



EUROPEAN WOMEN'S
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Europe 2020 Mid-Term Review

A Purple Pact: Looking back – Moving forward

Brussels, 31 October 2014

European Women's Lobby contribution to the Mid Term Review of the Europe 2020 Strategy

A new impetus for gender equality - A new Purple Pactⁱ

Introduction

The European Women's Lobby (EWL), the largest coalition of women's non-governmental organisations in the European Union (EU) comprising of members from the 28 EU Member States and three accession countries, as well as 20 European-wide women's non-governmental organisations, welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the Mid-Term Review of the Europe 2020 Strategy and calls for a forward looking vision for the remainder of the decade.

The EWL regrets that a gender equality dimension was omitted from the onset of the Europe 2020 Strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth in 2010,ⁱⁱ despite the fact that many studiesⁱⁱⁱ were produced at the time showing women's contribution to the economy for sustainable and inclusive growth. The EWL's contribution to the future of the EU2020 Strategy in 2009^{iv}, also stressed the urgency of a strong gender equality framework to steer the EU in the next ten years, particularly in the context of the crisis which was unfolding at that time.

However, the EWL welcomes the positive signals acknowledging that gender equality remains a core value of the EU. In particular, the EWL warmly welcomes the recent letter submitted by the Swedish^v government on behalf of 19 EU member states calling for a gender equality pillar within the EU2020 governance framework. Subsequently, the next phase of the EU2020 Strategy and the European semester architecture should be more explicit to steer and guarantee women's rights and gender equality in this rapidly changing environment.

Since the launching of the EU2020 Strategy in 2010 the world has changed considerably both within the European Union and globally. These changes can also bring new opportunities, particularly with regards to strengthening women's rights both at EU and international level. 2015 is a key milestone which the EU should seize to build on for the remainder of the EU2020 Strategy and beyond. The Beijing Platform for Action, endorsed by all Member States in 1995, provides a platform for the EU to reconfirm and strengthen its commitments and actions to make gender equality a reality in the EU by 2020. It should also underpin the renewal of the Commission's own Strategy on equality between women and men. At the same time, the renewal of the Millennium Development Goals in 2015 will adopt a stand-alone objective on gender equality. These key milestones provide the basis to make gender equality a global political goal, which the EU has a major role to play both at EU and international level.

This contribution to the mid-term review of the EU2020 Strategy is divided into two parts. The first looks at the past four years and provides a critical analysis of the Strategy and Semester architecture from a gender equality perspective. The second part looks towards the future and provides recommendations for the next phase of the Strategy particularly the gender equality pillar in the form of a new **Purple Pact**. This detailed contribution will serve as a basis to respond to the online questionnaire of the Commission's public consultation on the mid-term review.



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I.

Looking Back - EWL critical analysis of the EU2020 Strategy and European Semester architecture

1. Economic governance without a women's rights and gender equality perspective undermines the inclusive objectives of the Europe 2020 Strategy

The European Semester architecture^{vi} which is supposed to be the tool to implement the Europe 2020 Strategy has given prominence to economic governance to the detriment of a balanced and holistic socio-economic, rights based environmental approach; thus a smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. Austerity driven policies have impacted disproportionately on women, and have lowered working and living standards for women and men throughout Europe. It is clear that austerity is not working. It has led to a loss of confidence, trust and legitimacy in the EU itself, as economic policies and strategies have become more disconnected from the *real* lives of women and men throughout the EU.

The EWL regrets that debates amongst Member States about how to reach the 2020 targets have focus on short-term economic recovery through further austerity, ignoring the inclusive objectives of the 2020 Strategy.

The stakes continue to be high as the financial and economic crisis has transformed into a social and ideological crisis, in which conservatism, sexism, racism, homophobia and populism thrive, hitting women hardest. The impact of the recession on women became more acute over time as the effects of labour-market shifts were increasingly felt within households. Cuts in public expenditure affect public services and the many women who work in and use them^{vii}. Reductions in public expenditure also result in the transfer of care back to households, thus on women and perpetuate the uneven distribution of unpaid care work between women and men. This also undermines the achievement of the 75% employment headline target. Austerity driven policies are having a significant and damaging impact on specific groups of women who face multiple disadvantages: young and the elderly, migrants and ethnic minorities, the low-skilled, those with short-term contracts, single mothers, women in rural areas, those aged over 45, women with disabilities and women returning to work after childbirth.

Instead of being the guiding force of the EU2020 Strategy, the European semester transformed into a platform for **structural adjustment policy** and hence undermined the achievements of the EU2020 headline targets for *smart, sustainable and inclusive growth*.

EWL are concerned that this will lead to more poverty and inequalities both in the short and in the long term; where women are hit the hardest.



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2. The need for a specific horizontal headline target on gender equality within the EU2020 Strategy's five headline targets

All of the five headline targets should be gender mainstreamed, including the Research and Development target and the environmental targets. The Europe2020 *Guidelines for the employment policies of the Member States*, issued in 2010, provide specific guidance to Member States. In particular, **Guideline 7** refers to “*increased labour-market participation of women and men*” and highlights issues relating to childcare provision, equal pay, work-life balance and developing employment within the care sector. In terms of poverty/social exclusion, **Guideline 10** requests that all measures to tackle poverty should aim at promoting gender equality and focuses particularly on one-parent families. However, progress on these was not systematically checked in the National Reform Programmes of the Member States or referred to in the subsequent Country-Specific-Recommendations issued by the Commission. It is clear therefore, that in the absence of a **specific horizontal headline objective on gender equality** in the framework of the EU2020 Strategy, the approach is inconsistent and piecemeal.

3. Country-Specific-Recommendations (CSRs)

The EWL acknowledges that gender equality CSRs increased in terms of quantity in the four years since these were issued to Member States. However, these are **framed** in a **gender neutral** way, using concepts such as “**second earners**”, “**single parent households**” which hide the reality of gender inequality at the core of these concepts. This can have adverse effects by increasing rather than decreasing gender equality. For example, recommendations framed as gender ‘equal’, such as aligning the retirement ages of women and men, are not accompanied by measures to boost older women’s employment rates. Similarly, CSRs that call to increase the accessibility and affordability of childcare services, are aimed at women when they could promote shared care – of all dependent not only children – between women and men. The CSRs have missed the potential to strive towards a more gender equal society, where both women and men can become **equal workers and equal carers**.

It is clear that the Commission considers the low availability of childcare facilities as the main barrier to women’s employment. However, the Commission’s recommendations do not pay enough attention to the **low quality of women’s jobs** that remain in **gender segregated** framework coupled with **low pay, persistent gender pay gap** and **high-levels of part-time work** in most EU Member States. These factors contribute to high **gender pension gaps** and higher levels of **poverty** among women.

The EWL wishes to draw attention to the lack of consistent CSRs that address the **gender pay and the gender pension gaps** in particular. In 2011, 2012 and 2013, Austria was the only EU Member State to receive CSRs to address these gaps. The **gender pension gap is 39%^{viii}** on average in the EU, yet, in the CSRs that call on Member States to ‘reform’ pension systems, **NO** mention was ever made to this unacceptable gender gap that propels the majority of older women in to poverty. In 2014, no Member State was issued with a CSR to address the pay and pension gaps, despite the fact that these gaps exist in all countries. Specific targets must be set to reduce with the aim of eliminating these gaps by 2020.



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The EWL members issued **alternative country-specific recommendations** in 2012, 2013 and 2014.^{ix} These were based on analysis of their NRPs. As tensions arise between, on the one hand, pressure on Member States to severely reduce public deficits and, on the other hand, the absence of a full gender equality impact analysis (as well as a social impact analysis) to ascertain the impact of public deficit reductions on (in)equality between women and men as well as the impact on increasing inequalities, poverty and social exclusion as a direct result of austerity. More stringent and coherent gender equality objectives, targets and strategies across the broad spectrum of macro and socio economic policies are needed. While it cannot be denied that the socio-economic impact is part of a global crisis, women's contribution to moving out of the crisis should not be underestimated. In fact, there will be no future vision if women continue to be on the margins of economic power and decision-making.

4. A lack of coherence with other policy frameworks

Since the adoption of the EU2020 Strategy, several commitments were made on the need to strengthen the gender equality dimension but the lack of consistency has resulted in a patchwork approach to gender equality throughout the European semester over the past four years. Most notably, the [European Pact for Gender Equality 2011-2020](#), adopted in March 2011 calls on all the institutions involved to take the gender equality perspective into account in the implementation of the Europe 2020 Strategy, in **National Reform Programmes**, in the **Annual Growth Survey**, in the **Country Opinions and the Country Specific Recommendations**, and to make appropriate use of agreed gender equality indicators developed within the **Joint Assessment Framework** and within the follow-up of the **Beijing Platform for Action**. However, this has not happened systematically despite the potential of these effective tools. In addition, the [Strategy for Equality between women and men 2010-2015](#), adopted by the European Commission in September 2010, was never referred to in the European semester process. This Strategy, due to be renewed in 2015, must form the basis of an overall coherent framework in order to strengthen a coherent, consistent and holistic approach to gender equality in the post Mid-Term Review period. The absence of policy coherence has hampered the achievement of equality between women and men in the past.

Nevertheless, the EWL welcomes the gender equality objectives in the new Structural Funds Regulations for the period 2014-2017, which increasingly make a link the objectives of the EU2020 Strategy.

5. The weakest link - Lack of consultation with stakeholders including with women's organisations

The involvement of Civil Society (CS) in the form of consultation prior to the drafting of National Reform Programmes was very sketchy and/or in-existent in many countries, despite reference to 'stakeholder involvement' in Recital 16 of the Employment Guidelines. A lack of meaningful consultation and engagement of CS, including women's organisations, was a lost opportunity not only to gain input from grass-roots organisations, but in the long term risks jeopardising vital support for a more gender equal, social and sustainable inclusive growth model which can restore trust and hope in the EU project.



II.

Moving Forward – A pillar on gender equality, a new *Purple Pact*

The EWL firmly believes that the Mid-Term Review provides an opportunity to take stock of the past and to put in place the conditions for a new paradigm for the remainder of the EU2020 Strategy and beyond in which equality between women and men is the corner stone in the form of a ***Purple Pact***.

The EWL recognises that the current recession is unprecedented. It is **not** the result of evolutionary economic cycles but a consequence of a systemic implosion. Globalisation, unregulated financial markets, putting capital before people has led to growing inequalities in terms of income and access to social justice and human rights. The absence of women in economic and political decision-making and side-lining equality between women and men have all led to the collapse of the system with serious repercussions on the real lives of women, men, girls and boys both in the EU and worldwide.

According to the European Commission's own progress report on equality between women and men in 2013^x, in the absence of renewed policies, it will take **over 100 years** to achieve gender equality in Europe! Clearly, this sends a strong message that it can no longer be "business as usual"; advances to date with regards to gender equality are at risk of being undermined stalling progress for the present and the future.

Therefore, the EWL calls for a ***Purple Pact*** that challenges the **conventional 'growth' concept**, particularly as eminent economists (such as Joseph Stiglitz) converge that a (conventional) growth economy is not on the foreseeable horizon. An **'inclusive growth'** paradigm is therefore urgent, encompassing gender equality, equality for all, social justice, well-being and environmental sustainability, i.e. **going beyond** conventional Gross Domestic Product (**GDP**) as the sole measure of growth and prosperity and analyse present macroeconomic simulation models for growth from a gender equality perspective, thus putting unpaid work and real conditions for change into focus."

A ***Purple Pact*** requires first and foremost a **holistic life-cycle approach**, recognising that each phase of women and men's life phases impact on each other, therefore taking into consideration **demographic trends and changes** as well as **transitional points** in women and men's lives. Policies must be capable of identifying specific life phase needs and respond accordingly to ensure that continuous gender equality is at the core of a life-cycle vision.

Within this context and to ensure that a ***Purple Pact*** guides policy making for the remainder of the EU2020 Strategy and beyond, the EWL proposes five areas, which are further developed in the following section of this document; with a set of recommendations attached below.

1. A DUTY OF CARE - DEVELOP THE CARE ECONOMY
2. BUDGETS: THE MIRROR OF POLITICAL PRIORITIES
3. MIND THE GAPS –Pay, Pensions, Poverty
4. STRENGTHEN INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS
5. GENDER MAINSTREAMING



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1. A DUTY OF CARE - DEVELOP THE CARE ECONOMY

“Caring for others is central to the continuation of society, and caring for others, and being cared for, at different stages in our lives, is one of the central emotional experiences of our shared humanity” EWL Campaign Who Cares? 2006

In the context of the 2020 Strategy, the **care economy** complements the **green economy** as a means of reaching employment and inclusive growth targets, and provides a **holistic response to demographic changes**. Employment Guideline 7^{xi} clearly states that *job creation in all areas [should include] green employment and care*.

The EWL welcomes the inclusion in the Europe 2020 Strategy of the headline target to “green” the economy, namely, climate change and energy efficiency and proposes in a similar vein to **add targets on the care economy**, in conformity with Employment Guideline 7. This requires going **beyond the Barcelona targets** on childcare, to add care policies and targets for dependent persons, including the elderly. The care economy complements the green economy in that it reflects our shared responsibility towards the environment with our shared responsibility towards each other. Care is essential for social cohesion and the reproduction of human capital.

Strengthening the care sector, in which women are over-represented, requires increasing the value of care through quality work opportunities, higher wages, additional multiform infrastructures, and professional training, making the care sector a viable career prospect for both women and men. Specific attention must be paid to improving the position and working conditions of female migrant domestic care workers. The lack of provision of affordable services has negative consequences on the participation of women in particular on the labor market, which is accentuated by cuts in public care services under the auspices of austerity measures. The needs for care services are not being met and the potential to create quality jobs is missed.

Commitments relating to child care services notably the Barcelona targets, which have yet to be met in many Member States^{xii}, bring to the forefront the importance of care for sustainable human reproduction. While the numbers of women on the labour market today are unprecedented, women also continue to be the **main care givers/providers** to dependent family member including children, elderly and other dependents, and have more than ever before become **dual actors** both on the labour-market and in the home. The gender roles and relationships that structure **paid and unpaid work** have a direct impact on inequalities between women and men in the labour-market. Similarly, countries that have integrated care structures and family leave measures, including paid maternity and parental leave, are countries where women’s employment rates are also highest.

In the next decade, that is, the period covered by the EU 2020 Strategy, the numbers of older women and men will increase substantially: the proportion of the population over the age of 65 in the EU28 will almost double in the next 40 years, and the proportion of those over the age of 80 is expected to more than triple by 2050. Demographic changes with low replacement rates and increasing dependency rates require a holistic approach to care which encompasses care needs throughout the life-cycle.^{xiii} The European Commission acknowledges that the need for long term care will increase substantially in the coming years, yet no follow-up has been given to its Communication on Long Term Care under the Social Investment Package^{xiv}.



One of the impacts of the financial, economic and social crisis is the reduction in public spending in areas such as social and health services, which will in the long term shift the burden of care from the community to individual households, i.e. mainly women. Women are particularly at risk of experiencing inequalities in employment directly because of their caring activities and to accumulating inequalities over their life-cycle, with detrimental consequence on their economic independence and right to a dignified life as they age.

Similar to the environment where it has become apparent over the last decade that concerted EU action is necessary, the care economy should also be seen as a growth sector which places particular emphasis on well-being, hence reinforcing social cohesion. As all Member States are facing similar demographic challenges which, if ignored, will become more acute over the period of the EU 2020 Strategy, it is therefore, to address this pressing issue. The recommendations hereunder are addressed within the EU framework, while the implementation will be effective within Member States.

EWL RECOMENDATIONS

- Develop the **care economy** to respond to increasing care needs and as a viable career prospect for both women and men.
- Integrate the care economy into **educational and professional career** and training options, to break the gender stereotypes by offering care as a career option for women **and** men. In the context of efforts to tackle youth unemployment in particular, present the care sector as a viable option for young people, both women **and** men, for example through training programmes that emphasise the multiplicity of skills required in the sector in the future (ICT, multicultural skills, social skills). Create new **employment opportunities** in the area of care, covering the spectrum of care throughout the life cycle.
- Introduce a **new target on care** in relation to **care services for dependants other than children** and renew commitments for the realisation of the **Barcelona targets and targets that go beyond Barcelona** with a **clear timetable**. Boost care facilities for the elderly, including **social housing** schemes, **community development services** (home help, carers), accompanying services to enable **independent living**, intergenerational solidarity schemes, respite care facilities, etc.
- Address the issue of **pay** levels and **working conditions** in the care sector.
- Closely **monitor** and subsequently introduce a **new target** on to the **share of parental leave taken by men**.
- Develop **European legislative measures on other types of leave** as part of measures to reconcile professional and private life, such as: leave for care for elderly persons, or other dependants such as a family member with a disability or terminal illness; education leave to facilitate life-long learning.
- **Improve the conditions of migrant care workers by making domestic work subject to regulation** which guarantees that the worker can benefit from the full range of social rights and social protection and develop strategies which aim to facilitate and enable migrant care workers to gain regular employment.
- Follow up the country specific recommendations on care services given in 2011, 2012, 2013 and 2014 and give new recommendations on the provision of **elderly care services** – ensure that Member States who have received recommendations will have to use Structural Funds to address the gaps.



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2. BUDGETS: THE MIRROR OF POLITICAL PRIORITIES: the need for gender budgeting throughout the whole economic processes (making the links: gender equality in the context of economic, fiscal and social policies)

Economic policy guidance given to Member States in the framework of the European Semester has contributed to the detrimental effects on gender equality and particularly on women. Firstly, encouraging further cuts in public spending as carried out through Country-Specific-Recommendation disproportionately affect women because, as the main employees in public service sector, they bear the cost of layoffs and wage cuts. Reductions in public expenditure also transfers care work back to households, thus on women and perpetuate the uneven distribution of unpaid care work between women and men.

Secondly, specific proposals to reform Member States' employment and social policies such as the idea to tie pensions more closely with contributions and enhance privatisation and to tackle unemployment with a "stick and carrot" approach penalise women because they fail to address the structural dimension of gender inequalities in the labour market and of women's social exclusion.

This is also in complete opposition to the *Strategy for equality between women and men 2010-2015* and the **European Pact for Gender Equality 2011-2020** explicitly requires the European Commission itself and the Member States to promote equality between women and men in the implementation of the Europe 2020 strategy.^{xv}

The European Union cannot afford economic policy coordination that does not assess the impact of the proposed measures on women. To ensure progress toward the inclusive and social objectives of the 2020 Strategy, **the Council must take the initiative to carefully integrate a gender equality perspective into the European semester policy coordination cycle by notably applying the principles of gender budgeting.** Bringing equality between women and men to the heart of structured policy coordination and monitoring between the Commission and the Member States would enable a redressing of structural gender inequalities in a holistic way, helping the EU and the Member States to deliver on their commitments to equality between women and men, and to advance toward another model of society in which equality between women and men is the cornerstone.



EWL RECOMMENDATIONS

- Integrate a gender equality perspective into the whole European semester process by **taking into account women's needs and situation in the policy guidance given in the Annual Growth Survey and Country-Specific-Recommendations** by integrating a **gender impact assessment** in the assessment of national policies and macro-economic developments.
- Develop **gender disaggregated data** and methods of analysis, which allow to **monitor the impacts** of changes in taxes and benefits on individuals, not only on a household basis.
- **Assess the impact on women of planned and currently implemented austerity measures** in all Member States and include concrete measures targeted at women to counter these impacts. Integrate national **Gender Equality Targets** including **National Action Plans for Gender Equality** in the CSR's as a crucial tool for **gender budgeting**
- Include women, **especially feminist economists** in economic policy planning at the European and national level and take binding measures for the equal representation of women in economic decision-making;
- Use **gender budgeting tools to plan, implement and evaluate all public budgets** to ensure the effectiveness and equal outcomes of public spending;
- Apply the **Interinstitutional Agreement¹** between the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission with regards to annual budgetary procedures under the **MFF 2014-2020**, which calls for greater **gender-responsive** elements to take into account the ways in which the overall financial framework of the Union **contributes to increased gender equality**, and ensures **gender mainstreaming**.
- Establish **permanent gender budgeting units** within finance ministries and within ECFIN in the European Commission, which works in collaboration with the state machinery for gender equality
- **Use consistently the country-specific recommendations to enforce** specific actions to improve women's situation, to point out the gendered impact of proposed policy measures, and to encourage more systematic gender mainstreaming in the NRPs, including in the macroeconomic policies;
- Subject **all budgetary and taxation measures** under consideration to a **gender impact assessment**, where by a full distributional analysis is undertaken to identify how women and men and different groups are likely to be affected. The assessment must include consideration of how the unequal effects identified can be **mitigated and eliminated**. Correct proposed budgets in light of gender impact assessments to ensure equal outcome.



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3. MIND THE GAPS –Strengthened measures for women’s employment and robust measures to close the gender Pay, Pensions, Poverty gaps

Employment

Working culture and practices continue to be based on the ‘**male bread-winner**’ model, i.e. full-time, 40-45 year uninterrupted career, upon which social protection rights, particularly pensions, and taxation are based. However, the crisis has brought a shift in working patterns resulting in a deterioration of working patterns and conditions for all. Because of the crisis, many women are now **also the prime and sole breadwinners**, both in single headed households and in what once were dual earning households.

Part-time work is a characteristic of women’s employment patterns with four times more women working part-time than men. Consequently, women’s access to social rights and particularly pension rights are severely hampered, exposing them to a higher risk of poverty throughout their lives and particularly in old age.

Women continue to be perceived as ‘**dependents**’ or ‘**second earners**’ in taxation and social security systems which perpetuate rigid traditional gender roles and expectations. **Outdated concepts** in relation to **household composition and family models**, fail to capture the reality of women’s paid and unpaid lives. Therefore, a move towards the individualisation of rights with regards to social security and taxation is urgent to establish a balance between women and men and to guarantee women’s status as individuals within their own right.

Labour market reforms under the Europe 2020 Strategy as outlined in the Agenda for New Skills and Jobs^{xvi} focus on adapting workers to increased **flexibility in the labour market and on job creation**, as cost-effective reforms rapidly tackle unemployment. Such labour market reforms will fail unless they also **advance equality between women and men in employment** as required in the EU Treaty, and **advance women’s economic independence** as required in the *Strategy for equality between women and men 2010-2015*. “Cost-effective reforms” will not address either the longstanding gender inequalities in paid and unpaid work but could have a contrary effect and a reversal to rigid traditional gender roles.

Women still shoulder the **main responsibility for providing informal care to children and other dependants**. Women cite the lack of care services as reasons for involuntarily part-time paid work. Measures must be taken to encourage men to take an equal share of unpaid care work and to significantly improve reconciliation leave entitlements. In this context, the adoption of the **revised Maternity Leave Directive** in the form proposed by the European Parliament and closer monitoring of men’s take-up rate **of parental leave** is crucial.

The focus on **incentives** for women to take up employment and to ‘make work pay’ for them has been prominent in previous European Semesters but this **failed to address the structural dimension of women’s unequal position on labour market** and their shouldering of unpaid care and domestic work. Some groups of women face **several acute structural obstacles** that exclude them from contributing to economic development which represents a waste of human resources and talent. The structural barriers facing groups of women such as



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women of the **55-65 years age category**, **single parents** (of whom the majority are women), **women with disabilities** and women from **ethnic minorities**, including Roma women and **women with a migration background**.

With regards to **migrant women** in particular, while gender disaggregated data on the occupational profile of migrant women is patchy, women's labour migration is concentrated in a few female dominated occupations associated with traditional gender roles, especially in the domestic and household care sector as indicated previously. The main barriers preventing migrant women from contributing to economic development include, but are not limited to, the non-recognition of qualifications gained in their country of origin which in turn results in systematic de-skilling on the labour-market, lack of work experience in the host country and work related discrimination and racism.

All of the structural barriers must be tackled in order to reach the 75% employment rate for women and men in the EU2020 Strategy.



EWL RECOMMENDATIONS: Employment

- Follow up the Country Specific Recommendations given for member states to move from family based taxation methods to individualised taxation, address other forms of unfair fiscal treatment of married and cohabitating women.
- Strongly discourage 'mini-jobs' /zero-hour and all precarious working contracts which do not provide economic independence, sufficient social protection rights or occupational mobility, as a way to increase the employment rates of women returning to or entering the labour markets.
- Support employment of young women by removing obstacles that consider them an at-risk category due to their potential maternity/child birth; pursue discussions with the aim of adopting a strong revised maternity leave directive to protect young women prior to, during and on return to work after pregnancy and child birth.
- Assess and monitor the effect of the changing nature of employment conditions on women's vulnerability to poverty and social exclusion and develop gender-disaggregated data regarding:
 - Changes of contracts from long to short/fixed term;
 - changes of flexible working hours to part-time work, subcontracts, second jobs, and any other forms that undermine standard labour protection laws;
 - changes affected on return from statutory leave, especially maternity leave, according to different sectors of the economy (including in small and medium enterprises [SMEs]);
 - impact of changing working contracts and conditions on access to social protection (e.g. unemployment benefits, maternity pay, sickness benefits, disability benefits, pensions);
 - changes in access to rights due to social protection conditionality criteria;
 - Rise or fall in costs of childcare and in the care of dependent family members.
- Explore new possibilities with the view to guaranteeing **alternative funding sources for social protection systems**, based on productivity gains in the knowledge-based society. Maintaining social protection systems, based on equality, solidarity and redistribution of wealth, must remain a key priority
- Recognise the diplomas and qualifications obtained in countries outside the EU and provide appropriate services for their validation.
- Employment agencies and services should recognise the diversity in the jobs proposed for migrant women, avoiding channelling them systematically into low level and precarious employment.
- Employment agencies, the Social Partners, NGOs should work together to facilitate work experience and placement.



Poverty

More women than men face poverty and the gendered impact of the crisis and austerity measures makes addressing women's poverty all the more urgent. **Women are part of every group at risk of poverty and social exclusion, and in most cases, they are affected more strongly.** Women are at risk of poverty across the board, but particularly so when other factors intervene. Whether one considers race/ethnicity, age, disability, class or geographical origin, women are among the most socially marginalised groups. **Employment Guideline 10** requires that all activities to tackle poverty and social exclusion at national and EU level **must be gender mainstreamed.** The need for concrete measures to address the social exclusion of women at large and of the specific groups of women at national level are urgent as such measures are still lacking from the European Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion.^{xvii}

The 2020 target to reduce poverty and social exclusion is **insufficiently integrated into economic policy guidance** that puts emphasis on reducing deficits. **National poverty targets** must be ambitious, **gender disaggregated** and integrated into the priorities set for Member States' economic and employment policies for the next years.

Proposed further cuts in public spending will **increase women's poverty and social exclusion instead of tackling it.** For example, the public sector cuts that are being encouraged may lead to increased female unemployment as well as undermine women's access to services (quality health services for example), education, and social participation, all vital to avoid social exclusion. The EWL is specifically concerned about recommendations to tie **pension benefits more closely to contributions** and to develop private pension schemes that will have a **negative impact on women whose careers do not follow the male life-cycle model**, and will contribute to the increase of the poverty risk of older women.

EWL RECOMMENDATIONS: Poverty

- Ensure that the activities within **European Platform against Poverty (EPAP)** fully include a **women's rights** perspective by gender mainstreaming all activities and by introducing **new targeted actions** that address women's poverty and its causes, similar to the Recommendation on Child Poverty, developed in the framework of EPAP.
- Guarantee **individualised rights** with regards to **taxation and social protection** entitlements;
- Develop statistical measurement units on income poverty on **indicators based on an individual** and not a household basis to make women's poverty more visible;
- Guarantee a minimum income for all by developing an **EU Directive on Minimum Income**, building on the 1992 Recommendation¹ and the Active Inclusion Recommendation endorsed by the EPSCO Council in December 2008;¹



Gender Pay Gap

Closing the gender pay gap should be a macro-economic priority. This will have a **positive impact on social security** and fiscal systems as women's contribution to these systems will increase when women's earnings rise and moreover make women less reliant on social benefits to cover shortfalls in income gained through paid work.

The current **unadjusted average gender pay gap** in the EU remains high at 16% with large differences between countries. The legal obligation is very clear in the European Union; the principle of equal pay for equal work and for work of equal value is strongly established in European law and should be implemented and enforced throughout the EU. However, this right is in many cases not respected and the existing legislation proves insufficient to tackle this issue, which requires a multifaceted policy approach.

EWL RECOMMENDATIONS: Gender pay gap

- Set a European **equal pay target** for the remainder of the EU2020 Strategy, a target in terms to **reduce the pay gap of 10 percentage points** in each Member State and systematic monitoring through the European Semester processes.
- Set **qualitative targets in National Reform Programmes and subsequent CSRs** to close the **gender pay pension and poverty gaps**,
- Address the gender pay gap, including **full pay for women during statutory maternity leave** and gaps in pension rights.
- Improve **statistical data** on the gender pay gap, including **comparability of data and data on the part time pay gap** and the pension gap.



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Europe 2020 Mid-Term Review

A Purple Pact: Looking back – Moving forward

Gender Pension Gap

The current tendencies to increase retirement ages, strengthen the link between contributions and benefits and emphasise the role of second and third pillar pension schemes instead of the statutory state pensions are all **problematic from a gender perspective**.

Pension reforms must **address the needs of elderly women of today and propose measures to ensure that working-aged women of today and tomorrow** are entitled to the same pension rights as men.

The staggering average **39% gender pension gap**, requires a **multi-level approach** that entails reforming pension systems so as to **eliminate discrimination** and take account of women's life courses, redressing the gender gaps in employment which contribute to the gender pension gap and increasing care services for children and other dependents.

While the greater participation of women in the labour-market will improve their access to pension rights in the future, the **gender pension gap** will not disappear without comprehensive, multi-level measures. Decisive action to make pensions systems more gender equal, decrease gender gaps and segregation in employment and increase the care services for children and, in the context of demographic ageing, for other dependents is urgently needed.

EWL RECOMMENDATIONS: Gender pension gap

- Develop European standards on care crediting to ensure that pension systems reflect life courses that include care periods;
- Bridge the gender pension gap through addressing gender employment gaps and increasing care needs in the framework of the EU 2020 Strategy;
- Ensure individual pension rights for the elderly women of today;
- Secure strong, statutory state pensions and address gender issues in the second and third pillar schemes



4. STRENGTHEN INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS

Austerity policies have had a drastic impact on national gender equality bodies and the equality ministries/departments. In some countries equality institutions have experienced severe budget cuts, in others they have been merged with other departments or institutions, resulting not only in loss of funding but also of visibility and focus. In some countries equality institutions and bodies have even been abolished. As a consequence, the institutional safeguard for women's rights, gender equality and equality has been reduced significantly.

Ensure effective functioning of state gender equality institutions through no further cuts and/increased funding and human resources. Investing in women's rights and gender equality should not be linked to economic prosperity only: it is even more crucial in times of crisis.

EWL RECOMMENDATIONS

- A strong position for the new European Commissioner for Gender Equality, with support from all other Directorates.
- An EU Strategy for women's rights and equality between women and men, based on the dual approach of gender mainstreaming and specific actions.
- A stronger role for the European Institute for Gender Equality: monitoring gender mainstreaming and gender budgeting in all EU policies and organs, including macroeconomic policies and EU external policies; collecting and disseminating gender statistics; training and raising awareness on gender inequality within the EU institutions and towards the general public.
- A **budget heading** for activities on gender equality in the budget of **each** Commission unit, to ensure that **gender budgeting** as a tool is built in to secure EU spending on gender equality.
- A structured dialogue of the different EU institutions with the women's rights movement, including the EWL.
- The strengthening of the European Commission's Inter-Service Group on Gender Mainstreaming and making its work more visible inside and outside the Commission.
- To the Member States: Gender equality mechanisms should be at the highest political level, be part of a coordinated and comprehensive strategy for women's rights, and need to have the necessary authority, visibility, political recognition, funding and human resources. They should develop gender expertise within and as capacity builders for gender equality at different levels of government and administration.



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5. GENDER MAINSTREAMING

It is crucial that the next phase of the EU 2020 strategy is built on an overall coherent framework as the way forward of ensuring a **far reaching and long term vision for equality between women and men** that is firmly anchored in the overall EU policy framework. The political commitment of all involved, i.e. European and national decision institutions and policy makers, social partners, civil society and the private sector can make this happen.

Simultaneously, the importance of **gender equality goals** for women and men in all fields within the EU2020-strategy should be explicit. Gender mainstreaming should be applied **as the main strategy** for achieving the goal of gender equality early in the processes of decision making, i.e. in the analysis of current problems and consequences of policy recommendations.

Gender mainstreaming was adopted as a central strategy for all EU policies; however, the myth of “equality being already achieved” prevails. Women’s rights are not “the icing on the cake”. The EU’s **internal socio-economic policies** cannot be dissociated neither with its **external policies**, particularly with regards to trade in the context of globalisation. Therefore, the 2020 Strategy should encompass all through a strengthened effective gender mainstreaming strategy that sets the outcome of equality between women and men at the core.

EWL RECOMMENDATIONS

- Reinstatement and strengthen **equality between women and men** as inherent pillar (**Purple Pact**) of the EU 2020 Strategy accompanied by new targets and monitoring mechanisms
- **Ensure a coherent strategy across all policy areas**, one which is backed by all the political actors both at European and national levels, and processed through the different mechanisms to guide and report on the EU 2020 Strategy: integrated guidelines, national reporting mechanisms, Commission Annual Report on Equality between women and men, European Parliament reporting, peer groups and review mechanisms.
- Ensure a strong institutional **link between commitments at the European and national level**.
- Ensure **gender mainstreaming** through **better monitoring systems and systematic gender impact assessments in all policies, including gender budgeting, targets, benchmarks and measures** for the next phase of EU 2020 Strategy through the meaningful involvement of gender equality experts at all levels, and women’s non-governmental organisations.
- Set up a **permanent gender impact assessment procedure** for all **European Structural Funds, Cohesion Funds and funds related to the implementation of the EU 2020 Strategy**. Include a **gender clause** as part of the specifications in all agreements between the Commission and external contractors, in public and private procurement contracts.



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ⁱ The EWL is proposing that the future “pillar on gender equality” in the EU2020 Strategy, called for by the Swedish government with the support of 19 member states, is translated into a new *Purple Pact*. The colour purple is symbolic significant in the feminist movement in many countries around the world

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ⁱⁱⁱ Notably, **Swedish Presidency of the European Union**, Division for Gender Equality, *Conference report “What does gender equality mean for economic growth and employment?”*

^{iv} European Women’s Lobby contribution to the Commission Working Document Consultation on the future “EU 2020” Strategy, COM(2009) 647/3, 15 December 2009

^v Permanent Representation of Sweden to the EU, *Reply by Ministers responsible for gender equality to the Commission on the open consultation of the Europe 2020 strategy*, 10 July 2014, supported by: Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Finland, Greece, Germany, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain and Sweden.

^{vi} The term ‘European semester architecture’ is used to include the different processes: Annual Growth Survey (AGS), National Reform Programmes (NRP), National Convergence and Stability Programmes (NCSP), Country-Specific Recommendations (CSRs)

^{vii} See EWL [The price of austerity, the impact on women’s rights and gender equality in Europe](#), 2012, and [A she \(re\)cession – what does austerity mean for women in Europe?](#),

^{viii} European Commission, *The Gender Pension Gap in Europe*, 2013

^{ix} EWL *Ticking Clocks*

^x European Commission, *Progress on equality between women and men in 2013, A Europe 2020 initiative*

^{xi} Council decision of 21 October 2010 on guidelines for the employment policies of the Member States (2010/707/EU).

^{xii} See European Commission, *Barcelona objectives - The development of childcare facilities for young children in Europe with a view to sustainable and inclusive growth*, 2013

^{xiii} We must also be vigilant with regards to *care drain* in migration. Currently, in the world it is estimated that four million medical care professionals are needed to meet global care needs. If this tendency continues, by 2020 half of the doctors in the United States will have been trained in developing countries, exacerbating the care gap in these countries. For example, Africa disposes of 3% of the total world medical/care professionals, but 24% are required to meet medical and health care. See: Pascale Molinier, Sandra Laugier, Patricia Paperman, *Qu’est-ce que le care? Souci des autres, sensibilité, responsabilité*, Editions Petite Bibliothèque Payot, 2009

^{xiv} European Commission Staff Working Document, Social Investment Package, *Long-term care in ageing societies - Challenges and policy options*, 2013 41 final

^{xv} (COM2010)491 final, SEC(2010)1079/2.

^{xvi} COM(2010)682.

^{xvii} European Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion COM(2010) 758 final.