



European Economic and Social Committee

SOC/610
Gender equality issues

OPINION

European Economic and Social Committee

Gender equality issues
[own-initiative opinion]

Rapporteur: **Indrė VAREIKYTĖ**

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1. Conclusions and recommendations

- 1.1 The Committee believes that gender equality is a societal issue and that only a gender equal society can be economically and socially strong. It is therefore an economic and social imperative that women and men are treated equally and given equal opportunities.
- 1.2 While gender equality is a key objective of the EU, the EESC regrets that it will take over 100 years to achieve it at the current rate, especially if progress is further hindered by a backlash in the most crucial areas of development and a general slowdown in economic growth.
- 1.3 The Committee believes that the EU and its Member States must make every effort to achieve SDG 5 on gender equality by 2030. It therefore calls for an integrated and ambitious five-year EU gender equality strategy¹, spanning the term of the next Commission and EP, and a strong commitment to gender equality by the EU institutions, governments, civil society and the private sector to holistically tackle all aspects of equality effectively at the same time and with measures of equal impact.
- 1.4 The EESC calls for gender equality to remain a stand-alone goal in the future financial frameworks, with a clear commitment to gender equality and gender mainstreaming and the inclusion of gender indicators, gender impact assessment and gender budgeting in all programmes and policy fields. The gender dimension should also be integrated into the country specific recommendations.
- 1.5 The Committee calls on the European Commission to launch a package on care services to boost the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights and to revise the Barcelona targets on childcare.
- 1.6 The EESC condemns all forms of violence against women and encourages Member States that have not yet ratified the Istanbul Convention to reconsider their position. The EESC also calls on the Commission to add online harassment and mobbing of women to the definition of illegal hate speech. EU-wide indicators for comparable data collection on violence against women should be established, as this would assist with developing effective policy measures.
- 1.7 The Committee notes that the discussion on the Women on Boards Directive remains on the agenda of the Romanian Presidency of the EU Council with the objective of increasing female participation in decision-making bodies. It calls on the Council to continue its efforts and proceed with the discussion on the Women on Boards Directive. The Committee also calls on industry to take a leading role and increase the participation of women in top decision-making positions.
- 1.8 The EESC calls for effective measures to be taken to ensure equal opportunities for women and men in the labour market, notably measures to close the gender pay gap, as well as to tackle horizontal and vertical gender segregation in occupations.

¹ [OJ C110, 22.3.2019, p. 26.](#)

- 1.9 The EESC proposes establishing an emergency legal fund at EU level, which would provide support to civil society organisations who challenge national or local legislation that violates women's rights in courts.
- 1.10 The Committee recognises the role played by the media, advertising and public role-models in promoting gender equality and calls for measures to be taken to ensure that advertising has a positive rather than a negative impact in terms of representing and promoting gender equality in society.
- 1.11 The EESC calls on public institutions and civil society organisations across the EU to promote gender equality with their policies and external actions and to introduce exemplary internal measures, such as promoting women in decision-making and mainstreaming gender equality in all of their policies and processes.
- 1.12 Referring to Article 300(5) TFEU, the Committee calls on the Council to review its guidelines for the appointment of EESC members and recommends that the Member States put forward members on a gender parity basis. The Committee will strive to ensure gender equality in its operations, mainstream gender equality in its work process and establish a follow-up group in order to draw up adequate guidelines.

2. **General considerations**

- 2.1 Equality between women and men is a fundamental value and objective of the European Union, enshrined in the European treaties and the Charter of Fundamental Rights and most recently reaffirmed in the European Pillar of Social Rights. In addition to its legislative and policy framework for achieving gender equality, the EU supports the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, as well as the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the outcomes of their review conferences.
- 2.2 While there are numerous positive initiatives within Europe to tackle various aspects of gender inequalities, the drivers for true equality, especially within the Member States and regions, are complex and multi-faceted. Despite the general progress that has been made, the EESC regrets that, at the current rate, it will take over 100 years to achieve gender equality in the EU. The EESC has called for an overarching strategy for sustainability in implementing the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda. In this context, the Committee believes that the EU and its Member States must make every effort to achieve SDG 5 on gender equality by 2030.
- 2.3 The EESC is also concerned that the future progress on gender equality could be hindered by the backlash in some Member States within the areas of economic empowerment of women (employment, work-life balance, social rights, care), education, sexual and reproductive health and rights, violence against women, women's NGOs and key areas of the institutional and policy framework within the EU and its Member States.
- 2.4 Additionally, a slowdown in the economic growth of a number of European countries is forecast, and so there is a risk that gender equality could slip down the agenda of Member States

and companies as a consequence. It is important that the gender effects of macroeconomic policies are fully assessed and taken into account when designing fiscal policies and social protection and work-life balance policies, among others, so as to avoid further exacerbating the existing gender inequalities.

- 2.5 The Committee believes that advancing and ensuring the effective implementation of EU gender equality policies requires a new five-year EU gender equality strategy, spanning the term of the next Commission and EP, and a renewed commitment to gender equality by governments, civil society, the private sector and European institutions. It is not only needed to ensure a fair and equal society, but is also the best collective response to combat the discriminatory and misogynistic populist movements that are currently challenging democratic societies.
- 2.6 Public opinion supports the EESC's view here, as the majority of Europeans think that gender equality is crucial for a fair and democratic society (91%), for the economy (87%) and for them personally (84%). Moreover, the share of EU citizens who would like the EU to intervene more in this policy area has risen by 10% (from 55% to 65%) in just two years (2016-2018).
- 2.7 In this light, the Committee regrets that the overall EU funding allocated to gender equality measures in the 2014-2020 period is only EUR 6.17 billion, or around 0.6% of the overall appropriations. The EESC calls for gender equality to remain a stand-alone goal in the future financial frameworks, which also have to show a clear commitment to gender equality and gender mainstreaming and include gender indicators, gender impact assessment and gender budgeting for both the EU and national levels. Attention to gender mainstreaming and the provision of specific funds for gender equality measures should be present not only in programmes addressing employment and social inclusion issues or fundamental human rights (e.g. the ESF, REC, AMIF, EaSI funds), but also in policy fields that are not seen as immediately related to gender equality but could have significant gender effects such as ICT, transport, urban and rural development, business, investment support, sustainable development and environmental policies. Gender equality dimension, assessed on the basis of the gender equality index, should become an integral part of the EU semester process, including country reports and country specific recommendations.
- 2.8 In the light of the recent increase in #MeToo exposures, the Committee praises the European Ombudsman for recommending a stronger code of conduct in all EU institutions, and believes that it also should be swiftly adapted and adopted by public institutions in the Member States.
- 2.9 The EESC calls on public institutions and civil society organisations across the EU not only to promote gender equality with their policies and external actions, but to also introduce exemplary internal measures, such as promoting women in decision-making and mainstreaming gender equality in all of their policies and processes, which are currently limited, but could set a strong positive example for the surrounding public institutions and businesses and further the dialogue on the implementation of gender equality measures at all levels of European society.

3. **Economy**

- 3.1 Equal access to economic resources is not just a matter of women's economic independence but a prerequisite for meeting the EU objectives on sustainable economic growth, quality employment, social cohesion, prosperity and competitiveness. Encouraging participation of women in the labour market is crucial for smart, sustainable, inclusive growth and GDP more generally, for ensuring that the EU makes full use of available talent.
- 3.2 In the labour market, European women continue to face persistent gender inequalities, segregation and a gender pay gap, which alone will cost the EU an estimated EUR 240 billion in GDP by 2030 and has both an immediate effect on women's take-home pay and a long-term effect on their social security and pension entitlements. The EESC therefore welcomes the Commission's consultation to evaluate the provisions in Directive 2006/54/EC implementing the Treaty principle on "equal pay" with a view to ensuring better enforcement of the principle of equal pay for work of equal value in practice.
- 3.3 While reduced working hours can be a choice, over a quarter of Europe's population is in involuntary part-time employment. Women are over-represented in part-time employment and their choice of part-time work is often influenced by caring responsibilities. The share of involuntary part-time work has decreased only slightly (0.1%) in recent years. One reason for involuntary part-time work is a lack of adequate care infrastructure and flexible working arrangements which could offer better opportunities for work-life balance. Women are also generally more exposed to poverty and limited career possibilities. Moreover, almost twice as few women as men set up their own businesses across the EU.
- 3.4 The EESC therefore calls for effective measures to be taken to ensure equal participation of women and men in the labour market, as well as to tackle horizontal and vertical gender segregation in occupations. Creating more opportunities for women to gain access to quality full-time employment with flexible work arrangements should be a key priority.
- 3.5 The Committee believes that promoting family and gender equality-friendly labour policies and implementing transformative and targeted measures that can re-balance the unequal distribution of caring and domestic tasks between women and men are essential², especially as economic conditions put increasing pressure on workers. Monitoring of the transposition of the EU work-life balance directive will be essential to ensure upward reforms towards adequate paid leave and flexible work arrangements and to assess the impact of the new measures on the uptake of parental and paternity leave by fathers.
- 3.6 Appropriate measures, such as the provision of accessible and affordable childcare and long-term care services, as well as measures promoting the take-up of leave for men, are crucial for allowing parents and carers to enter, remain in, or return to the labour market. The EESC calls on the European Commission to launch a package on care services to boost the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights and complement the Work-life Balance Directive,

² [OJ C 129, 11.4.2018, pp.44](#)

containing a mix of policy, funding and target recommendations; and to revise the Barcelona targets on childcare.

- 3.7 Collective bargaining can play an important role in addressing gender inequalities in the labour market. The recommendation of the ILO Global Commission on the Future of Work regarding a transformative agenda for gender equality should guide the social partners, Member States and EU institutions in their actions.

4. **Education and training**

- 4.1 Despite many encouraging changes in the education achievements of women and men, stereotypical segregation patterns remain throughout the Member States. Men remain severely underrepresented in sectors associated with traditional female roles, such as health and welfare, humanities and arts or teacher training and education science, while outnumbering women in STEM and ICT in all Member States. This creates additional challenges for women, as STEM, ICT and AI skills are already crucial today and will become indispensable in the future³.
- 4.2 Women with low levels of skills and qualifications need additional support to improve their position in the labour market, as the gender gap in employment is widest for people with no or low qualifications and those facing intersectional discrimination. Policy measures specifically targeting vulnerable groups of women, especially those facing disabilities⁴ and multiple disadvantages, would help raise their skill levels.
- 4.3 Women continue to increase their participation in higher education and outnumber men in many fields in tertiary education. However, segregation in both tertiary and vocational education persists, which limits career choices in non-traditional sectors and access to the same career opportunities.
- 4.4 It is therefore crucial to continue addressing gender-based stereotypes and segregation in education and training by supporting gender-sensitive curricula in education, career counselling, media campaigns that encourage boys and girls, women and men to follow career paths according to their skills and abilities; to foster career opportunities and developments for both women and men who choose non-traditional sectors; to create opportunities for women to capitalise on their higher education achievements to the same degree as men, to address the existing glass ceiling for women in academia⁵; and to increase support opportunities for female entrepreneurs⁶, especially in non-traditional sectors. It is also recommended to increase the general awareness of gender equality issues and the equality skills of public servants and professionals.

3 [OJ C 173, 31.5.2017, pp. 45](#)

4 [OJ C 367, 10.10.2018, pp. 20](#)

5 [OJ C 12, 15.1.2015, pp. 10](#)

6 [OJ C 299, 4.10.2012, pp. 24](#)

5. **Women and poverty**

- 5.1 Women are at greater risk of poverty, partly because of lower hourly pay, overrepresentation among minimum wage earners and in sectors that have lower remuneration levels, and are more likely to be in part-time work, non-flexible work arrangements or have more care-related absences from work. The feminisation of poverty is the consequence of a number of factors, including the undervaluation of women's work and gender pay gap. The gender employment gap widens substantially once people have children, which reflects the difficulties that women face in reconciling child-raising and care responsibilities with their work, as well as discriminatory and unfair treatment faced by pregnant women or those returning from maternity leave.
- 5.2 It is crucial to acknowledge that women are not a homogeneous category and that specific measures are required for women who face discrimination or disadvantages beyond gender, i.e. women with disabilities, racialised women, LGBTIQ+, women in rural areas, immigrants, refugees or asylum seekers, and young and elderly women.
- 5.3 The Committee therefore recommends reinforcing measures which support gender equality in economic activity:
- mainstreaming gender in economic development initiatives;
 - promoting equality in employment to achieve equal economic independence and financial security;
 - supporting initiatives that increase awareness of the importance of women's economic independence for reducing poverty;
 - addressing the effects of interrupted careers and different working patterns on the risk of women entering a state of poverty throughout their lives;
 - developing policy measures targeting specific vulnerable groups of women who are most at risk of poverty;
 - continuing to reform national pension arrangements by factoring the gender dimension into pension entitlements (e.g. by including maternity/paternity and other care-related leave time in pension calculations);
 - addressing child poverty by including a gender perspective and a holistic approach that develops synergies between social inclusion, gender equality and other policy areas and with other policy and financial instruments;
 - reviewing, adopting and maintaining macroeconomic policies and development strategies that address the needs and efforts of women in poverty.

6. **Human rights**

- 6.1 Gender equality is a fundamental principle, constituting an integral part of human rights and a prerequisite for making human rights applicable to all and enabling all to exercise them.
- 6.2 The EESC condemns all forms of violence against women and encourages Member States that have not yet ratified the Istanbul Convention to reconsider doing so without further delay. EU-wide indicators for comparable data collection on violence against women should be established, as this would assist with developing effective policy measures. To this end, the

experience gained in some EU countries could provide an indication as to the approach to adopt. The EESC also calls on the Commission to update the Recommendation on measures to effectively tackle illegal content online and the Code of conduct on countering illegal hate speech online, which was agreed upon by the EC and global IT companies, by adding online harassment and mobbing of women to the definition of illegal hate speech.

- 6.3 The Committee deeply regrets the current backlash against women's sexual and reproductive health and rights in Europe, with serious implications for women's human rights and a general threat to the universality of human rights. Moreover, although legislative rollbacks have specifically targeted women's access to legal abortion services in some European contexts (even when evidence shows that comprehensive sexual education can reduce unwanted pregnancies by 50%), other aspects of women's sexual and reproductive health and rights have also been affected, e.g. legal requirements for obtaining medical prescriptions for emergency contraception. Additionally, a series of retrogressive laws and policies with a broad range of harmful implications for women's rights have entered into force, including laws which have the effect of hindering sexual education, preventing the dissemination of information on sexual orientation and gender identity, including for education purposes, or decriminalising certain forms of domestic violence.
- 6.4 The EESC calls on the EU institutions and civil society to work together to take immediate, tough action against such laws. The Committee also proposes establishing an emergency legal fund at EU level, which would provide support to civil society organisations who challenge the legislation that violates women's rights in courts.
- 6.5 The EESC also stresses the importance of addressing obstacles that women and, specifically, victims of violence face when claiming redress when their rights have been violated, and ensuring equal access to justice for all women, by removing economic, cultural and (gendered) institutional barriers as a necessary precondition for women's human rights. Further on, the Committee regrets that indicators for assessing the progress of Member States in the area of women's human rights are still lacking; and that men are generally more likely to face unobjective judgement and be deprived of parental and visitation rights.

7. **Women in power and decision-making**

- 7.1 Despite the progress in recent years, underrepresentation of women in political and economic decision-making remains a challenge for the EU and its Member States. At all levels of government women occupy only a third of political decision-making positions and merely a quarter of senior and junior ministerial positions. Public/private economic and financial institutions are still almost entirely male-dominated.
- 7.2 The EESC regrets that even after continual calls from across the entire European Union and the Committee itself⁷, the threshold of 40% women in company boards by 2020 will not be achieved. It notes that the discussion on the Women on Boards Directive remains on the agenda of the Romanian Presidency of the EU Council with the objective of increasing female

⁷ [OJ C 133, 9.5.2013, pp. 68-73.](#)

participation in decision-making bodies. It calls on the Council to continue its efforts and proceed with the discussion on the Women on Boards Directive. The Committee also calls on industry to take a leading role and to significantly increase the participation of women in top decision-making positions.

- 7.3 The Committee repeatedly⁸ recommends considering effective strategies and tools (e.g. legal, budgetary and voluntary measures, gender quotas) to break the glass ceiling and achieve gender balance in elected and nominated posts in major political structures. Addressing and tackling the gender norms, attitudes and stereotypes hindering equal representation of women in decision-making positions in the political, economic and social domains is more important than ever.
- 7.4 The EESC recommends that the Commission lead an initiative to attract more women to participate in politics and vote for qualified female candidates by creating measures to invest in their skills, resource foundations and mentoring networks.
- 7.5 The EESC welcomes the target set by Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker of ensuring that, by the end of the current term, at least 40% of its middle and senior managers are women and, in this light, acknowledges that, given that the EESC is an EU body that represents EU civil society and acts as the bridge between society and the EU institutions, it is regrettable that only 30% of its members are women. The Committee therefore calls on the Council to review its guidelines for the appointment of EESC members in order to take account of economic, social and demographic developments within the Union, as stated in Article 300(5) TFEU. The Committee will strive to ensure gender equality in its operations.
- 7.6 In its newly adopted Rules of Procedure, the EESC has committed to ensuring compliance with the principle of gender equality and non-discrimination in all its policies. To this end, the EESC will adopt an anti-harassment policy and establish a follow-up group in order to draw up guidelines for the mainstreaming of gender equality in all its work, notably in its opinions.

8. **Media**

- 8.1 The media plays a vital role in shaping the opinions, attitudes and prejudices of a society. Women are producers and consumers, as well as part of media content, yet media content is not always gender-sensitive, and can portray degrading images of women and perpetuate gender roles, stereotypes and norms. The rise of digital technologies and new forms of communication has further complicated the relationship between women's roles in the media and the way in which producers, consumers and content relate to them.
- 8.2 While employment of women in the media sector in the EU has increased to nearly half (44%) of the workforce and women represent the largest group (68%) of graduates on journalism and information courses, women in media organisations mostly occupy only positions with limited influence on the content and strategy of organisations.

⁸ [.OJ C 262, 25.7.2018, pp. 101-106](#)

- 8.3 To improve gender equality in the media industry, it is crucial to target the glass ceiling, to enhance participation of women in top decision-making positions, and complement voluntary measures adopted by media organisations with policy measures supporting transformation of the media sector and its content. It is of the utmost importance to start acknowledging the consequences of gender stereotypes produced by media content, as well as assessing how men and women are represented in the media.
- 8.4 The advertising industry is still struggling to portray both women and men proportionally and realistically. Society is still seeing women and men depicted in outdated, unacceptable ways, even though gender stereotypes are now often presented in a more subtle manner. The EESC believes that it is time to shed any anachronistic perceptions and for the industry to take a leading role to ensure that advertising has a positive rather than a negative impact in terms of representing and promoting gender equality in society, especially in terms of gender stereotyped marketing to children.

Brussels, 15 May 2019

Luca Jahier

The president of the European Economic and Social Committee

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N.B. Appendix overleaf.

Appendix: List of best practices, measures and actions for gender equality

Explanatory note

The EESC acknowledges existing efforts to present best practice measures and actions to society as a whole in order to encourage wider dissemination and application across the EU, namely: the 100-example database **A Toolkit for Gender Equality in Practice**, compiled by the European social partners (<http://erc-online.eu/gendertoolkit-etuc/>); good practice databases of the European Institute for Gender Equality (<https://eige.europa.eu/>); and others. The Committee both encourages public institutions and civil society organisations to use the aforementioned examples in order to implement better actions for gender equality, and provides an additional list of selected best practice examples for different levels of governance and society.

Women in decision-making

Gender quotas have been introduced in several European countries in order to recruit more women to leading economic and political positions during the last couple of years. Quotas are fixed numbers or percentages of underrepresented groups or genders that have to be met when filling certain positions or boards. In order for the quota regulations to be effective and to actually represent the needs of a minority group, a critical mass of 30-40% is required. In most European countries gender quotas are used in politics, economics bodies and civil services, but there are many different kinds of quotas which vary in terms of how binding and effective they are. Opponents of the idea of gender quotas doubt their effectiveness and fairness, whereas supporters hope that with the help of quotas, barriers and prejudices against women could be removed in the long term. Looking at the examples listed, it is clear from the figures that many European countries have succeeded in increasing the numbers of women in leading political and economic positions by introducing gender equality laws, including gender quota regulations. Another important factor for reaching real gender equality is that parties include gender quotas in their internal structures and programmes, so women and men have equal access to posts at all political levels. In conclusion, gender quotas have brought major change in terms of gender equality, but at the same time they are only efficient if appropriate sanctions prevent people circumventing political or economic laws.

Norway: As one of the first countries to introduce gender quotas, Norway tried to increase the participation of women in politics by voluntarily introducing gender quotas for candidate lists in the 1980s. From then on, the number of women in the Norwegian parliament rose steadily, and already in 1990 the percentage of women in parliament was 36%. The law, which came into force in 2006, requires market-listed companies to fill 40% of the seats on supervisory boards with women. Companies were given a period of 5 years to fulfil requirements and risk being denied registration as a business enterprise or being forced to dissolve by a court if they did not comply. In 2015, the percentage of women on company boards in Norway was 38.7%.

Spain: With the introduction of the Equality Law in 2007 all political parties were required to put forward lists on which 40% of the candidates are women; otherwise the candidate lists were rejected. Therefore, the percentage of woman in the Spanish parliament rose from 15% in 1990 to 39% in 2016. Moreover, state-controlled and market-listed companies or companies with more than 250 employees

were required to increase the percentage of women in their executive boards to 40% by 2015. Companies were motivated by the promise of being given preference in the awarding of contracts if they complied with the law. Accordingly, the percentage of women in boards of companies in Spain rose from 10.6% in 2011 to 18.8% in 2015.

Italy: Following the constitutional reforms in 2003, Italy's regional governments adopted gender quotas in the electoral process which required there to be equal numbers of female and male candidates on their candidate lists. Non-compliance was punished by rejecting the candidate lists or financial penalties, depending on the region. Consequently, the percentage of women in the Italian parliament increased from 13% in 1990 to 31% in 2016. In order to support the participation of women in economics, a new law was passed in summer 2011 requiring at least a third of both genders to be represented on executive boards of state-controlled and market-listed companies. Companies were threatened with financial penalties if they failed to comply with the law. As a consequence, the percentage of women on company boards in Italy rose remarkably from 4.2% in 2011 to 24.6% in 2015.

France: Candidate lists from all parties running for the elections of the National Assembly (Assemblée nationale) and the Senate are required to put forward equal numbers of female and male candidates (only a 2% difference is allowed). Non-compliance was punished with financial penalties. Therefore, the percentage of women in the French parliament rose from 7% in 1990 to 26% in 2016. On 13th January 2011 a law to increase gender equality in French economics also was passed. Companies which are market-listed or have more than 500 employees were required to increase the percentage of women on supervisory and administrative boards to 20% by 2014 and to 40% by 2017, or positions had to stay vacant. Failure to comply incurred financial penalties, for example not receiving attendance fees for supervisory and administrative boards. Consequently, the percentage of women on company boards in France increased from 18.2% in 2011 to 34.4% in 2015.

Belgium: In the 1970s and 1980s Belgian parties started to adapt voluntary gender quotas in order to increase the participation of women in politics. In 2002, the Gender Equality Act was passed, which required political parties to put forward an equal number of female and male candidates (the difference could not be greater than one), or their candidate lists were rejected. This gender quota applied to the elections of the Lower and Upper House as well as to subnational elections. Thus, the percentage of women in the Belgium parliament increased from 9% in 1990 to 39% in 2016. Like most of the European countries, Belgium passed a law in summer 2011 requiring at least one-third of the members of executive committees in state-controlled or market-listed companies to be women. Non-compliance resulted in financial penalties or positions being left vacant. Accordingly, the percentage of women on boards in Belgium rose from 10.8% in 2011 to 27% in 2015.

Netherlands: The candidate lists of the Labour Party (Partij van de Arbeid) alternated between men and women from 1987 onwards. Other parties adapted different gender quotas later. The percentage of women in the Dutch parliament in 1990 was already 21%, which was relatively high in comparison to other European countries at that time. However, the percentage increased to 37% in 2016. In order to support gender equality in the Dutch economy, a new law was adopted in summer 2011 requiring the executive boards of listed companies or companies with more than 250 employees to include at least 30% from each gender, or they would be penalised. Therefore, the percentage of women in boards of Dutch companies increased from 16.2% in 2011 to 24.4% in 2015.

Germany: Since the Alliance 90/The Greens party (Bündnis 90/Die Grünen) introduced a 50% quota for women in 1986 on party lists, other parties also started introducing similar gender quotas. The Left Party (Die Linkspartei) for example required 50% women in all party offices. The amount of women in the German Federal Parliament (Deutscher Bundestag) was 39% in 2016. On 6 March 2015 a law was passed that required market-listed companies to fill at least 30% of their seats in steering boards with women, or positions had to stay vacant. This law to provide equal access to leading economic positions came into force only in 2016 in Germany, and Germany was one of the last countries to take this step. Furthermore, around 3500 smaller companies had to set the goal of increasing the amount of women in their directorates and boardrooms. In addition, the German government has plans to increase the quota to 50% and introduce quota regulations in order to increase the number of men working in kindergartens, primary schools, etc.

Croatia: During the elections in 2015 in Croatia, 40% of the candidates for parliament from each party were for the first time required to be women. However, candidate lists which did not comply with the requests were not rejected, but parties had to pay a penalty. As a result, the percentage of women in parliament dropped to 13%, which is the lowest percentage since 2000.

Poland: On the initiative of the Association of Women's Congress, which submitted a bill to the citizens' parliament, the new electoral law in force since 1 August 2011 requires there to be a minimum of 35% of candidates on electoral lists from each gender.

Sweden: For nearly 20 years now, all decisions of the executive committee and the steering committee of the Swedish Trade Union Confederation (LO) have to have a "gender equality assessment" annexed to the suggested decisions. That can be an explanation of how many women and men respectively there are on the delegation/board or other body that the committees decide to nominate people to, or an assessment of what implications the suggested policy would have on gender equality, when it concerns a reply to a legislative consultation or similar. Every policy report and every formal decision of an LO executive or steering committee needs an annexed gender equality assessment, so that the dossier includes a visible note that shows what gender equality effects the suggested decision would have, or how the gender equality aspects have been taken into account. Until the required gender equality assessment is made and annexed, the proposal/decision is not dealt with.

Canada: Equal Voice (<https://www.equalvoice.ca>) is a national, bilingual, multi-partisan organisation dedicated to electing more women to all levels of political office in Canada. The organisation works with all political parties to increase the nomination of women candidates, promotes change both in and outside legislatures to support increased representation of women, equips women to run through online campaign schools and networking and skills development programmes, and aims to inspire young women to consider a political career through life-changing events like Daughters of the Vote. Equal Voice is the leading authority on women in politics across the country, tracking and monitoring representation of women among candidates and in legislatures and governments across the country.

Canada: The Young Women's Leadership Network (<https://www.ywln.ca>) is a national not-for-profit organisation dedicated to fostering civic and political leadership by young women at all levels and is active in the fight to end gender-based violence in politics. The YWLN focuses primarily on fostering leadership by young women and takes an intersectional approach to social justice, civic

engagement and gender-based violence that is non-partisan, trans-inclusive and anti-oppressive. The YWLN has developed a toolkit to help survivors of sexual violence in politics. The YWLN further developed an "It's Time" campaign including a report that is based on interview data with 60 Ontarians who have been impacted by sexual violence and harassment in politics. It seeks to equip political institutions with a broader understanding of sexual violence and provides effective ways to promote a culture of consent in politics.

Austria: Zukunft.Frauen (Future.Women): The Austrian Ministry for Digital and Economic Affairs together with the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber and the Federation of Austrian Industries have developed a joint programme called "Zukunft.Frauen" (Future.Women), which has been running since 2010 and has been attended by more than 300 women. The programme adopts a view, that a bundle of measures is needed to get more women into management positions, e.g. reconciling family and career and the associated framework conditions. In addition, however, there is a need for measures that start directly with women, above all to encourage them to continue on their path to the top. The programme is also complemented by a database which facilitates the search for potential candidates for supervisory management positions.

The goals of this management programme are to:

- have more women in management and supervisory board positions;
- make leadership positions more attractive for women;
- motivate and empower women to seek and apply for higher positions;
- create a network of female managers who are public role models;
- achieve an economic advantage for Austrian companies by having more women at the top;
- raise the awareness of companies and decision-makers of this issue.

Gender employment policies

European Court of Justice: Case Marshcall v Land Nordrhein-Westfalen, C-409/95 ECR I-6363; on EEC Equal Treatment Directive 76/207: Articles 2(1), 2(4). Hellmutt Marschall, a teacher at a comprehensive school in Germany, applied for promotion to a higher-grade teaching post. The civil service law of the Land of North Rhine-Westphalia provided that where "there are fewer women than men in the particular higher-grade post in the career bracket, women are to be given priority for promotion in the event of equal suitability, competence and professional performance, unless reasons specific to an individual [male] candidate tilt the balance in his favour."

Mr Marschall was informed by the district authority of Arnsberg that, in accordance with these provisions, since fewer women than men were employed in the relevant pay and career bracket, an equally-qualified woman was to be appointed to the position. He brought legal proceedings and the Administrative Court of Gelsenkirchen referred the following question to the European Court of Justice:

"Does Article 2(1) and (4) of Council Directive 76/207/EEC of 9 February 1976 on the implementation of the principle of equal treatment for men and women as regards access to employment, vocational training and promotion, and working conditions preclude a rule of national law which provides that, in sectors of the public service in which fewer women than men are

employed in the relevant higher grade post in a career bracket, women must be given priority where male and female candidates for promotion are equally qualified (in terms of suitability, competence and professional performance) unless reasons specific to an individual male candidate tilt the balance in his favour?

The ECJ held that:

1. Legislation which provides for preferential treatment for female candidates for promotion who are equally qualified as male candidates in sectors where women are underrepresented may fall within the scope of Article 2(4) of the Equal Treatment Directive, if it contains a saving clause which guarantees that women are not to be given priority if reasons specific to an individual equally qualified male candidate tilt the balance in his favour. Such a rule, since it does not guarantee absolute and unconditional priority for women, does not go beyond the limits of Article 2(4) unlike the rules at issue in the *Kalanke* case.
2. The rule should take into account of all criteria specific to the candidates and will override the priority accorded to female candidates where one or more of those criteria tilts the balance in favour of the male candidate."

Gender mainstreaming policies

Austria: The principle of equality is embedded in the Federal Constitutional Law under Article 7, which states that "all nationals are equal before the law" and excludes any privileges based upon sex – among other things. In 1998, an amendment to this article provided the constitutional basis for the implementation of gender mainstreaming, by introducing the responsibility for all level of authorities (Federation, Länder and municipalities) to implement appropriate measures to achieve de facto equality between men and women.

Austria: The **City of Vienna** in Austria started its work on **gender mainstreaming** in 2000, focusing on making this a cross-cutting strategy for the whole municipality. By investing in gender mainstreaming, the city aimed to "achieve positive socio-political change for all its citizens". The objective was to **better meet the needs and demands** of all its citizens and thereby **improve quality of public services**. This was done through evaluations and by considering all users of public services, not only from a gender perspective but also from a social, ethnic and health-related perspective. The first step of this initiative was to integrate a gender perspective into the design of **urban planning** and also to develop and implement targeted projects for women. At this first stage, concepts and methods were developed and tested to provide general guidelines for the implementation of gender mainstreaming in all areas. The City of Vienna has also integrated **gender budgeting** into its budget proposals since 2006, reviewing all parts of the budget from a gender perspective and specifying, in a separate chapter, who benefits from different items in the budget. As a second step, the city focused on structural and systematic implementation of gender mainstreaming by concentrating activities on raising awareness, transferring knowledge and developing evaluation and reporting methods. Municipal officers in charge of gender equality have also been appointed.

Gender pay gap

Iceland: Equal pay certification: Parliament (*Alþingi*) passed an amendment to the 2008 legislation on equal position and equal rights of women and men on 1 June 2017, making it mandatory for all

firms and institutions with 25 or more employees (on a full time yearly basis) to obtain a "pay equality certification" (*Jafnlaunavottun*). The new provision entered into force on 1 January 2018. The largest workplaces (with 250 or more employees) had until 31 December 2018 to obtain their certification whereas smaller workplaces have more time to comply with the new legislation (e.g. those with 25-89 employees have until 31 December 2021). The required certification is based on the ISO "Equal pay management system - Requirements and guidance" (ÍST 85:2012). Professional certifiers, such as private consultancy firms, deliver their verdict, with a report for each case certified, to the public Centre for Gender Equality (*Jafnréttisstofa*). The certifiers are requested to give information to this centre about those who do not qualify in the test. The certification has to be renewed every three years. The centre cooperates with the social partners and can provide them with information from its registry of certified (and uncertified) companies and institutions.

International: The "Glassdoor" wage tracking software: Founded in 2007, Glassdoor is a job offer and recruitment website (www.glassdoor.com) created for job seekers, employees and employers. Besides job offers, Glassdoor contains a complete database indexing more than 8 million company evaluations, wage references, interview questionnaires, CEO and directors' evaluations, etc. It also includes a wage comparison tool taking into account the company, position and social benefit. It allows employees to compare their own salary with other the salaries of other employees from 180 000 companies in the world. Glassdoor provides help in improving recruitment processes to achieve a better gender balance, developing human resources management, increasing the proportion of women on executive boards, adjusting salary grids, enhancing employees' status and skills, etc.

Better work-life balance

Italy: Family Audit Certification: The "Family Audit" certification is the result of a joint project of two Italian public bodies: the Italian Department of Family Policy and the Autonomous Province of Trento. In 2012 they launched a reflection on a managerial tool to promote cultural and organisational change in businesses. Together, they built Family Audit, a certification attesting that companies have adopted human resources management measures, focusing on the wellbeing of employees and their households. Family Audit aims to continue improving the wellbeing of employees by introducing innovative, organisational and competitive solutions in terms of flexibility, time management and work-life balance. The tool was designed to address discriminatory situations at work and unequal career opportunities for men and women. Family Audit was a way to safeguard maternity rights, promote women's work and offer equal career opportunities for both men and women. The Family Audit certification starts with a thorough analysis of the business by consultants, who assess the situation of the company and identify goals and initiatives which would help meet work-life balance needs. Each business gets its own tailor-made programme with specific goals to achieve before being certified.

AVIVA: In November 2017, Aviva launched a new group-wide policy to offer equal paid leave to new parents, thus creating a level playing field for men and women who want to take time out to spend with the new addition to their family. They believe that regardless of gender, parents should not have to choose between caring for a new child and their career. Parents employed by Aviva will now be eligible to the same amount of paid and unpaid time off, regardless of gender, sexual orientation or how they became a parent (whether birth, adoption or surrogacy). They were the first company in France to offer 10 weeks of parental leave to both parents, eight weeks longer than the statutory

minimum. Aviva was also the first company in France to voluntarily publish a Gender Pay Gap report. Work-life balance and diversity in the workplace are strategic imperatives to global businesses today. Aviva sees becoming a more inclusive and diverse organisation at every level as a business priority. They believe that diversity makes commercial sense by improving innovation, decision-making and the way they deliver for customers.

Gender and media

International Women's Media Foundation - Global Report on the Status of Women in the News

Media: There is abundant evidence of underrepresentation of women in news coverage, but until now there were no reliable, comprehensive data on which to make a clear determination about where women currently fit into the news-making operation or in the decision-making or ownership structure of their companies. The IWMF Global Report on the Status of Women in the News Media seeks to fill this gap by presenting for the first time sound data on gender positions in news organisations around the world. The findings presented in this report, conducted over a two-year period, offer the most complete picture to date of women's status globally in news media ownership, publishing, governance, reporting, editing, photojournalism, broadcast production and other media jobs. More than 150 researchers interviewed executives at more than 500 companies in 59 countries using a 12-page questionnaire. The IWMF Global Report includes detailed information on news operations with respect to men's and women's occupational standing, salaries, hiring and promotional policies, and numerous other workplace practices. It also provides information about recruitment, training, policies related to advancement, news assignments, and a range of other issues that affect gender status in news organisations. While not all countries could be included in the study, those selected represent every region of the world, and the media surveyed represent a range of small, medium and large companies. The research takes a sound social science approach whereby the IWMF is able to make observations and draw general conclusions from the data.

UK: BBC: The broadcaster set a 50:50 gender quota after it came under pressure over its treatment of female staff. By April 2019, the corporation aims to have an equal number of male and female expert contributors to topical shows. The gender quota is now aimed at increasing the opportunities for women on air, ensuring a range of voices are heard. A series of measures has followed, including, in 2013, the creation of a "women's expert database" to make it easier for programme-makers to find and book female contributors for television and radio. More than 100 people have so far taken part in an "expert women" scheme, for free media training sessions to boost confidence and performance.

International: NewsMavens. NewsMavens is a news roundup about what is most important in Europe today, produced by women from top EU media brands. It compiles a daily recap of the most important news from Europe and a weekend review of the most relevant stories, including individual interviews with international women of influence with their own view on the stories that matter most to women.

Croatia: "Our Daily Sexism": In January 2017, a team of volunteers from the Croatian portal [Libela](#) researched how the most popular news portals in Croatia wrote about women and [discovered](#) that 4.5% of all articles (427 out of 9 515) in Croatia's most popular news portals had explicitly sexist headlines, leads or subheadings, which meant that each of the media outlets analysed had published, on average, approximately 100 sexist articles per month. After Libela's investigation into

sexism in Croatia was completed, a social media community project "[Our Daily Sexism](#)" (Seksizam naš svagdašnji) – a group that flags sexist ads, media articles, and statements by public figures in Croatia – was born. Over the past two years, the page has managed to take down several misogynist marketing ads and persuaded media outlets to apologise and remove them. There are several mechanisms in Croatia that can be used to call out sexism, and "Our Daily Sexism" uses them all quite successfully. The Facebook page was created in March 2017, and has made over 800 posts to date. Additionally, the most outrageously sexist or misogynistic posts, ads or articles are reported to the Ombudswoman for being in violation of Article 16(2) of the Gender Equality Act, which states: "It is forbidden to publicly present and represent women and men in an offensive, disparaging or humiliating way with regard to their gender and sexual orientation". Over the past two years, eight such cases have been reported to the Ombudswoman, who then asked the publishers to remove the offensive material.

L'Oréal "This is an ad for men" campaign: A bold new ad campaign, where cosmetics become charts that demonstrate the benefits of female leadership, has a message for men: hire more women. A visually inventive campaign from one of the world's leading cosmetics brands would like businessmen in positions of power to know that women are not just a trending topic. March was International Women's month, and many brands and corporate entities took the opportunity to honour their own female executives and highlight the benefits of diversified leadership. At the same time, quite a few acknowledged the considerable progress still to be made. An effort from L'Oréal Paris simplified the message by demonstrating the benefits of female leadership via some of the corporate executives' very favourite things: charts and graphs. But there was a key difference in that they were all made of cosmetics. The creative agency McCann Düsseldorf drew on global surveys connecting diversity in the workplace and the boardroom to three key measures of success: profitability, innovation and employee satisfaction. They then turned the numbers into visually striking illustrations of the degree to which companies benefit from hiring women in leadership roles while simultaneously displaying the brand's well-known products. When presented in this way, the ads promoting Color Riche, mascara and nail polish provide an immediate and visceral connection between more women in the boardroom and a healthier balance sheet. The statistics presented were drawn from global studies by the Peterson Institute for International Economics, the University of Arizona Eller College of Management and Korn Ferry Hay Group. Their message can also be read in a way specific to Germany where they were created. According to a 2019 survey by Ernst & Young, women account for only 8.6% of board members in publicly-listed German businesses.

International: Ariel "Share the load" campaign: Ariel's "Removing the Stains of Social Inequality" campaign, which encouraged men to share the traditionally female chore of washing, was crowned Campaign of the Year at the 2016 M&M Global Awards. On the Indian subcontinent, washing is seen as women's work. It does not matter what a woman does out of the home. If she's a director, a highly qualified professional or even a CEO, doing the washing is part of being a "good wife". Procter & Gamble-owned Ariel's best weapon in the detergent war was to ask a simple question: "Why couldn't a man do the washing?" This was a powerful global truth that could not only work on the Indian subcontinent but also add value elsewhere. The objective was to launch Ariel Matic, a new premium detergent on the Indian subcontinent, including in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, but the message went much further, going viral in 22 countries in 16 languages. Ariel used the content as far afield as Germany, Portugal and Spain.

Lithuania: (Un)Childish magazines: A third-year student from Vytautas Magnus University (Lithuania) has assessed the gender stereotyping and adultisation of the content of magazines for children in Lithuania. The assessment concluded that the most popular adult and child magazines, which usually provide easy-to-read information, can provide us with important information – what gender images are reflected and constructed by one of the most influential sources of public opinion, norms, values and stereotyping. Unfortunately, the children/younger adolescents, who have gone through the initial stage of primary socialisation and who are still looking for long-term identity and values in various fields, including their own sexual perception, are most vulnerable to stereotyping. Regrettably, this search for identity and values for the fans of most of the abovementioned journals begins with an uncritical awareness of the world of gender stereotypes. It is easy to describe the magazine's message: for girls – beauty, relationships with friends and boys, for boys - adventures, trials, games, techniques and other "men's" activities. Girls' magazines are usually more colourful, rich in pink, embellished with butterflies, flowers and so on. Customers are also attracted to various body and spirit supplements: lip glosses, jewellery, handbags, friendship bracelets, sense cards, beauty programmes, guy chat topics, and more. Meanwhile, boys' magazines are usually presented in darker colours, usually without attachments, and occasionally readers are provided with miniature toy weapons and machines, etc.

EU-wide: COFACE Network. #TOYS&DIVERSITY – Study on toy catalogues in Europe: making or breaking stereotypes? The project and campaign on "Toys and diversity" is a contribution to the current discussions on equality and diversity, stagnating rates of women's participation in employment and persistence of gender segregation in the labour market. But what image is being given to the younger generations? Are mass media and marketing providing a forward looking and non-stereotypical vision of inclusion and diversity? Alternatively, are they reinforcing stereotypes? Early years are key in the social and cognitive development of every child and the impact that play and toys have on child development contribute to shape the child's behaviour, interests and choices that he or she will make in later life. Therefore, to attempt to provide some answers to these questions, COFACE Families Europe designed a project on toys and diversity that aims to voice concerns and raise awareness among parents and families of marketing directed towards children. As an initial step, we decided to start by examining a marketing instrument aimed at families, such as toy catalogues and, using a diversity lens, to analyse how children are represented across different EU countries.

Germany: Berlinare: In 2019, not a single woman was nominated for best director at the Oscars, and so smaller festivals are stepping up. In recent years, the fight for gender parity in Hollywood has been growing, with movements like #MeToo and #TimesUp reaching across the globe. The effects are starting to show. The 69th *Berlinale*, or Berlin International Film Festival, opened on 7 February, with 41% of all films featured made by women. In terms of gender equality this places the *Berlinale* festival way ahead of the Cannes and Venice festivals, where last year only 14% and 5% of the features respectively were made by women.