

EWL WELCOMES THE EU GENDER EQUALITY STRATEGY 2026-2030 BUT CALLS FOR LEGALLY BINDING ACTIONS TO MEET GLOBAL CHALLENGES

Brussels, 11 March 2026

The European Women's Lobby (EWL) welcomes the Gender Equality Strategy presented today by the European Commission, which reaffirms the EU's commitment and leadership in advancing gender equality over the next five years.

The Strategy comes at a moment of intensifying global challenges to women's rights. From the rise of cyberviolence to the erosion of reproductive freedoms and persistent economic inequalities, women and girls across Europe continue to face systemic discrimination and emerging risks that require strong and coordinated policy responses.

While the European Commission's analysis of these challenges is excellent, it falls short in one critical aspect: it does not propose legally binding follow-up measures, leaving implementation largely voluntary. The approach relies heavily on soft tools such as regulatory dialogue, guidelines and exchanges of best practices. Unfortunately, without enforceable commitments, real impact will be limited despite ambitious goals.

EWL welcomes the strategy's support for the implementation of the Istanbul Convention and the Violence Against Women Directive, with increased attention to cyberviolence. It also commits to continued monitoring of the implementation of the Pay Transparency Directive and advances long-awaited initiatives such as the Care Deal for Europe, recognising the structural inequalities linked to unpaid and undervalued care work. Beyond these areas, it highlights the importance of women's participation in conflict prevention and peacebuilding, proposes initiatives on gender equality in the arts and cultural sectors, and recognises the importance of engaging boys and men on issues such as consent as part of broader efforts to challenge gender stereotypes and prevent violence.

However, significant gaps remain:

- Violence against women is still not recognised as a Eurocrime, leaving key forms of gender-based violence without a clear EU legal framework.
- The Strategy also does not provide a legal definition of intersectionality, limiting its capacity to address compounded forms of discrimination.

- Important issues such as the situation of migrant women, the gendered impacts of climate change, and access to justice receive limited attention.
- In addition, while menstrual poverty is acknowledged, the proposed response is limited to exchanges of practices rather than concrete and enforceable action.
- There is no proposal for a stand-alone fund in the future Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) to follow-up on the Citizens Initiative My Voice, My Choice.

Mary Collins, Secretary General of the European Women's Lobby, said: "In this world in turmoil, we need more women at the helm. Europe has been the guarantor for women's rights and must remain so. The challenges today are immense and the journey will be long. Achieving gender equality is the solution. The Gender Equality Strategy will be a guide along the way but we need more bold, ambitious and binding measures. Gender equality is a societal issue and, at the end of the day, everybody benefits."

EWL will closely monitor the implementation of the Gender Equality Strategy 2026–2030 and continue to engage with EU institutions, Member States and civil society to ensure that commitments translate into measurable progress for women and girls across Europe.

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