

2026 Work Programme

Introduction

Since the last mandate of the EU (2019-2024), the world has changed immensely. The rise of the extreme right, the invasion of Ukraine, and ensuing wars and conflicts in Europe and the world are all impacting women and fuelling a backlash towards women's rights and gender equality. We have entered an era in which the values at the very heart of Europe – democracy and participation, gender equality and social justice, solidarity and sustainability, respect for the rule of law and human rights – are being undermined. More than ever, we need to consolidate our network and strengthen our resistance to this reality.

In 2026, we will work for a reinvigorated political impetus to put Women's Rights and Gender Equality back at the centre of the EU project. This means we will renew our current Strategic Framework and build on the European Commission's post 2025 political strategy for gender equality that includes commitments for the European Commission, the European Parliament, Member states, and other actors.

In 2026, we will adopt our (new) Strategic Framework for the next five years: 2027-2031. The new EWL Strategic Framework will take into account the rapidly changing, turbulent world. We will continue to advocate for a gendered EU budget, a reinforced institutional dialogue on women's rights, including annual women's rights ministerial meetings, and a process to bring women's voices back into the heart of the political discussion about the future of Europe. We will continue to advocate for a feminist economic model. This means a long-term vision for an economic model that works for all – not just the few – through the development of a caring economy by investing in social policies such as health, education, children and lifelong care; access to housing, energy and food. A redistributive inclusive economy that seeks to ensure that all have the capacity to contribute to meeting collective needs through progressive taxation systems, to ensure the sustainability of public services and prevent privatisation. We will continue to focus on the pay, life-long earnings and pension gaps, monitoring of the pay transparency directive, the work-life-balance directive, the European Care Strategy and the European Pillar of Social Rights.

Despite the progress made in addressing male violence against women (adoption of the Directive on VAW 2024/1385, ratification by the EU of the Istanbul Convention) there remains a lot to be done in terms of eradicating violence against women.

There is not a single country in the world where women and girls are free from male violence, and there is not a single area in any woman's life where she is not exposed to the threat or reality of acts of male violence. This includes closely monitoring the transposition and implementation of the 2024/1385 Directive, and preparations for its

future revision (foreseen in 2028) regarding additional forms of violence that were omitted from the original text, namely rape on the basis of lack of consent, sexual harassment and sexual exploitation, and forced sterilisation.

We will also monitor the EU's implementation of the Istanbul Convention and explore the possibility of alternative/shadow reports.

We will continue to work on safeguarding women's rights in the digital sphere and reinforce the communication and policy tools to fight inequalities both online and offline. We want to see positive results from the policies provisioned in the Digital Service Act and the Artificial Intelligence Act, such as following the obligation of large digital platforms in the EU to remove illegal content from their websites, monitor for manipulated digital forgeries (deep-fake) or illegally distributed images, often weaponised against girls and women.

We will also address the issue of women, peace, and security to advocate for women's real and meaningful participation in peacebuilding. We will continue to advocate for women's Sexual and Reproductive Rights (SRHR) and, together with the Brussels Call coalition (coordinated by the EWL) to end sexual exploitation including a Europe free from prostitution. We will continue to build on our Manifesto 'Europe at a Crossroads' (translated into 22 languages), developed in 2024 consisting of a holistic feminist agenda to advocate for, inter alia, gender parity quotas at EU level. We will continue to support our members to strengthen our collective work, particularly through re-granting mechanisms.

Objectives for 2026

EWL external objectives

1. Advocating for institutional mechanisms that ensure the effective implementation of gender mainstreaming and the equal political participation of women. To achieve this, EWL will:
 - Advocate for an EU Gender Equality Council formation
 - Monitor the (new) Gender Equality Strategy
 - Implement the EWL CERV project on "Strengthening gender mainstreaming in climate policies";
 - Continue to participate and contribute to the EC Advisory Committee on Equal Opportunities between women and men;
 - Continue to strengthen collaboration and partnership with the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE);

- Continue to develop champions network in the European Parliament, expand reach beyond FEMM and LIBE Committees and advocate for our key asks in our elections Manifesto;
- In partnership with other organisations, advocate for gender mainstreaming in all policies, including migration and climate policies.
- Engage with EU presidencies: Cyprus and Ireland
- Monitor and respond to the backlash/sexism

Women in Decision-Making

- Update the position on quota/alteration/nested quotas and intersectionality (discussion has already emerged in Women in Politics Working Group)
- Women on Boards Directive: focus on supporting members' lobbying actions and reporting on transposition progress
- Call for quotas for women in tech companies

Post EU elections

- Advocate for equal representation (next elections), depending on legislative opportunities
- Monitor the progress of transposition of the Women on Boards Directive in different member states

Feminist digital policies

- Continued advocacy engagement on gender mainstreaming in digital policies, including advocacy to tackle Cyber violence against women and girls (VAWG)
 - Artificial Intelligence (AI) and the impact on women's rights
 - Event on Women & STEM in collaboration with academic stakeholders
 - Continued Engagement of the "digital" members mailing list
 - Begin our advocacy strategy for EU's accession to CEDAW
 - Generation Equality Forum and continued engagement with its next steps
 - Participate in CSW70 – statement and participation (side-event)
 - Continue to work on Women, Peace and Security and Feminist Foreign Policy issues for Peace
2. Ending all forms of gender stereotyping and male violence against women and girls, and ensuring access to their sexual and reproductive health and rights and a life free from sexual exploitation.

We will support EWL members in advocating for the comprehensive implementation of the Directive on combating violence against women and domestic violence. We will also monitor and advocate for a comprehensive implementation of the Istanbul Convention (IC) by the EU, and explore drafting an alternative report in partnership

with other organisations. We will work with members in countries where the IC has not yet been ratified.

Together, EWL will support legislative analysis to expand the EU framework to eliminate all forms of violence against women, particularly rape based on consent, sexual violence, prostitution and pornography, sexual harassment in the workplace, and forced sterilisation. We will:

- Continue advocacy efforts to address cyber violence against women and girls (VAWG)
 - Focus on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) and Sexual Exploitation (SE)
 - Develop recommendations following the report on the mapping of surrogacy and trends at the EU level
 - Engage in advocacy for a Europe free from prostitution, promoting the abolitionist model
 - Host an event in October (International Day of No-Prostitution and Anti-Trafficking Day) to promote the Equality Model and highlight the Brussels Call coalition's work
 - Meet with new key MEPs to present our positions on SRHR and sexual exploitation
3. Promoting feminist transformation of the economy, based on equality, well-being, social justice, and care as a universal collective need and responsibility of both women and men.

Feminist Economy

- Continue work with the EWL Feminist Economics Working Group to update the Purple Pact for a feminist economic model
- Develop a position on the care economy
- Follow up on the implementation of the Work-Life Balance Directive
- Monitor the implementation of the Pay Transparency Directive
- Reintroduce discussions on maternity leave (to be confirmed), focusing on minimum standards and the revision of the 1992 directive
- Monitor the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) process and, where relevant, submit contributions
- Track developments related to the European Pillar of Social Rights

EWL Internal Objectives

Building the resilience of our members to strengthen peer support will remain a priority, including through our Membership activities support fund (MASF), as individually we are invisible, but together, we are invincible.

4. Continue to strengthen EWL's capacity (culture, collective actions, governance, decision-making, and impact) and tools to work together towards achieving our collective goals, we will focus on the following:

Governance

- Hold in-person and hybrid meetings: Executive Committee (4), Board meetings (2), General Assembly in person (1), and an online extraordinary General Assembly (1)
- Draft and adopt the new EWL Strategic Framework for 2027-2031
- Ensure effective operational systems and human resources, with regular internal assessments of the staff manual (developed in 2024 – monitor its implementation and adapt as needed)
- Renew digital infrastructure, conduct regular internal audits on security (digital systems, etc.), and update practices on GDPR and privacy quality assurance, including codes of conduct

Financial Sustainability

- Implement the long-term fundraising strategy, including diversifying funding sources
- Continue supporting members through re-granting (Members Activities Support Fund - MASF)
- Develop partnerships with external funders
- Explore collective project work, including EU funds
- Apply for the Work Programme and Operating Grant (OP) 2027
- Provide ongoing training for members (and staff) on finances, including the EWL budget cycle, EC Operating Grant, invoices, contracts, VAT, partnerships, fundraising, and MEAL
- Conduct annual financial audits (external auditor)
- Organise webinars or videos for peer learning focused on EU programmes and funds to ensure members are informed and benefit
- Begin exploring the feasibility of developing a fundraising department to ensure long-term financial sustainability

Communications

- Continue providing regular Member Updates
 - Engage actively on social media to share the latest news, updates, and relevant information in line with EWL goals and values
 - Support and amplify awareness-raising and advocacy efforts through key opportunities, such as International Women's Day and the 16 Days of Activism to end violence against women
 - Provide support to members for the (new) website
1. 5. To reflect our feminist values of diversity and inclusion across all EWL's work and structures, and create safe spaces for open dialogue. To ensure this, EWL will:
- Continue the work of the Inclusion, Diversity and Equality, and Wellbeing Committee

- Organise the annual AGORA event for young feminists and create opportunities for regional/national AGORA events
- Support meaningful engagement, participation, and inclusion of all women in EWL's spaces
- Ensure the inclusion of easy-to-read materials, translations, and accessibility options
- Create safe spaces for exploring issues with differing political perspectives among members, facilitating consensus-building on EWL positions and strategies.