

Brussels, 18 September 2026

International Equal Pay Day 2026

Do we really want equal pay?

The 18th of September marks International Equal Pay Day, to raise awareness of the persistent gender pay gap. Today, women stop earning as men have already earned what women will earn until the end of the year. As from today, women are working for free.

Globally, women earn roughly 17–23% less than men.¹ In the EU, women are on average paid 11% less per hour than men.²

Yet, the Pay Transparency Directive³, due for transposition in June this year, has only been fully transposed by five Member States. The European Women's Lobby (EWL) questions whether we really want equal pay as progress is too slow. We now have a Directive on the table that is being ignored.

Today we stand in solidarity with women workers, marking this date with a renewed call on Member States to fully implement the Pay Transparency Directive. Equal pay for equal work is a fundamental right and a cornerstone of EU law, and yet the Member States continue to stall the directive's transposition and implementation. Women deserve better and have waited way far too long for what it is only their right: equal pay for equal work and work of equal value.

¹ [Gender Pay Gap Statistics 2026: A Comprehensive Analysis | Equal Pay Today](#)

² [Gender Equality Index | European Institute for Gender Equality](#)

³ [Pay Transparency Directive \(2023\)](#)

