of farm relief services in many Member States impacts women farmers in particular; calls on the Member States to reinforce these services;
69. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to examine new intergenerational housing concepts for rural areas that combine housing, care and community life for young families and older people and provide new impulses for rural development;

70. Stresses that limited access to healthcare, including access to sexual and reproductive health rights and services, and mental health services, disproportionately affects women living in rural and island areas and outermost regions, exacerbating existing inequalities and undermining the full exercise of their fundamental rights; underlines that the scarcity of medical infrastructure, the lack of healthcare professionals and geographical and transport barriers pose additional obstacles to the timely provision of adequate care; calls on the Member States to ensure equal, affordable and timely access to and continuity of essential healthcare services in these territories, promoting innovative solutions such as mobile clinics, local units, telemedicine, strengthening primary healthcare clinics and, where relevant, cross-border care arrangements and targeted prevention programmes, to guarantee equity in access to healthcare and social and territorial cohesion; stresses, furthermore, the importance of ensuring the availability of adequate mental health support and services tailored to the specific needs of women in these regions, in order to address the heightened risk of isolation, stress and burnout;
71. Recognises that women with disabilities are under-represented in entrepreneurship in rural and island areas and outermost regions; calls on the Member States to ensure that education, employment, rural business support services, training programmes and networking events are accessible to women with various types of disabilities; emphasises that digital entrepreneurship and remote work opportunities can be particularly valuable for women with mobility limitations in geographically isolated areas; encourages the sharing of best practices between regions on how to adapt entrepreneurship support for women with disabilities; notes that accessibility improvements in rural business environments benefit not only entrepreneurs with disabilities but also ageing entrepreneurs and the broader community;
72. Highlights the particular economic challenges of eastern border regions, including limited employment opportunities and wage inequalities; draws particular attention to the high level of unemployment among women and young people in these regions, which is significantly above the EU average; calls on the Commission and the Member States to develop targeted programmes supporting entrepreneurship, facilitating young female farmers' access to land and finance, and ensuring the effective use of CAP and cohesion policy instruments to strengthen the resilience and development of these regions;
73. Underlines that women still predominantly take on caregiving roles, whether caring for a sick relative, a child, or an elderly person, which too often leads them to interrupt or abandon their professional careers; stresses the need to develop and make accessible affordable and high-quality services, in particular childcare, to facilitate the

reconciliation of private and professional life, including the continuation of entrepreneurial projects;

74. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to establish an integrated 'one-stop-shop' within the CAP, with a dedicated section for women in rural areas, making it accessible online; underlines that this facility should include an interactive map of available financial instruments, standardised application templates and advisory services for the preparation of business plans and projects;
75. Considers that cohesion policy should be more empowering for women living in the EU's outermost regions and should promote gender equality as well as the effective implementation of the EU's strategy on gender equality in the outermost regions;
76. Emphasises that female entrepreneurship on small islands makes a decisive contribution to social cohesion, sustainability, the strengthening of local identity and sustainable development; points out that the spatially limited market on islands and in remote areas limits the development of agriculture and, implicitly, of women's entrepreneurial initiatives in this field and poses a challenge for entrepreneurship; calls, in this context, for EU policymakers and national authorities to direct their attention to this, to ensure a level playing field for women entrepreneurs on islands and in remote rural territories;
77. Calls on the Member States to ensure effective access to social protection for self-employed women and assisting spouses and partners in agriculture and craft micro-enterprises, including adequate pensions and family-related leave and access to maternity, parental and pension rights in line with the European Pillar of Social Rights;

Violence

78. Condemns all forms of gender-based violence as a violation of women's fundamental rights and a barrier to women's autonomy and economic empowerment, including through entrepreneurship; calls on the Member States to prioritise targeted support, protection measures and accessible resources for rural women affected by violence, ensuring their safety, dignity and access to justice including for those in post-conflict recovery and involved in peacebuilding efforts; highlights that the nature and terms of women's work in rural and island areas, along with their physical isolation, increases their vulnerability to gender-based violence; calls for comprehensive prevention including awareness-raising on domestic, economic, sexual and psychological violence, and to ensure access to services such as helplines, support services and shelters and effective measures to end impunity; stresses the need for targeted campaigns in rural areas to raise awareness of and

counter gender-based violence, particularly in communities where traditional gender roles and economic or family dependencies often prevent women from seeking help or leaving abusive situations; reiterates the call for the EU and all Member States to ratify, implement and adequately fund the Istanbul Convention and ensure equal access to services for women in rural and island areas and outermost regions;

79. Underlines the importance of access to confidential services in rural communities and of women's shelters for women and children in situations of domestic violence; recalls the Istanbul Convention's standard regarding women's shelters of one family place per 10 000 head of population; regrets that access to such shelters in rural areas is limited; calls on the Member States and local and regional authorities to provide sufficient financial support and resources to specialist women's organisations for the establishment and management of such shelters and for the continuity of provision in affected areas; urges the Member States and local authorities to actively promote a culture of respect, dignity and mutual understanding, with a focus on empowering rural and vulnerable communities made up of women and girls; highlights that open dialogue, survivor-centred storytelling, collective responsibility for the prevention of violence and positive educational initiatives can inspire empathy and collective healing;
80. Calls on the Member States to support the establishment of monuments or memorials dedicated to the historical pain and suffering of women in post-war conflicts, including crimes committed in geographically vulnerable areas, such as rural locations;
81. Urges the introduction of measures that support survivors' economic independence, including targeted training, job placement, entrepreneurship grants and microcredits, so they can safely enter or re-enter the labour market;
82. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to ensure that the implementation of Directive (EU) 2024/1385 on combating violence against women and domestic violence²⁰ fully addresses the specific needs of victims in rural and island areas; stresses the importance of including rural considerations in national transposition plans; urges the Member States to use EU funding instruments, including cohesion policy and rural development funds, to support efforts to address gender-based violence, including the development of targeted strategies to ensure that victims in these areas have equal access to justice, protection and support, including through mobile

²⁰ Directive (EU) 2024/1385 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 May 2024 on combating violence against women and domestic violence (OJ L, 2024/1385, 24.5.2024, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/dir/2024/1385/oj>).

victim support units, rural helplines, community-based services, and awareness-raising campaigns tailored to rural populations; highlights the need to bridge the digital divide and improve infrastructure to facilitate reporting and access to services;

83. Emphasises that the absence, or inferior status, of women working on the farm of their spouse/partner contributes to their economic dependency; notes that women's lower employment rates, obstacles to inheriting land or taking over their parents' farms, as well as limited access to credit and funding, have a similar effect, increasing the risk of domestic and economic abuse;
84. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to ensure that women's entrepreneurship in rural, mountainous, border and island areas and outermost regions is fully supported within the framework of the post-2027 MFF; reiterates the need for gender mainstreaming across all MFF programmes; stresses the need to ensure that EU funding programmes such as the ERDF, the ESF+, the Just Transition Fund, Interreg, and in particular the CAP, cohesion policy, Horizon Europe, and the Digital Europe programme, include specific measures aimed at promoting the active participation of women, supporting the creation and consolidation of rural enterprises, and fostering innovation and digitalisation; also underlines the importance of facilitating women's simplified and effective access to EU funds, covering not only agricultural businesses but also cooperatives, local associations and women-led community projects, in order to strengthen territorial cohesion, gender equality, and the economic vitality of rural and island areas and outermost communities; calls in this regard on the Commission and the Member States to enhance the visibility and accessibility of funding opportunities specifically dedicated to women in rural areas, including through targeted information and promotional campaigns aimed at increasing awareness and uptake; welcomes the recent announcement by the EIB regarding the extension of its Sustainability Awareness Bond framework to include two new social objectives – gender equality and women's economic empowerment – which represents a step forward in integrating the gender dimension into financing;
85. Opposes strongly the centralisation of cohesion policy funding, as women's support through cohesion policy funds would then hinge on the goodwill and allocation of national governments rather than be allocated at regional level; calls in this regard on the Commission and the Member States to honour the principles of multi-level governance and place-based solutions, as well as the partnership principle, as set out in the Treaties;
86. Supports the Commission's strategy for the savings and investments union and the creation and expansion of inclusive financial instruments, including a labelled EU Investment Savings Account

(ISA) to increase and facilitate access to finance for EU companies; calls for a tailored ISA specially designed for women living in deprived areas;

87. Welcomes any examples which celebrate the dedication of women agriculturalists, and promote awareness of sustainable agricultural practices rooted in European traditions;
88. Underlines that policies promoting women's entrepreneurship in rural and island areas and outermost regions must adopt an intersectional approach, recognising that women's experiences and access to opportunities are shaped by multiple and intersecting factors;
89. Stresses that the different EU initiatives and EU funding schemes must be designed and implemented through an intersectional lens, addressing the multiple and overlapping barriers women face, and ensuring that no woman entrepreneur is excluded or left without adequate support;
90. Underlines the importance of mobilising all actors in the financial system to improve women's access to funding and, for this purpose, encourages the establishment of a European charter for equal access to finance;
91. Reiterates the need for the EU to adopt a comprehensive and integrated strategy for women's entrepreneurship in rural and island areas and outermost regions, setting out clear objectives, measurable targets, and coordinated measures across the EU's various funding instruments; requests that this strategy be allocated specific, stable and adequate financial resources, as well as dedicated funding mechanisms adapted to the particularities of these territories, in order to ensure equal access, promote innovation and digitalisation, and strengthen the EU's economic, social and territorial cohesion, as well as to ensure adequate support from the Member States;
92. Highlights the contribution made by LEADER and Community-led Local Development to gender equality and local empowerment; calls for these approaches to be maintained, reinforced and ring-fenced with simplified access for women-led initiatives;
93. Calls for the EU and the Member States to combat trafficking in women and forced prostitution with a comprehensive strategy that includes prevention, effective prosecution, cross-border cooperation and assistance and protection for victims; emphasises that women must be able to decide for themselves what kind of work they do;

◦

◦ ◦

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