



# TOGETHER FOR A FEMINIST EUROPE

STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK 2016 - 2020  
EUROPEAN WOMEN'S LOBBY

## ▶▶ THE SHAPING OF THE NEW STRATEGY

This strategy has been developed through a participatory process involving all parts of the European Women's Lobby (EWL). The contents have been drawn from the outcomes of strategy sessions, meetings, and Member, Executive Committee and staff consultations, including the EWL Board in Brussels (April 2014) EWL General Assembly in Lisbon (October 2014); Executive Committee meeting (January 2015); online member's consultations (November 2014-April 2015); and Strategy Workshop April 2015 in Brussels attended by Executive Committee, Member representatives and Staff.

This is the top line of EWL's strategic framework, setting out a clear analysis of the internal and external context EWL is operating in, EWL's vision for a feminist future, and EWL's role in making it happen. It asserts EWL's core values and principles, and EWL's approach and contribution to achieving change.

Other parts of the strategy – stakeholders and partnerships, key shifts, success indicators and work plans - will be more detailed and will set out in our Strategic Plan exactly how we are going to achieve our vision.

**This next phase of the process June – October 2015 will be developed in further meetings and members' consultations over the coming months, building on what we have achieved so far.**

Brussels, June 2015

EWL brings together the women's movement in Europe to influence the public and European Institutions in support of women's rights and equality between women and men.

Another world is  
on her way. On  
a quiet day I  
can hear her  
breathing.

- Arundhati Roy



Zsofi Lang Illustration

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EUROPEAN WOMEN'S  
**LOBBY**  
EUROPEEN DES FEMMES



Funded by the Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme

# ▶▶ WHAT WILL BE DIFFERENT ABOUT THIS NEW STRATEGY?

Our new Strategy has a **transformational agenda defining a clear collective vision for a feminist Europe, and challenging stereotypes, sexism and patriarchal values.** EWL's strategy and approaches have a refreshed and strengthened concept of power. Our joint campaigns will be embedded in sound power analysis, and will aim at challenging visible and invisible powers that prevent the realization of women's and girls' human rights.

a better society. It is a benefit - not a threat - for all. Particular priority will be given to developing our collective resources to build the campaigning and organisational capacity of women's organisations, EWL member organisations and the wider women's movement. As part of this approach, we will further develop working methods to enhance EWL member organisations' participation in setting plans, and implementing campaigns and advocacy strategies.

**Power With:** has to do with finding common ground among different interests in order to build collective strength. Based on mutual support, solidarity, collaboration and recognition and respect for differences, power with multiplies individual talents, knowledge and resources to make a larger impact.

**Power To:** refers to the unique potential of every person to shape his or her life and world. Education, training and leadership development for social justice are based on the belief that each individual has the power to make a difference, which can be multiplied by new skills, knowledge, awareness and confidence.

**Power Within:** has to do with a person's sense of self-worth and self-knowledge. It is grounded in an ethical value base that fosters a vision of human rights and responsibilities and an ability to recognize individual differences while respecting others.

**Link - Making Change Happen: Concepts for Revisioning Power for Justice, Equality and Peace, Just Associates**



EWL's strategy is **intersectional: it deliberately recognises that patriarchy and oppression effect different women in diverse ways** and demands that we engage with women and men in all their diversity, particularly where rights and discrimination intersect, for example, across race, economic status, ability, and sexuality. At the same time, women's rights and equality between women and men remain EWL's top priority and the starting point for all EWL activities. EWL will continue to reflect the diversity of context and experience of our members in different parts of Europe. Building on the considerable experience of generations of feminist activists, EWL will place particular emphasis on younger women, seeking to understand and support their concerns, recognising the new challenges they face, and empowering them so that they become a key constituency shaping the future of EWL.

This strategy will enable us to be part of a bigger discourse on the future of Europe: **promoting a holistic, transformational socio-economic vision**, based on well-being, social justice, and a strong voice against women's poverty. It promotes women's full participation and contribution to all aspects of society, and demands the defeat of patriarchal structures and culture. EWL will promote feminist alternatives to traditional patriarchal economics : towards an economy and society based on equality, human rights, social and environmental justice.

EWL will promote an **open and evolving approach** that takes into account new and emerging issues and values all aspects of women's lives throughout their lifecycle. Story-telling and women's personal and collective narratives will be a much more central part of our approach. EWL will aim to amplify diverse real women's voices and lived experience in different European contexts, and bringing these into the European decision-making arenas.

Feminists have developed categories that clarify the diverse sources and expressions of power – both positive and negative. These include the most common controlling forms of power – power over – and more life-affirming and transformational forms – power with, power to, and power within. EWL's concept of power is that of individual power ("power within") and collective capacity ("power with") to empower or positively transform oneself and others ("power to").

Collectively as EWL members, staff and governing bodies, **we will be agenda-setting and proactive instead of reactive**, helping to strengthen and champion the women's movement across Europe and in solidarity with women internationally. EWL's new Strategy helps us bring women's rights and equality between women and men into the centre of the political agenda. **It seeks to reinforce and broaden support for women's rights in Europe**, making our language and demands more accessible to a wider audience inside and beyond the European Institutions. This will help us to build broader pressure for change at EU level, which remains the primary focus of EWL work and action.

This new Strategic Framework will help us to understand and better tackle the opposition, and build support and momentum behind the demand for change, by communicating that equality between women and men is essential in creating

## ▶▶ EWL's VISION

### **We believe in a Feminist Europe.**

We want a holistic, transformational socio-economic vision, based on well-being, equality, social justice, and a powerful voice against women's poverty. We envision a culture in which women enjoy equal rights and participation in reimagined power and decision-making structures, in which all forms of violence against women has been eliminated, and women have been liberated from all forms of oppression. We envision a society in which women's contribution to all aspects of life is recognised, rewarded and celebrated - in leadership, in care and in production; all women have freedom of choice, self-confidence, and freedom from exploitation; and no woman has been left behind.

## ▶▶ EWL's 5 KEY PRINCIPLES

**Women's rights are  
Human Rights  
(non-negotiable and  
indivisible)**

**Solidarity**

**Autonomy**

**Inclusion**

**Participation**

## ▶▶ EWL's 6 CORE VALUES

**Equality between  
women and men**

**Dignity**

**Diversity**

**Justice**

**Peace**

**Respect**

## ▶▶ EWL's MISSION

We are a credible source of expertise and experience on women's rights and equality between women and men, representing the diversity of the women's movement across the European Union. We represent an inclusive, confident, loud, independent feminist voice and bring real women's voices into the EU political arena. We build consensus and mobilise our members' collective experience to work on major issues affecting women, to realise women's rights, equality between women and men and social justice. We act as a catalyst connecting different actors and organisations to bring change at EU level.

## ▶▶ THE INTERNAL CONTEXT: WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED?

Founded in 1990, the European Women's Lobby (EWL) is the largest alliance of women's non-governmental associations in the European Union.

As we celebrate EWL's 25th anniversary, we are proud that **our collective feminist voice** has made a significant difference. For 25 years EWL and its members have worked together at the European and national level to achieve equality between women and men in all areas of public and private life. We have raised and tackled issues of economic and social justice and independence for women. We have campaigned for the equal representation of women and men in decision-making. We have struggled together for women's human rights including the eradication of male violence against women.

**EWL's diverse membership** ensures that EWL has a representative and credible voice and expertise on women's rights policies at national and at EU level. EWL has developed a reputation with decision makers that ensures access and voice in important political and policy spaces. EWL's energized and active membership means that we can collectively draw on creativity and best practice from across Europe.

**Building the capacity of EWL Members** and the wider women's movement for high impact collective action is an important focus of EWL's work and activities. The stronger EWL's members, the stronger the collective voice of the women's movement the greater its political influence at local, national and EU level.

**EWL has worked across its membership to develop positions and lobby actions. EWL has sought to connect national women's rights grassroots organizations with EU level policies which is an area that will be developed in the next strategy phase.**

EWL will develop new ways of working that strengthen the leadership of EWL members and groups of members in designing and implementing campaigns together. It also means being more proactive in building capacity amongst EWL members for strategic planning, programme design, campaigning, organisational development, movement building and financial planning and management.

EWL's long history and diverse, democratic membership means that we have the convening power to facilitate connections across the women's movement and with wider civil society.

With a rapidly shifting civil society landscape however, a more strategic approach to power analysis and alliance building is needed to ensure that we do not miss opportunities to engage with other networks in Europe and globally to engage a broader group of people.

EWL has developed powerful campaigns with its members and with other organisations which can also be used as inspiration (5050 campaign, prostitution campaign, etc.).

The past 5 years have seen EWL's communications presence grow exponentially. With over 1.5 million visits to our website by 430.000 users and 21.000 Facebook friends, growth in social media has meant that EWL is able to reach out and interact with a large community of stakeholders that is growing

daily. The next phase will demand that EWL build on this to develop communications capacity across our membership to reach out to broader publics. This will include developing our engagement with traditional and new media in a way that is fully accessible and respects diversity.

**New technologies** also offer opportunities to improve our internal communications, allowing greater diversity and regularity of interaction amongst members and with the EWL Secretariat. EWL will test new ways of working virtually - including through webinars and video conferencing - to allow EWL members to work together more regularly across a range of topics and campaigns.

A dedicated team of hard working and expert staff is based in the **EWL secretariat** in Brussels. Investment will be needed to support staff to develop the core capabilities needed for the future to deliver on this strategy, particularly capacity building for staff and members on: power analysis, alliance and movement building, effective programme design, and monitoring and evaluation. There will also be investment in developing skills around management, communications, fundraising, financial management, governance and leadership development. EWL will develop and role-model feminist human resources, organisational development and governance approaches. We will champion a feminist leadership culture that integrates and promotes diversity and emphasises sustainability.

**A lack of financial resources** for women's rights is a major risk factor for the women's movement in Europe, including EWL and its membership. We are all too dependent for survival on a handful of donors. EWL itself is still heavily dependent on the European Commission for its funding. A creative and renewed emphasis on diversification and scaling up the mobilisation of resources is needed.

In a time of unprecedented national, European, and global change, diminishing confidence in the prevailing political and economic models, and renewed energy within the women's movement, **EWL has a unique opportunity in the next five years to represent the collective strength of our members, position us strongly within the women's rights movement globally, and present a timely, new and exciting vision and strategy for a feminist Europe.**

## ▶▶ THE EXTERNAL CONTEXT: THE WORLD IN 2015

In 2015, the European Women's Lobby (EWL) is celebrating its anniversary: 25 years of feminist action and activism all over Europe! An exciting and diverse new wave of feminist activism is bursting forth throughout the world and in Europe, connecting women and men in new campaigns and actions to combat discrimination and misogyny.

It is a remarkable moment in the struggle for women's rights and equality between women and men in Europe and globally. The international community is celebrating the 20th anniversary of the **Beijing Platform for Action**, a fundamental human rights instrument for women and girls adopted in 1995 at the United Nations Fourth World Conference in Beijing.

At the same time, the European Union (EU) will adopt its new **Strategy on Equality between women and men**, which should be the framework of the EU action on equality between women and men and women's empowerment for the coming 5 years. At the international level, a new global framework for development will be adopted, with new Sustainable Development Goals, including women's rights and equality between women and men as a standalone goal. These new SDGs will apply in all countries in the world and so provide an renewed opportunity for global, regional and national feminist action.

Assessing the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in Europe allowed EWL to take stock of progress, look at remaining challenges, and highlight opportunities for the European Union to lead the way towards women's empowerment and equality. Through this snapshot of women's rights in Europe, it is clear that despite the fact that equality between women and men is a core value of the EU, it is still not a reality in Europe.

**Europe is changing rapidly.** After enlargement and transition, 7 years of recession and austerity have left the EU without a progressive vision. This, combined with the rise of populist nationalist movements in parts of Europe has distracted political efforts away from measures to promote core European values of equality between women and men; human rights and social justice. Inequality, both within and across countries has increased in the past 10 years, and little progress has been made in recent years in closing the gap between women and men. The picture for women's rights is also very diverse across the EU, with women's rights going backwards in some countries.

Patriarchy and stereotypes persist within an otherwise dramatically changing context due to rapid globalisation.

The European Women's Lobby is working to secure and advance women's rights at the complex intersection of these two forces of globalisation and patriarchy.

### **Patriarchy and persisting stereotypes**

Patriarchy persists and frames the whole system which legitimatises the oppression of women's rights. In exploring how it is that we have laws protecting and promoting the equality between women and men, but there is still so much sexism and violence, it is important to emphasise the extent

to which stereotypes constrain women's roles in work and at home, in society and politics, in sport and culture. Efforts to empower women within this system have shown their limits. Feminists need to go beyond empowerment to achieve the liberation of women from patriarchy and misogyny.

Populist and conservative forces in Europe are increasingly organising themselves to question the very principle of equality between women and men. This movement is attempting to push women back into traditional roles in the personal sphere and limiting women's engagement in political and public life.

This is particularly threatening **sexuality education and SRHRs** in Europe as we have seen with proposed restrictions to abortion rights in Spain, with the One of Us mobilisation at European level, the homophobic reaction in France and with the growing voice of the so-called Anti "Gender ideology" voices in Central Europe seeking to question the very idea of equality between women and men.

### **Feminism and the current macro-economic landscape**

Globalisation as it manifests within the current macro-economic system has weakened the role of the State and international institutions, as power is shifting from state to corporate and financial institutions. Power is further shifting between continents and countries, increasing inequality between rich and poor and men and women.

The values of competition, profit, and patriarchy that underpin much of the present dominant globalised macro-economic system are contributing to growing inequalities and are impoverishing women. Current economic orthodoxy is spreading deregulation and primacy of the market, undermining the regulatory role of the state, and leading to reductions of public budgets which impact most heavily on women. This prevailing economic model also supports an emphasis on individualistic discourse and lifestyle, which impacts on women's and girls' rights (through their commodification) and on solidarity as people are isolated or divided (sometimes even within the women's movement).

Discussion about macro-economic policy usually assumes it to be **gender-blind and "free of ideologies"**, as if the economy is a benevolent and invisible power rather than a matter for political decision making and accountability. As such, and according to UN Women, prevailing economic policy "...has failed to support the achievement of substantive equality for women. From a human rights perspective, macroeconomic policy needs to pursue a broad set of social objectives that would include the creation of decent work, mobilizing resources to enable investments in social services and transfers and creating channels for meaningful participation by civil society organizations, including women's movements, in macroeconomic decision-making".

As feminists we must assert that that economics is politics, and that the socio-economic outcomes are derived from specific actors making concrete decisions that have gender impacts. A lack of effective democratic global governance is also contributing to a crisis in democracy, where many people feel disengaged from formal political processes. Additionally, while there is clear scientific consensus about the threat of climate change to our way of life, there is a political inability to address the very real and present threat. The urgency of the need to

tackle climate change may also represent an opportunity to change the system as our old models of growth, production and consumption will no longer be feasible. Feminists – who have always been close to ecological movements – need to embrace this opportunity.

**As we set out our strategy for the coming years, we can see a volatile decade ahead full of challenges and opportunities:**

### Violence against Women

The FRA Survey on Violence against Women in 2014 finally produced official evidence of the high prevalence of violence against women in all parts of Europe. It also provided a comprehensive overview of the old and new forms of violence that women in Europe are facing specifically because they are women. Violence against women still constitutes the most widespread violation of women’s human rights in Europe. From domestic violence to stalking; from prostitution to online abuse; from FGM to rape; the persistence of old and new forms of violence against women demonstrates the extent to which our societies are built on and perpetuate patriarchal values and male domination and entitlement.

### Poverty and the Economy

The recent financial crises have been a real setback in terms of efforts to achieve equality and social justice. Austerity has led to rising inequalities inside and among EU Member States. Cuts and outsourcing of public services have a particularly negative impact on women both as majority users, employees and providers of underpaid and unpaid care. The overall financial instability has had a detrimental impact on women. EWL work on Austerity in Europe shows the **impact of austerity** on women’s rights, employment and women’s organisations, as well as the impact of neoliberalism & consumer society on women and girls. We see women bearing the brunt of the cuts to public spending, further consigning women to a “pink ghetto” of economic injustice, poverty and insecurity. This is not a new phenomenon, but has been exacerbated by the ongoing political trend for austerity measures to reduce public debt.

The nature of work and employment is changing rapidly with jobs shifting to parts of the world with lower pay and labour rights. In Europe there is a rise in unemployment especially amongst younger and older women. There is an increase in part time, low paid and precarious jobs combined with declining Trade Union membership.

This evolving labour market provides opportunities to develop new kinds of employment through social entrepreneurship, the digital economy, new hybrid business models, and other exciting and innovative fields. However, these areas need to be monitored and shaped to ensure that they protect and promote women’s rights and equality between women and men.

**Feminist economists** urge us to think beyond GDP as a goal for governments to pursue growth and look instead for new measures of wellbeing. They are engaging in exciting new analysis and campaigns emphasising the potential role of tax and public spending as a means to redistribute power and resources to women. There are new, powerful and interesting

allies in institutions and civil society in this struggle. Feminist economists have talked about gender impacts of politics of finance and economy. This important theme is now lacking. Economic growth can be pursued with different means of politics of finance and economy, and they can be better or worse for equality between women and men and welfare.

### Migration and Demographic change

Europe is facing an ageing population, low fertility rate, increasing demand for care, pensions, and increase in migration. All are having a significant impact on the political and socio-economic landscape for women in Europe. Migrant and ethnic minority women are particularly vulnerable to low paid precarious work in the formal and informal labour market. There is a pension gap between women and men of nearly 40%, which combined with an aging population of predominantly women represents a major threat to equality between women and men and social cohesion. Migration and demographic change also represent an opportunity for women’s rights. The need to engage more effectively with women in all their diversity offers an opportunity for building and strengthening alliances for progressive feminist change across civil society and beyond, and for making sure that we guarantee and advocate for the equal rights of all migrant women in Europe.

5 years of austerity has also contributed to the **backlash** against women rights and a lack of solidarity around the urgent need for assistance to the victims especially migrant women and girls trafficked, raped and killed including in the Mediterranean Sea.

### Power and Democracy

Women are still woefully **underrepresented** in power and decision-making. Less than 25% of members of parliaments in Europe and 3% of CEOs in top companies are women. As feminist activists we see an urgent need to introduce measures to tackle the overrepresentation of men in all areas of power and decision-making, and to engage men in supporting our feminist vision.

Europe is increasingly succumbing to the global trend of closing down of democratic space for civil society and citizenship. From the UK’s new law limiting lobbying by CSOs to recent laws to limit demonstrations in Spain, government actions to restrict the voices of citizens, movements and CSOs are a concern to women’s rights activists. Extremist and populist movements and views are on the rise, together with increased resistance to women’s rights. Women human rights defenders across the world are particularly vulnerable to abuse and this is no different in Europe.

There are opportunities for EWL to advance a vision of **feminist leadership** that is transformational, sees women as agents of change and not victims and advances structural changes for women’s rights. Feminist leadership consciously supports diversity and intersectionality. It makes space for and encourages other women.

Feminist leadership also sees a shift in how business is done and we are seeing an increasingly lively debate in the corporate world about shifting the leadership culture and practice from competition to collaboration; slowly social and

sustainable business models are beginning to replace pure profit driven enterprises. EWL will seek new ways of engaging with progressive parts of the business world to develop strategies to support equality between women and men and women's rights eg. closing the gap in pay and leadership; women in social entrepreneurship; women in the digital economy etc.

At the same time new citizens' movements are reacting by opening up of new political space, local action, progressive forces experimenting with alternatives. In particular a youthful new **"Fourth Wave" of feminism** is upon us. It is energetic, humorous and angry. It recognises the diverse needs of different women. It is connected and vibrant! Opportunities are presenting themselves to build new alliances within civil society. This means there is an opportunity to promote a feminist discourse within and across European civil society and build a new generation of feminist leadership in social movements.

### Digital technology

The increasing prevalence and emphasis of the Internet in all aspects of our lives, from learning to demanding accountability from our government, means that it is becoming part of the texture of our everyday social, political, economic, and cultural life. Digital technology offers huge possibilities for feminist activism and community-building, new technologies also represent an opportunity for disruptive power to change the system. New economic opportunities and work spaces are opening up. But digital technologies also represent new spaces of violence and oppression for women's rights activists. They can further perpetuate existing inequalities and exclusion. Emerging campaigns calling for a feminist internet stress that it is not just an inert tool, but a space, where identities are constructed, norms redefined or disrupted, and action undertaken.

### Resourcing the mechanisms to support women's rights

The lack of funding for women's rights and equality between women and men constitutes a significant threat to the achievement of equality between women and men. The level and regularity of resourcing has been the main factor contributing to the success or failure of institutions for the promotion of women and gender mainstreaming strategies. The financial crisis has had a major impact on the available resources for women's rights and equality between women and men. At a time when women's rights, independence and equality are far from being achieved, special attention must be given to maintaining high levels of resourcing for measures which aim at keeping up with progress towards equality between women and men. Financial resources, in particular core funding, are also at the heart of ensuring a voice for women's rights organisations at all levels. This is of direct concern to EWL and its member organisations especially as it impacts on their own sustainability.

### Working for change at the EU level

EWL and its members work together for EU legislation, strategies, programmes and policies in support of our vision and aims. In the past few years it has become increasingly difficult to achieve legislative and policy change at EU level behind any progressive, rights based agenda, including women's human rights. Despite the evidence that progress on **gender equality has stagnated in recent years**, gender equality has been diluted and the 'crisis' used as an excuse, and there is a lack of political will or capacity to legislate for concrete measures in support of women's rights, representation and resources at EU level.

This explains EWL's analysis of the need to strengthen the constituency of support for women's rights through reinforcing our members and engaging activists at national level, to build pressure on EU and national institutions to introduce and resource an effective strategy for equality between women and men at EU level. It also means that EWL needs to reinforce the capacity of our members and strategic allies to campaign for stronger EU frameworks and institutions in support of women's rights and women's organisations.

### Reaching out beyond the EU

The causes and impacts of inequality between women and men are global. The continued need to monitor the implementation of the Beijing PFA, as well as the need to ensure implementation and adequate resourcing for the new Sustainable Development Goals provides an impetus for joint working with women's movements throughout the world. We need to work in a leadership role within the **global women's movement** to ensure that we are joining forces to find and share the solutions. We need to share analysis and resources to resist the backlash and – together - we need to build stronger alliances within and beyond the women's movement. Working with allies in our neighbouring countries, as well as in other OECD countries can bring opportunities to share, learn and expand our voice.

## ▶▶ OUR THEORY OF CHANGE: HOW WE BELIEVE CHANGE HAPPENS

We believe in a Feminist Europe in which an end to gender inequality is not only possible, but imperative, to achieve the well-being of all people and the planet.

Change does not follow a straight path. It is, however, happening every day because of the passion, vision and commitment of people working across borders, social groups, and experiences, who are more powerful when they work together.

EWL believes change can happen when:

**EWL Members** and the wider feminist movement work in solidarity with each other across Europe and internationally

We use **effective and accessible communication**, including digital communications, to shift values and behaviours that discriminate against women

We build **awareness**, **promote** feminisms, and **empower** all citizens to fight patriarchy

**Feminist leadership** works to **eradicate stereotypes** and engage men and women to participate in and influence democratic processes

**Legislation and public policy** support women's equal control over, and access to, spaces, resources and services

## ▶▶ STRATEGIC AIMS: LONG TERM GOALS TO ACHIEVE OUR VISION

### Building our Movement: 3 INTERNAL Strategic Aims

1. To raise more, better and **sustainable funding** for women.
2. To work together effectively at **different levels and in different contexts:** local, national, European Union and International.
3. To promote and debate **diversity**, advancing consensus, and strengthen our collective voice.

### Transforming society: 4 EXTERNAL Strategic Aims

1. To put an **end to all forms of violence against women and girls** and promote a society of peace, human security and dignity.
2. To challenge and change the culture of **sexism and stereotypes** and promote positive roles for women and men.
3. To promote the feminist transformation of a **sustainable economy** based on new economic models based on equality, well-being, care and social justice.
4. To position women at the heart of **political, social and economic participation and decision-making**.
5. To ensure **sustainable and strong institutional mechanisms** for equality between women and men at **EU level**.