



# WOMEN AND THE ECONOMY

*"Not everything that counts can be counted; not everything that can be counted counts."*  
Albert Einstein

#Beijing20

FROM WORDS TO ACTION



1995-2015

Women's economic independence is of crucial importance to enable women to make real choices in their lives on an equal footing with men and in order to achieve effective gender equality. Women's real and full economic independence is not yet a reality in any of the EU member states. Persistent gender gaps in employment pay, poverty, pensions and unpaid work, show that women's economic independence is far from being achieved and that the vast majority of women remain in a dependency status.

Limited access to decent work, gender-segregated labour markets, women's over-representation in unpaid care work, and social protection systems shaped around the male breadwinner model, are all major hurdles for the advancement of women and hinder women's ability to enjoy their full and equal rights .

Women's economic independence is more than a "business case". We need a shift in the values conveyed by our economic and financial systems: from profitability to wellbeing, from competition to solidarity, from inequality to transparency. The economy must serve the wellbeing of all, and not the other way round.

## BEIJING '95 STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES



- Promote women's economic rights and independence, including access to employment, appropriate working conditions and control over economic resources.
- Facilitate women's equal access to resources, employment, markets and trade.
- Provide business services, training and access to markets, information and technology, particularly to low-income women.
- Strengthen women's economic capacity and commercial networks.
- Eliminate occupational segregation and all forms of employment discrimination.
- Promote harmonisation of work and family responsibilities for women and men.



## FACTS & FIGURES IN EUROPE

The gender pay gap remains a major issue within the EU as women on average earn 16 % less than men. A worrying development is the widening gender pension gap which stands at 39% within the EU: twice the gender pay gap. The gender pension gap shows that gender inequalities accumulate throughout women's lives and that a life-cycle approach to women's economic independence is urgently needed. Forecasts predict that in the absence of decisive action, it will take over 100 years to close gender gaps in employment, pay and unpaid work (30 years for equal employment, 70 years for equal pay, 40 years for equal share of housework).

In figures, women's employment rate - 63% (2012) - is nowhere close to the EU target of 75%, and work patterns continue to reflect traditional gender roles as women are four times more likely than men to work part-time. The crisis is hitting particularly young women, facing

high unemployment rates. Migrant women face multiple discrimination when trying to access the labour market.

Family responsibilities and household tasks are not equally shared. In 2010, women spend 26 hours a week in unpaid work compared with 9 hours for men. As a result, women have more frequent career breaks and often either leave the labour market, and/or do not go back to a full time job following childbirth.

Austerity measures have a huge effect on women, both as workers in the public sector and users of public services. Therefore, reductions of care-related facilities and/or allowances, cuts in housing benefits or family benefits can disproportionately affect women. Moreover, women bear a disproportionate share of tax burdens, as they use larger portions of their income on food and basic goods for the household.



EUROPEAN WOMEN'S LOBBY EUROPEEN DES FEMMES

## ACTIONS

- EWL action for an EU Maternity Leave Directive **"2/3/4 years overdue!"**: campaign calling for the adoption of a legally-binding instrument protecting all pregnant women workers.
- EWL report **"The price of austerity - The impact on women's rights and gender equality in Europe"** (2012).
- EWL video clip **"A she-(re) cession. What does austerity mean for women?"** (2013): captures the main messages of EWL's reports on the impact of the crisis on women.
- **Monitoring of and advocacy on EU processes having an impact on women's economic independence:** contributions on Employment Package (2012), Personal and Household Services (2011), a possible EU Directive on Filial Leave (2011), White Paper on Pensions (2012), equal pay (2012-2013).



# WOMEN AND THE ECONOMY & THE EUROPEAN UNION



Women's economic independence is one of the five priorities of the European Commission's Strategy for Equality between Women and Men 2010-2015. The European Commission carried out a review of the 2006 Recast Directive (on equal treatment of women and men in employment and occupation), paying particular attention to equal pay, and following a number of consultations, issued a Recommendation on strengthening the principle of equal pay between men and women through increased wage transparency (2014). In 2014, EU social partners released a gender equality toolkit.

The Women's Rights and Gender Equality Committee of the European Parliament adopted a series of legislative and 'own opinion' reports in the period 2009-2014 relating to women's economic independence, including: equal treatment of self-employed workers (2010); the so-called Maternity Directive, adopted initially in plenary in 2010 but never reached the

second reading phase due to the reluctance of the Member States to accept the proposal of the Parliament; equal pay and work of equal value (2012); impact of the economic crisis on women's rights (2010 and 2013); precarious women workers (2010), and the role of women in the green economy (2012).

The Council of Ministers for Employment, Social Affairs (EPSCO) adopted conclusions in 2014 that call for indicators to measure: Full-time equivalent employment rates; Part-time employment as percentage of total employment; Self-employment as percentage of total employment; and also called for a pillar on gender equality within the Europe 2020 governance framework. However, the lack of EU dialogue with civil society organisations on the implementation of the EU 2020 Strategy shows that there is urgent need to address the current paradigm for the economy, putting equality and the environment before growth.

## GOOD PRACTICE



- In Croatia, new approaches to time surveys offer a broader understanding of gender gaps that move beyond standard calculation of the gender pay gap (eg. time linked not only to work or care, but also to sleep or cultural activities).
- 15:54 campaign: raising awareness on the gender pay gap in Sweden. In 2014, from 15h54, women are not paid any more for their work. The Sweden Women's Lobby annual campaign, called 15h53 in 2013, showed that women gained only one extra paid minute in 2014.

## CHALLENGES



- International institutions and economic networks emphasise gender equality as a determining factor for good economic and social development. However, obsolete economic models are applied, which in many cases lead to policies that risk increasing gender inequality in society. We need new models, based on feminist economics.
- In 2012, the European institute for statistics Eurostat asked all EU Member States to integrate into their national statistics most of the illegal activities producing wealth, including drug dealing and prostitution. While some countries already count prostitution in their GDP, others will hasten to do so, in order to reduce their debt and deficit. Such economic strategies trivialise the commodification of women's bodies and highlight the limits of the model based on GDP only.
- Austerity policies could transfer the responsibility for care from society to households, i.e. women, with detrimental consequences on stereotypes about women's and men's roles, and obstacles to women's economic independence.
- Persisting gender stereotypes in the education and the media have a direct impact on society's representations of the possible roles for women and men and the prevalence of traditional unequal/patriarchal patterns.
- The increasing demand for migrant domestic workers should be closely monitored to make sure that migrant women have access to social protection and equal labour rights and to ensure that all women in Europe have the same rights.

## OUR DEMANDS **Women's economic independence is the foundation of all rights.**

- **Promote women's quality employment by effectively enforcing and strengthening EU equality legislation.**
- **Guarantee the individualisation of social security and taxation rights in order to break women's dependency on their partners and/or the State.**
- **Protect all women workers, irrespective of their employment status, including pregnant workers, by adopting a European Directive on maternity leave that guarantees women's full pay and protection from discrimination.**
- **Develop standards on quality and affordable care services for children, dependent and elderly persons across the life-cycle, and achieve the Barcelona targets on childcare.**
- **Develop a multi-layered approach that focuses on equality in paid and unpaid work to enable both women and men to become equal earners and equal carers throughout their lives. Take measures to increase men's take-up rate in care responsibilities and ensure that educational options for boys include sectors that are traditionally associated with women and girls.**
- **Close the gender pay gap by 2020 and set targets to close the pension gap.**
- **Create quality jobs especially in the public sector, so called white jobs, and the social economy. Invest in public services especially in the areas of education, health, child and dependent persons care.**
- **Use Gender Budgeting as a standard methodology of all public budget processes.**
- **Work together with Trade Unions to support/enforce gender equality.**
- **Go beyond GDP: develop indicators on wellbeing and alternative accounting measures, including to ensure that women's unpaid care work is recognised in national accounts systems and a visible contribution to the economy.**
- **Promote parity in decision making in the economic and financial sector as well as private companies in order to ensure democracy and better governance, particularly financial and economic governance.**

