



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

PUBLIC CONSULTATION ON THE EUROPE 2020 STRATEGY

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Type of organisation: *Women's non-governmental organisation*

- Member State*
- Public authority*
- Registered organisation*
- Registered company*
- Individual citizen*
- Non-registered organisation/company*
- Other, please specify:*

Main area(s) covered by your contribution:

- Economic and financial affairs*
- Competitiveness*
- Industry*

- Single market*
- Employment*
- Research, development and innovation*
- Digital economy*
- Climate, energy and resource efficiency*
- Education*
- Poverty/social exclusion*
- Other, please specify: Gender Equality*

Register ID number (if you/your organisation is registered in the Transparency register):

85686156700-13

Your reply:

- can be published with your personal information*
- can be published in an anonymous way*
- cannot be published*

A) Background for the public consultation:

The Europe 2020 strategy was launched in [March 2010](#) as the EU's strategy for promoting smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. It aims to achieve a knowledge-based, competitive European economy while preserving the EU's social market economy model and improving resource efficiency. It was thus conceived as a partnership between the EU and its Member States driven by the promotion of growth and jobs.

The Europe 2020 strategy is built around five [headline targets](#) in the areas of employment, research and development, climate and energy¹, education and the fight against poverty and social exclusion. The strategy also set out a series of action programs, called "[flagship initiatives](#)", in seven fields considered to be key drivers for growth, namely innovation, the digital economy, employment and youth, industrial policy, poverty and resource efficiency. The objectives of the strategy are also supported by action at EU level in areas such as the single market, the EU budget and the EU external agenda.

¹ In January 2014 the Commission launched a [framework](#) for energy and climate policies up to 2030. A reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 40% below the 1990 level, an EU-wide binding target for renewable energy of at least 27% and renewed ambitions for energy efficiency policies are among the main objectives of the new framework.

The Europe 2020 strategy is implemented and monitored in the context of the [European Semester](#), the yearly cycle of coordination of economic and budgetary policies at EU level. The European Semester involves discussion among EU institutions on broad priorities, annual commitments by the Member States and country-specific recommendations prepared by the Commission and endorsed at the highest level by leaders in the European Council. These recommendations should then be taken on board in the Member States' policies and budgets. As such, together with the EU budget, the country-specific recommendations are key instruments for the implementation of the Europe 2020 strategy.

After four years, the Commission has proposed, and the European Council of 20-21 March 2014 has agreed, to initiate a review of the Europe 2020 strategy. On 5 March 2014, the Commission adopted a Communication "Taking stock of the Europe 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth" ([Communication](#)  and [Annexes](#) ). drawing preliminary lessons on the first years of implementation of the strategy. Building on these first outcomes and in a context of a gradual recovery of the European economies, it is time to reflect on the design of the strategy for the coming years.

Through these questions, we are seeking your views on the lessons learned from the early years of the Europe 2020 strategy and on the elements to be taken into account in its further development, in order to build the post-crisis growth strategy of the EU.

B) Questions:

1. Taking stock: the Europe 2020 strategy over 2010-2014

Content and implementation

For you, what does the Europe 2020 strategy mean? What are the main elements that you associate with the strategy?

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, including in 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, in which the **EU 2020 Strategy** has the potential to provide a **coherent** framework.

*Overall, do you think that the Europe 2020 strategy has made a difference?
Please explain.*

The European Women's Lobby (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, despite the fact that many studies² 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 2009³, also stressed the urgency for 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. In the absence of a clear framework on gender equality, the **erosion of women's rights** has been one of the consequences of this oversight which will require a robust gender equality framework for the remainder of the EU 2020 Strategy.

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 Swedish⁴ government on behalf of 19 EU Member States (and subsequently supported by more Member States) calling for a **gender equality pillar within the EU2020** governance framework. Consequently, 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.

Has the knowledge of what other EU countries are doing in Europe 2020 areas impacted on the approach followed in your country? Please give examples.

The EWL is a European-wide and 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. The European Semester architecture⁵ which is supposed to be the tool to implement the Europe 2020 Strategy gave prominence to economic governance to the detriment of a **balanced and holistic socio-economic, rights based environmental** approach. The result has led to **austerity driven policies** that have impacted disproportionately on women, and a lowering of working and living standards for both women and men throughout

² Notably, **Swedish Presidency of the European Union**, Division for Gender Equality, *Conference report "What does gender equality mean for economic growth and employment?"*

³ European Women's Lobby contribution to the Commission Working Document Consultation on the future "EU 2020" Strategy, COM(2009) 647/3, 15 December 2009

⁴ **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.

⁵ 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)

Europe. It is clear that **austerity is not working** as it has led to the biggest challenge that the EU faces: a loss of confidence, trust and legitimacy, 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 on the reforms Member States are requested to undertake focus on short-term economic recovery through further budgetary cuts and on a traditional short sighted concept of growth, ignoring the inclusive objectives of the 2020 Strategy and the impact of such reforms on women's rights and progress towards achieving equality between women and men.

For example, **recommendations** to members states to **reform pension systems** by aligning women and men's pension age, **failed to address the staggering 39% average gender pension gap**, and **no** reference was ever made to ensure that **gender equality** should be a **guiding principle** in pension reforms. Recommendations to increase child care provisions were underpinned by concepts such as '**second earners**' status, which reinforces rigid traditional gender roles and fail to meet the goal of gender equality which would enable **both women and men to become equal earners and equal carers**.

While the **gender pay gap** (EU average of 16%) exists in all Member States, only one, namely Austria, received a recommendation in 2011, 2012, 2013 to reduce the gap, while no Member States was issued with a recommendation to reduce both the gender pay and pension gaps in 2014.

Has there been sufficient involvement of stakeholders in the Europe 2020 strategy? Are you involved in the Europe 2020 strategy? Would you like to be more involved? If yes, how?

The involvement of Civil Society (CS) was in fact the '**weakest link**' of the Europe 2020/European Semester. Involvement in the form of consultation prior to the drafting of National Reform Programmes was very sketchy and/or inexistent 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.

The EWL was engaged with European civil society organisations in an **EU Semester Alliance**, which included **joint reports on alternative country-specific recommendations**, **public hearings** and **capacity building seminars**. However, European policy makers, particularly those working directly on the European Semester have not engaged directly with civil society organisations. This should be further developed and strengthened in the future in the form of a **public consultation with civil society stakeholders** both at **national and European** levels. The appointment by the European Commission of "**EU 2020 Officers**" at the Member State level provides a good opportunity to engage in more meaningful stakeholder involvement with the potential of bringing together a board spectrum of stakeholders. It is important that Member States demonstrate and are held accountable for the involvement of civil society in general and women's rights organisations in particular.

Tools

Do the current targets for 2020 respond to the strategy's objectives of fostering growth and jobs? [Targets: to have at least 75% of people aged 20-64 in employment; to invest 3% of GDP in research and development; to cut greenhouse gas emissions by at least 20%, increase the share of renewables to 20% and improve energy efficiency by 20%; to reduce school drop-out rates to below 10% and increase the share of young people with a third-level degree or diploma to at least 40%; to ensure at least 20 million fewer people are at risk of poverty or social exclusion].

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 and/or monitored 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 transversal headline objective on gender equality** in the framework of the EU2020 Strategy, the approach is inconsistent and piecemeal.

The lack of consistent **CSRs** that address the **gender pay and the gender pension gaps** in particular is striking. 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%**⁶ 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.

⁶ European Commission, *The Gender Pension Gap in Europe*, 2013

What has been the added value of the seven action programmes for growth? Do you have concrete examples of the impact of such programmes? ["Flagship initiatives": "Digital agenda for Europe", "Innovation Union", "Youth on the move", "Resource efficient Europe", "An industrial policy for the globalisation era", "Agenda for new skills and jobs", "European platform against poverty"].

In terms of the **Agenda for New Skills and Jobs**⁷, labour market reforms as outlined in this flagship initiative 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 and undermine the headline target on employment, particularly for women.

The **European Platform against Poverty and social Exclusion (EPAP)**, initially had the potential of providing coherency between different elements of the European Semester particularly with regards to the poverty target. However, it became apparent that EPAP was disconnected from other European semester processes, namely input from stakeholders into the **Annual Growth Survey (AGS)** regarding the headline target on poverty. The **Annual Convention**, which is part of EPAP, provides a good opportunity to bring together a broad spectrum of stakeholders across the Member States and European level. However, the outcomes of the Annual Convention remain vague and do not contribute to other European Semester processes, in particular the Annual Growth Survey, as not only is the timing of the Convention too late to inform the AGS in relation to policy action on the poverty target, no formal conclusions adopted by the Convention, which are crucial for follow-up and coherence.

The EWL recognises the wide span of initiatives addressed under EPAP (Social investment Package, Recommendation on Child Poverty, follow-up to the White paper on Pensions, etc), but fails to see how these initiatives are streamlined into the EU2020 Strategy, which leaves EPAP in a disjointed position with regards to linking to the overall strategy. Furthermore, whilst providing an interactive space for stakeholder dialogue, one of the key stakeholders, namely the **Social Protection Committee**, is absent which not only undermines linkages between national and European components, but more worryingly weakens an overall strategy on reaching the headline target on poverty. In terms of gender equality, the EWL stresses that the activities within EPAP should fully include a women's rights perspective and introduce new targeted actions/initiatives that address women's poverty and its causes, similar to the Recommendation on Child Poverty.

⁷ COM(2010)682.

Among current targets, do you consider that some are more important than others? Please explain.

All of the targets **are relevant** but require more **systematic and robust gender mainstreaming** across the **five headline** targets to demonstrate the importance of gender equality goals for women and men in all fields within the EU2020-strategy. 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 analysis of current problems and consequences of policy proposals.

Some of the targets need to be strengthened and re-aligned to meet new pressing needs that have become more apparent since the financial crisis which has spiralled into a social crisis.

An **additional target to develop the care economy** in conformity with Employment Guideline 7:

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 the **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.

- **Addressing women’s Poverty in conformity with Employment Guideline 10:**

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 European Semester processes and the flagship initiative European Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion.⁸

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.

- **Recognise women’s different starting point on the labour-market with regards to the headline target on Employment:**

⁸ European Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion COM(2010) 758 final.

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.

The **EPSCO Council** adopted **conclusions** on “Women and the economy”⁹, in June 2014, in which comprises reference to a set of **three new indicators**, including “**Part-time employment as percentage of total employment for women and men**” (indicator 19) on the basis of the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) report “*Review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in the EU Member States: Women and the Economy*”. This indicator, along with the others, should be integrated into the headline target on Employment.

Second earner status: 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.

Specific issues relating to migrant women: 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, sexism and racism**.

- **The urgency for robust policies to close persistent gender gaps, particularly in relation to:**

The 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

⁹ EPSCO Council conclusions, Women and the economy: Economic independence from the perspective of part-time work and self-employment, 19 June, 2014

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.

The 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. This requires

Addressing the staggering average **39% gender pension gap**, requiring 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.

Do you find it useful that EU-level targets are broken down into national targets? If so, what is, in your view, the best way to set national targets? So far, have the national targets been set appropriately/too ambitiously/not ambitiously enough?

It is crucial that the targets are broken down into national targets. **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.

The EWL recommends that in order to capture the true extent of women's poverty to ensure that adequate policies are put in place, it is urgent to develop **statistical measurement** units on **individual income** and not on household income alone to make women's poverty more visible. The EWL further recommends guaranteeing a minimum income for all by developing an **EU Directive on Minimum Income**, building on the 1992 Recommendation¹⁰ and the Active Inclusion Recommendation endorsed by the EPSCO Council in December 2008.¹¹

2. Adapting the Europe 2020 strategy: the growth strategy for a post-crisis Europe

Content and implementation

Does the EU need a comprehensive and overarching medium-term strategy for growth and jobs for the coming years?

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**.¹²

The EWL acknowledges that the current recession is unprecedented in that it is not the result of evolutionary economic cycles but a systemic consequence of implosion. Globalisation, unregulated financial markets, putting capital before people, growing inequalities in terms of income and in access to social justice and human rights, the absence of women from 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 2013¹³, in the absence of renewed policies, it will take **over 100 years** to achieve gender equality

¹⁰ 1992 Council Recommendation on "Common criteria concerning sufficient resources and social assistance in social protection systems", 92/441/EEC .

¹¹ Commission Recommendation on the active inclusion of people excluded from the labour market, Brussels, [30.09.2008] C(2008).

¹² 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, and the EPSCO Council conclusions of 19 June 2014, is translated into a new **Purple Pact**. The colour purple is symbolic significant in the feminist movement in many countries around the world

¹³ European Commission, *Progress on equality between women and men in 2013, A Europe 2020 initiative*

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, a **Purple Pact** 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, which encompasses 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.

What are the most important and relevant areas to be addressed in order to achieve smart, sustainable and inclusive growth?

Inclusive growth: Develop the care economy

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.¹⁴ 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 Package¹⁵.

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

¹⁴ 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

¹⁵ European Commission Staff Working Document, Social Investment Package, *Long-term care in ageing societies - Challenges and policy options*, 2013 41 final

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.

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** are crucial.

Smart (and sustainable) redistributive mechanisms: Gender budgeting

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.

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, proposals to reform Member States' employment and social policies by tackling 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** which 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.¹⁶

¹⁶ (COM2010)491 final, SEC(2010)1079/2.

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.
- **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.
- 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 Agreement**¹⁷ 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.
- A **budget heading** for activities on **gender equality** in the budget of **each Commission unit**.
- 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
- **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 National Reform Programmes, 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.

¹⁷ **Council of the European Union**, *Draft Council Regulation laying down the multiannual financial framework for the years 2014-2020 and Interinstitutional Agreement between the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission on budgetary discipline, cooperation in budgetary matters and on sound financial management*, Brussels, 27 June 2013

Sustainable – gender equality 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.

EWL recommendations:

- A **strong European Commissioner for Women's Rights and Gender Equality**, supported by a Directorate on equality between women and men.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- At **Member State level: 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.

What new challenges should be taken into account in the future?

The biggest challenge facing the EU is to **restore confidence and trust**. Austerity driven policies proposed as an exit from the crisis are giving prominence to economic governance to the detriment of a balanced and holistic socio-economic, rights based environmental approach, a far cry from the *smart, sustainable and inclusive* objectives of the EU2020 Strategy.

The financial and economic crisis has transformed into a **social and ideological crisis**, in which conservatism, sexism, racism, homophobia and populism thrive, hitting women hard. 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.

It's time to get **back on track** and draw lessons from the past. Instead of being the guiding force of the EU2020 Strategy, the European semester has transformed into a **structural adjustment policy** hence undermining the achievements of the EU2020 headline targets. Therefore, the challenge remains to ensure a **coherent and balanced holistic socio-economic policy** framework to ensure that the economy works for the well-being of all and not the other way around.

In the next decade, i.e. the period covered by the EU 2020 Strategy, **demographic challenges** are ahead as the numbers of **older women and men will increase substantially**.

Paradoxically, the **rapid growth of mass inequalities** and poverty is taking place simultaneously with an increase in wealth concentrated in the hands of a few. Clearly, more stringent efforts need to be made with regards to **tax justice** and in particular moving ahead with the **financial transaction tax** to curb speculation. Further **public debates** are needed to ensure that **capital gains contribute** to strengthening and maintaining **social protection systems**. Social cohesion and stability are crucial to inclusive growth, sustainable development and the implementation of the Social Dimension of the EMU.

These **challenges**, among others, can only be **faced together** which requires **inclusive, legitimate, participatory and democratic mechanisms**. Women continue to be underrepresented in decision-making across the spectrum of economic and political policy-making; more stringent policies are urgent to bridge these gaps which call into question the credibility of a smart, sustainable and inclusive societal model.

How could the strategy best be linked to other EU policies?

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. Therefore, the EWL proposes to set up a **permanent gender impact assessment procedure for the implementation of the EU 2020 Strategy**. The EWL welcomes the gender equality objectives in the new Structural Funds Regulations for the period 2014-2017, which increasingly make a link to the objectives of the EU2020 Strategy and calls for close monitoring of the implementation from the planning to the implementation and evaluation stages.

At the EU and international levels, **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, including in 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.

What would improve stakeholder involvement in a post-crisis growth strategy for Europe? What could be done to increase awareness, support and better implementation of this strategy in your country?

EWL recommendations:

- Expand the **sources of information** that is used to inform and draft country-specific recommendations contained in Staff Working Documents (SWD) to **include a diversity of sources from non-governmental organisations** that can provide grass-root experiences, information and data of what is actually happening on the ground. Explore the possibility of **developing Shadow (or Alternative) Reports**, similar to those submitted to the UN Committee on the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)¹⁸
- Develop **guidelines for stakeholder involvement and engagement** for input at every stage of the Semester process both at national and European levels, and for feedback on implementation
- Involve **national Parliaments and the European Parliament** in debates and discussions.
- Provide a mandate to the national **European Semester Officers** to ensure engagement, capacity building and awareness on EU 2020 and the Semester processes.
- Closely **monitor and report on progress** in achieving the headline targets and sub targets, in consultation with stakeholders, including women's organisations.

¹⁸ For further information see :

http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/NGO_Information_note_CEDAW.pdf

Tools

What type of instruments do you think would be more appropriate to use to achieve smart, sustainable and inclusive growth?

EWL recommendations:

- Reinststate and strengthen **equality between women and men** as an 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, Annual Growth Survey, Commission Annual Reports 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**, in following up and closely monitoring implementation of the Integrated Guidelines, in particular the **Employment Guidelines**, which have been severely overlooked in the past.
- 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 **tools on the implementation of the EU 2020 Strategy**.
- Apply the **Interinstitutional Agreement**¹⁹ drawn up 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
- A stronger role for the **European Institute for Gender Equality** to provide tools: 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.

¹⁹ **Council of the European Union**, *Draft Council Regulation laying down the multiannual financial framework for the years 2014-2020 and Interinstitutional Agreement between the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission on budgetary discipline, cooperation in budgetary matters and on sound financial management*, Brussels, 27 June 2013

What would best be done at EU level to ensure that the strategy delivers results? What would best be done at Member State level?

Gender equality is an obligation **enshrined in the Lisbon Treaty**. Therefore, both member States and the European institutions have an obligation to report on progress, mitigate shortfalls and put in place tools, such as gender impact assessments and gender budgeting mechanisms to ensure that gender equality is a core overarching objective of the EU2020 Strategy.

How can the strategy encourage Member States to put a stronger policy focus on growth?

Austerity driven policies are putting Member States under severe pressure. **Country-specific recommendations** that are built on **information which enable a broad holistic vision**, gained through greater engagement and involvement of different stakeholders, including women's organisations, would help in **identifying and addressing policies** that are people-centred, focused on inclusiveness and places **gender equality** at the heart of policy guidance. Such an approach will restore hope and a **shared responsibility for a collective strategy** that responds to real needs on the ground.

Are targets useful? Please explain.

Please see responses to "national targets" above.

Would you recommend adding or removing certain targets, or the targets in general? Please explain.

The EWL recommends **keeping all the targets** and **adding a transversal** gender equality pillar – A **Purple Pact**, which has been described previously. For proposals relating to **additional targets**, please see response to "**Among current targets, do you consider that some are more important than others?**" above

What are the most fruitful areas for joint EU-Member State action? What would be the added value?

Please see response above to **How could the strategy best be linked to other EU policies?**

3. Do you have any other comment or suggestion on the Europe 2020 strategy that you would like to share?

Please find attached a separate document from the European Women's Lobby: analysis and proposals on the Mid-Term Review: A Purple Pact: Looking back – Moving forward, which contains more details and recommendations. The responses to this questionnaire are based on the information contained in the document.