

PORTUGUESE PLATFORM FOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS CONTRIBUTION TO THE EU GENDER EQUALITY STRATEGY POST-2025 (2026–2030)

10th August 2025



The [Portuguese Platform for Women's Rights](#) is the largest Portuguese civil society organization in human rights of women and girls with 34 member organizations. National coordination of the International Council of Women (ICW), of the European Women's Lobby (EWL) and of the Association of Women from Meridional Europe (AFEM). Member of the Euro Mediterranean Women's Foundation. Organization with Special Consultative Status by the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the UN. Declared a Public Utility Entity by Dispatch nº 6166/2020, of 2.6.2020, published in the D.R. nº 112, II Series, of 9.6.2020.

INTRODUCTION

The [Portuguese Platform for Women's Rights](#) (PpDM) welcomes the timely opportunity to contribute to the European Commission's consultation on the upcoming Gender Equality Strategy 2026–2030. As a national umbrella organisation of 34 women's rights NGOs in Portugal and an active member of the [European Women's Lobby](#) (EWL), of the [International Council of Women](#) (ICW) and its European branch ([European Centre of the ICW](#)) and of the Association des Femmes de L'Europe Méridional, PpDM supports a feminist, intersectional, peaceful and ambitious approach to advance equality between women and men across the EU and its Member States.

Our contribution reflects the key priorities of PpDM and the EWL, rooted in the lived experiences of women and girls, and grounded in a commitment to women's human rights and democratic values. It is also based on the international instruments ratified by Portugal, as the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the CoE Convention on Prevention and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence - this convention also ratified by the EU - and the Beijing Platform for Action, among others.

We urge the Commission to pursue a bold, coherent, and long-term vision towards an equal Europe, while resisting the pressures of deregulation and backlash.

1. ELIMINATE ALL FORMS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

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Violence against women and girls (VAWG) remains a systemic and pervasive violation of human rights. **Freedom from male violence against women must be a fundamental right in the EU.**

PpDM urges the European Commission to **ensure the full ratification and implementation of the Istanbul Convention by all EU Member States**, complemented by adequate European and national funding for prevention, protection, and prosecution.

Directive 2024/1385 must be implemented with close monitoring by women's organisations and revised to include a consent-based definition of rape, explicit protection against femicide, sexual harassment, and forced sterilisation, and recognition of VAW as a Eurocrime as per Article 83.1 of the Treaty¹ on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), which is also supported by the European Parliament.²

PpDM further urges the EU to recognise VAWG as a continuum, including economic and institutional violence. We call for EU-wide minimum standards for survivor protection, and

¹ [Treaty](#) on the Functioning of the European Union, TFEU.

² European Parliament, [Resolution](#) of 18 January 2024 on extending the list of EU crimes to hate speech and hate crime (2023/2068(INI)).

mechanisms to hold Member States accountable. Furthermore, mechanisms for independent monitoring and 'naming and shaming' persistent gaps should be institutionalised.

Centre survivor engagement in EU responses to sex-based violence and invest in the development and implementation of structured and well-resourced survivor engagement mechanisms across Member States to ensure survivors' experiences meaningfully inform EU and national policy, legislation, and service delivery. Survivor-led input should be embedded in monitoring, evaluation, and reform of sex-based violence responses, in line with the Istanbul Convention³ and the EU Victims' Rights Directive.⁴

Deliver **victim-survivor-centred justice reform**, including review of procedural barriers and access to services, to safeguard women's privacy, safety, and access to support. We call particular attention to the use of **parental alienation⁵ relating to children who witness domestic violence** and, in cases of divorce, are held 'hostage' and call to further accentuate that 'aggravating circumstances' in these situations should be evoked to protect women and their children.

PpDM stresses the absolute need to consider **support services for survivors of violence against women as an essential service under Principle 20 of the EU Pillar of Social Rights.**⁶

2. ERADICATE CYBERVIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS AND ENSURE THEIR SAFETY ON THE DIGITAL SPHERE

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PpDM highlights the **urgency of action-related to fight against sexism, misogyny, sexual violence, sexist hate speech, and inequalities between women and men**, particularly in relation to access to and the exercise of power across all social contexts and interactions, and namely on the digital sphere.

The proliferation of cyberviolence against women and girls (CVAW) calls for urgent action. The EU must **harmonise legal definitions, ensure full implementation of relevant articles of the Directive on combating VAW, and promote cooperation with the Council of Europe on an Additional Protocol to the Budapest Convention on Cybercrime.**⁷

³ Council of Europe [Convention](#) on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence.

⁴ [Directive](#) 2012/29/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 October 2012 establishing minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime, and replacing Council Framework Decision 2001/220/JHA.

⁵ Parental alienation: manipulation of a child to develop a negative view and/or reject the other parent, often used as a form of control in situation of domestic violence.

⁶ [Communication](#) from the Commission to the European parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on the European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan.

⁷ Council of Europe, [Convention](#) on Cybercrime, 23 November 2001.

This protocol aims at **tackling all forms of cyberviolence against women, including cyber sexism, online hate speech, and cyber misogyny**, with specific focus on preventing and eliminating such violence against women who are active in or aspire to roles in the public sphere, such as politicians, women's rights activists, climate activists, and journalists.

The transposition of the **Digital Services Act must guarantee the accountability of digital platforms for online violence, including image based sexual digital forgeries and pornography**. Platforms must be mandated to produce transparency reports on their efforts to tackle online violence against women and girls. EU investment in digital safety education for girls and cross-border investigations into digital impunity are essential.

PpDM stresses that it is imperative that the **EU Directive on Violence Against Women (VAW) also ensures robust protection against the four key forms of online violence**, defined under cyber-crimes: (i) non-consensual sharing of intimate or manipulated materials, (ii) cyber harassment, (iii) cyber stalking, and (iv) cyber incitement to violence or hatred (articles 5, 6, 7, and 8). The **transposition of these provisions into national legislation** must not be limited to minimum standards. It **must reflect the highest levels of protection**, guided by the principle that safeguarding women and girls from online violence is a democratic imperative which must not be undermined by misinterpretations of freedom of expression.

PpDM appeals to the co-legislators to approach the **Victims' Rights Directive**⁸ negotiations with the ambition to explicitly incorporate articles on cyberviolence against women and its sexual nature.

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An **EU-wide data collection and prevention framework must be established**, based on harmonised definitions and categories of CVAW at EU level and across EU institutions to address existing discrepancies across national legal systems that hamper effective protection and prosecution of perpetrators.

3. COMBAT SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN IN PROSTITUTION AND PORNOGRAPHY

PpDM calls for a **strong and coherent EU approach to end the sexual exploitation of women and girls in prostitution and pornography**. Both systems rely on and perpetuate all kinds of inequalities, commodify women's bodies, and reinforce harmful patriarchal norms. Prostitution is a form of violence, never work, and disproportionately affects women in vulnerable contexts, including migrant women, black and Asian women, and women in poverty. **The EU should adopt the Equality Model**,

⁸ [Directive](#) 2012/29/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 October 2012 establishing minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime, and replacing Council Framework Decision 2001/220/JHA.

and move towards (i) the suppression of repressive measures against prostituted persons, primarily women and girls; (ii) the criminalisation of all forms of procuring; (iii) the development of real alternatives and funding for exit programmes for those in prostitution; (iv) the prohibition of the purchase of a sexual acts; (v) the implementation of policies of prevention and education, to promote equality and positive sexuality; (vi) the development of prevention policies in the countries of origin.

The Strategy should prioritise exit programmes for women in prostitution, across healthcare, housing, legal and migration support, social protection, and employment.

The pornography industry, increasingly driven by profit, digital platforms and coercion, must be eliminated. EU laws must prohibit pornographic content involving exploitation, coercion or violence, including content generated or disseminated without consent. **Clear regulation, accountability of platforms, and robust monitoring are needed to prevent impunity, protect rights, and challenge cultural narratives that normalise sexual exploitation.**

4. PREVENT SEX-BASED IMPACTS OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

The development and deployment of Artificial Intelligence (AI) systems must be subject to strict gender-sensitive scrutiny. AI technologies increasingly shape access to information, opportunities, and rights, but it reflects and reinforces existing societal biases, including sexism, racism and other forms of discrimination.

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PpDM urges the EU to **implement mandatory fundamental rights and gender impact assessments for all AI systems**, particularly those used in employment, education, justice, health, and border control. **Specific attention must be paid to the proliferation of AI-generated sexualised content** (e.g., image based sexual digital forgeries), automated decision-making in social welfare systems, and surveillance technologies disproportionately targeting women and girls, especially those in vulnerable situations.

Prevention includes **setting ethical and legal safeguards from the design phase, ensuring transparency and accountability, and including feminist perspectives in all stages of AI governance.** The EU must ensure that technological progress does not come at the cost of women's dignity, safety and human rights.

5. IMPLEMENT A LIFECYCLE APPROACH TO WOMEN'S HEALTH

PpDM strongly advocates for a **lifecycle approach to women's health in the upcoming EU Gender Equality Strategy.** This includes recognising that women's health needs vary across different life

stages, from childhood to adolescence, mid-life to older age, and that historical neglect of women-specific health in medical research and care continues to undermine women's wellbeing.

The strategy must address the full spectrum of health issues affecting women, including breast and cervical cancers, menstrual health, pregnancy and postpartum care, menopause, endometriosis, mental health, and chronic conditions such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease and osteoporosis. It must also explicitly oppose forced contraception, forced medication, and ensure accessible, informed, and supported healthcare decision-making for women and girls with disabilities.

To truly implement a lifecycle approach to women's health, it is essential to explicitly integrate menopause into gender equality and health justice frameworks. Ignoring menopause - which includes the pre, peri, and post phases - perpetuates inequalities for over half of the EU population. European gender policy must address the chronic under-researching of women's health, particularly regarding hormonal transitions. This approach ensures that menopause is recognized as a natural and universal phase of life, not a neglected topic, thereby affirming that there is no equality between women and men without menopause inclusion.

We call on the EU to mandate the **systematic integration of sex and gender analysis into all EU-funded health research and to develop sex-disaggregated and intersectional health data systems across Member States.** This data is essential to tackle systemic inequalities faced by women, in particular Roma, migrant, refugee, older, and women with disabilities, who often face institutional discrimination and severe gaps in care access. A minimum of 10% of national health budgets should be dedicated to universal, inclusive healthcare grounded in equality and human dignity.

Mental health must be addressed as a gendered issue. The EU must promote national mental health systems that are gender-sensitive and intersectional, **considering the impacts of sex-based violence, caregiving burdens, economic inequality, and trauma.** Funding must support inclusive, trauma-informed mental health services, early intervention, and women's rights organisations-based care. Specific attention should be paid to **mental health outcomes for survivors of violence and carers,** with improved research and data on disparities between women and men in diagnosis, treatment, and recovery.

6. ENSURE THE EFFECTIVE PROTECTION AND PROMOTION OF SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND RIGHTS (SRHR)

SRHR are fundamental rights. PpDM calls for the **removal of legal, financial, and social barriers to safe and legal abortion in all Member States.** Abortion care must be included in EU healthcare standards, with EU guidance aligned with WHO norms. EU funding should support women's rights organisations promoting SRHR, especially in restrictive environments. **The Commission must ensure**



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that the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights is interpreted to guarantee access to abortion and resist all forms of backlash against sexual and reproductive rights of women and girls.

As one of the organisations involved, PpDM supports a robust follow up to the petition '[My Voice, My Choice](#)' to enable women to have access to abortion in EU countries with the support of EU funding.

The EU must declare abortion a fundamental right and actively counter digital disinformation and censorship targeting SRHR. Protection mechanisms must be strengthened for SRHR defenders facing threats and violence.

Moreover, **to create a comprehensive approach to sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), it is vital to explicitly include the right to experience an informed menopause as a good quality of life policy.** These rights do not cease to exist upon the end of a woman's reproductive capacity. Therefore, policies must acknowledge this, and all **Member States should adopt public policies that reassure women going through menopause that their rights are a public concern and must be defended.**

7. PROMOTE TRANSFORMATIVE EDUCATION BASED ON WOMEN'S HUMAN RIGHTS

Education must play a central role in **challenging sexist stereotypes, dismantling patriarchy, and promoting a culture of equality** from early childhood onwards.

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The EU Gender Equality Strategy must promote inclusive and gender-transformative education. This includes the **integration of equality between women and men, human rights and anti-sexist or feminist values across all levels of education**, starting in early childhood and extending through secondary and vocational systems. Curricula must reflect diverse experiences and actively combat social gendered expectations.

Promoting **STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics) education for all children** is essential to challenge occupational segregation. **Girls must be encouraged to pursue scientific and technical fields, while boys should be equally supported in exploring social and care-oriented professions.**

Comprehensive sexuality education must be guaranteed across Member States, **grounded in feminist principles of bodily autonomy, consent, mutual respect and emotional intelligence.** It is urgent to **include the reproductive cycle**, specifically including menopause and perimenopause, as part of sexual education. Empowering young people with knowledge dismantles taboos and supports future equality in healthcare and the workplace. **Feminist sexual education plays a key role in preventing violence, countering discrimination, and dismantling harmful social gendered norms.**



The Strategy must also address **the harmful impact of violent pornography, particularly its influence on adolescent behaviours, online misogyny and the normalisation of coercion and abuse**. Tackling online harms must go beyond age-verification tools to challenge the content itself.

PpDM stresses the importance of **combating mainstream masculinities** and educating boys and men about respectful relationships, emotional responsibility, and the harms of prostitution and pornography.

The EU must hold digital platforms accountable for their role in disseminating misogynistic and violent content. Under the Digital Services Act, the European Commission must ensure **robust monitoring and regulation of harmful content** targeting women and girls. It is also important to **create mechanisms that tackle image-based sexual violence and adopt a harmonized legal definition** for this as a crime at EU and Member States level.

Public campaigns that showcase male care role models can support cultural change. These campaigns should focus on themes such as non-violence, shared care, and emotional equality, while ensuring that resources are not diverted from women's organisations and survivor support.

Finally, the Strategy must guarantee **inclusive access to education and vocational training for all girls and women**, with targeted measures to support black and Asian women, women with disabilities, Roma women, and others facing systemic discrimination.

8. ENSURE ECONOMIC AUTONOMY OF ALL WOMEN AND GIRLS AND ACHIEVE ECONOMIC EQUALITY BETWEEN WOMEN AND MEN

Despite progress, gender gaps in pay, pensions, and employment persist. **PpDM calls for the effective implementation of the principle that every woman has the right to equal pay for equal work or work of equal value and to be economically independent.**

The EU must **enforce the Pay Transparency Directive with effective monitoring covering all economic sectors. Undervalued sectors such as care and education must be revalorised, and access to finance and entrepreneurship for women must be increased.** Tax reforms should eliminate disincentives for second earners, and **public investment should focus on decent jobs for women in both traditional and emerging sectors.** Economic autonomy must also address poverty among women, including migrant women, older women and single mothers.

Furthermore, as to **women's economic autonomy and digital inclusion**: Promote concrete policies for women's access to the digital economy and artificial intelligence (AI), with a focus on gender-sensitive AI; invest in the digital empowerment of women, including training in emerging technologies

and leadership opportunities in the digital sector; and importantly **prevent algorithmic biases that perpetuate inequalities and strengthening ethical regulation of AI with a gender perspective.**

Attention must be paid to the impact of non-standard, gig and platform work on women. Equality between women and men criteria must be applied to all EU recovery and investment funding. Gender indicators must be integrated into ESG frameworks at EU level.

9. ERADICATE POVERTY AMONG WOMEN AND CHILDREN

PpDM urges the EU to explicitly recognise **women's poverty as a structural and gendered injustice**, rooted in unequal access to economic resources, unpaid and underpaid care work, and systemic discrimination across the life course. Despite its severe impact on the lives of millions of women and girls, the issue of gendered poverty - including **the alarming rise in homelessness among women** - remains notably absent from the current Roadmap for Women's Rights. This omission must be corrected in the next Strategy.

The **interlinkage between sex and poverty** must be central to all relevant EU policy frameworks, including the European Pillar of Social Rights, the Anti-Poverty Strategy, and the upcoming Gender Equality Strategy. Women, particularly single mothers, older women, migrant women, Roma women, women with disabilities, black and Asian women, are disproportionately at risk of poverty and social exclusion due to cumulative disadvantages in education, employment, access to housing, healthcare, and social protection systems.

The EU must adopt **binding targets to reduce women's poverty**, ensuring that all Member States report on progress through gender-disaggregated data. Anti-poverty measures must adopt an **intersectional approach** and be developed in consultation with women's rights organisations and those directly affected. This includes tailored social investment strategies, inclusive housing policies, universal and gender-sensitive access to social protection, and targeted income support for single mothers and carers.

In addition, the Strategy should explicitly address **the feminisation of homelessness**, which remains under-recognised due to gendered patterns of housing insecurity. Many women cycle through precarious housing situations or are hidden from homelessness statistics due to fear of violence or loss of custody of children. The EU should support research, prevention and service models that are trauma-informed, survivor-centred, and aligned with the right to housing and dignity for all women and children.

Ultimately, a **Europe free from poverty must be a Europe free from** inequality between women and men; one that prioritises redistributive justice, economic autonomy for all women, and systemic investment in care, inclusion, and public goods.



10. REAL AND CONCRETE WORK-LIFE BALANCE AND CARE

PpDM advocates for the **adoption of an "equal-earner, equal-carer" model** as a cornerstone of equality between women and men in both economic and social policy. Women's disproportionate responsibility for unpaid care continues to limit their access to paid work and economic autonomy, with long-term consequences that persist throughout their lives, but particularly in older age, when many face inadequate pension rights due to badly paid jobs, precarious work, fragmented or interrupted careers. This model must explicitly recognise the right of all individuals, regardless of being a man or a woman, to take time out of the labour market for caregiving at different life stages. It also requires the **establishment of care credits in pension systems**, ensuring that **time spent on unpaid care work is fairly accounted for in pension calculations**. The EU must **integrate this approach into broader macroeconomic governance and social protection reforms**, including the European Semester and Economic Governance Framework, to prevent the reproduction of gender-based inequalities through fiscal and pension policy.

PpDM supports reinforced **implementation of the Work-Life Balance Directive, ensuring equal take-up by men and comprehensive leave entitlements**. Public investment in care infrastructures - childcare, eldercare, and long-term care - is essential for women's labour market participation, economic autonomy and well-being. Mental health support for unpaid carers and healthcare professionals must be developed. EU measures should promote a cultural shift towards shared responsibility and de-stigmatise flexible work arrangements for caregivers.

11. RECOGNISING, VALUING AND REDISTRIBUTING UNPAID FAMILY SUPPORT CARE

Care work, including caring for children, the elderly, people with disabilities and household management, is still carried out disproportionately by women and girls, and is one of the main structural factors of inequality between women and men. Despite being essential to the functioning of economies and societies, this work remains invisible to national accounts and undervalued in public policies. **Parity in unpaid family support care and domestic work is paramount.**

Care must be recognised as a public good and not subjected to market logic. We call for the European Strategy for Gender Equality 2026-2030 to recognise **care work as a fundamental pillar of the economy and social cohesion** and therefore:.

- Integrate the economic value of unpaid care work into national accounts systems, using harmonised EU-wide methodologies for calculation and monitoring.
- Develop specific indicators of inequality in the distribution of care between women and men, with systematic collection of data disaggregated by sex, age and socio-economic situation.
- Create social protection and economic compensation mechanisms for informal carers, including pension rights, paid leave and professional training.

- Establish tax incentives and financial support for companies that implement work-life balance policies that promote co-responsibility in care, such as flexible working hours, voluntary teleworking and shared and equal parental leave.
- Guarantee universal access to quality, affordable and inclusive public care services, such as crèches, day centres and home support services, reducing women's dependence on unpaid work.
- Implement and monitor the Care Strategy with participation from women's organisations.

Recognising, valuing and fairly redistributing unpaid family support work is a necessary condition for guaranteeing equal opportunities in employment, political participation and access to social protection, and **should be treated as a cross-cutting priority in all European Union policies.**

12. EQUAL SHARE OF POLITICAL POWER

Women remain underrepresented in political decision-making. **The EU should adopt 50-50 parity and encourage Member States to implement legislative 50-50 measures.**

Political institutions must combat online and offline violence against women in public life. **Political leadership training, visibility of role models, and intersectional strategies to support women from diverse backgrounds are crucial.** Particular attention should be paid to older women's political participation. **Ageism and menopause-related stigma contribute to the under-representation of women in their 50s and 60s** - a demographic group that holds unique experience and insight.

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Online political violence against women is a growing threat to democratic participation. **The EU must legislate to prevent and punish sex-based attacks on women in politics, especially those in leadership.**

PpDM calls on the European Commission to **establish mandatory 50-50 parity in the nomination and appointment of Commissioners, and to ensure the creation of a dedicated, standalone portfolio on gender equality in future Commissions.**

13. PROTEC AND SUPPORT WOMEN IN CONFLICT AND CRISIS

The EU must **reinforce its commitment to the Women, Peace and Security Agenda.** Women's participation in conflict prevention, peace processes, and crisis response must be guaranteed. Special attention should be given to the protection of women and girls in humanitarian crises, including access to SRHR and prevention of sexual violence, trafficking and sexual exploitation. The EU's external policies must be gender-sensitive, coherent, and intersectional, ensuring alignment between development, humanitarian, and foreign policy instruments.



PpDM unequivocally condemns the use of sexual and gender-based violence as a weapon and tactic of war. These acts constitute some of the most severe violations of international human rights and humanitarian law, intentionally used to terrorise, displace, and destroy communities. **Rape, sexual slavery, enforced prostitution, and forced pregnancy must be recognised and prosecuted as war crimes and crimes against humanity,** in accordance with the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. The EU and its Member States must adopt a zero-tolerance approach, strengthen accountability mechanisms, and ensure full enforcement of international legal frameworks.

PpDM also calls for the full implementation of the **EU Gender Action Plan III (GAP III)** until its revision in 2027. The EU must uphold its commitment to ensuring that **85% of all new external action initiatives** contribute to equality between women and men and the empowerment of women and girls, including in democratic-fragile and conflict-affected contexts.

The health and rights of women and children in conflict zones must be a priority. Armed conflict, displacement, and the breakdown of services leave women and girls without access to maternal care, sexual and reproductive health, mental health services, and protection from violence. PpDM urges the European Commission, the EEAS, and Member States to **guarantee comprehensive access to SRHR in all humanitarian responses,** and to scale up funding aligned with the EU's global health and Women, Peace and Security commitments.

Humanitarian and development programming must be gender-responsive, ensuring access to food, healthcare, income, safe spaces and trauma-informed support services for women and children. Funding mechanisms must be transparent, inclusive, and **prioritise partnerships with local, women-led organisations,** who are essential actors in resilience and peacebuilding. Lastly, it is vital to invest in survivor-centred justice systems and strengthen measures for the **prevention of gender-based violence in crisis contexts,** including through protection infrastructures and long-term psychosocial care.

PpDM underlines that **a truly feminist economic model must also encompass a gender-transformative approach to climate and environmental policies.** Climate change is not gender-neutral: women and girls are often the first and most severely affected by environmental degradation, climate-related displacement, and adaptation policies that fail to consider women and girls specific needs. At the same time, women are powerful agents of change in the fight for environmental justice and sustainability, especially when meaningfully included in leadership and decision-making processes.

The post-2025 Gender Equality Strategy must therefore integrate climate justice as a core priority. This includes **mandating gender impact assessments for all EU climate and environmental policies and funding instruments, to ensure that green transition measures do not exacerbate structural inequalities.** The EU must **allocate dedicated funding to promote women's leadership in the green**

economy, support their access to training for green jobs, and ensure parity in climate-related governance bodies.

All climate and energy policies, at EU and national levels, must be gender-responsive, equality-driven, and aligned with poverty reduction. This is particularly urgent in the framework of the Just Transition and the European Green Deal, which must actively contribute to reducing, not reinforcing, inequalities between women and men across Member States. National Energy and Climate Plans (NECPs) must include an equality perspective that recognises the disproportionate impact of energy poverty on women and actively supports their participation in local energy initiatives and solutions.

14. INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS AND GOVERNANCE

PpDM reiterates that **the success of the EU Gender Equality Strategy depends not only on its content, but on the institutional mechanisms and governance structures that support its implementation, monitoring, and coherence across all policy areas.**

We call for the **creation of a formal and permanent Council configuration on Gender Equality**, which would provide the necessary political and institutional framework to mainstream gender across all EU policies and Council formations. To date, there is no structural mechanism at Council level for equality between women and men. Informal meetings of Ministers responsible for equality have been sporadically convened (most recently under the Spanish (2023), Belgian (2024), and Polish (2025) Presidencies) but remain dependent on the priorities of individual Member States. **This ad hoc approach results in fragmented and inconsistent progress and weakens institutional accountability.**

A **dedicated Council formation** would allow for a coherent, transversal and high-level political response to inequalities between women and men, recognising that while some aspects may fall under employment and social affairs, others - such as violence against women, representation in power, and digital harms - require intersectoral coordination. **A Council configuration would not only set the agenda and support legislation but also track progress on the implementation of the EU Gender Equality Strategy 2026–2030**, including through annual reports and connection to the EIGE Gender Equality Index to identify priority areas and promote harmonised responses.

Such a mechanism would require **dedicated capacity within the Council and Permanent Representations**, enabling better technical preparation and political follow-up, as well as greater alignment with the work of the High-Level Group on Gender Mainstreaming, the Advisory Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, and the EIGE Management Board.

Importantly, a dedicated Council formation would also provide the necessary space and focus to **address intersectional and systemic discrimination**. It would create institutional capacity to respond to the lived realities of black and Asian women, Roma women, women with disabilities, older women, migrant and refugee women, and all those facing compounded forms of exclusion and inequality.

In parallel, PpDM supports the call for the appointment of a **European Coordinator on Violence Against Women and Girls** at Cabinet level within the European Commission. This role must be politically visible and well-resourced, with a mandate to oversee and coordinate the implementation of the Istanbul Convention, the Directive on Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence, the Directive on Trafficking in Human Beings, and the forthcoming Victims' Rights Directive. Ensuring coherence and accountability across these instruments is essential to guaranteeing the EU's commitment to ending all forms of violence against women.

PpDM reinforces the need for robust institutional frameworks to ensure that commitments to equality between women and men are translated into tangible and sustained impact. This includes financial, political and structural instruments that reflect the EU's legal obligations and political priorities.

Budgets must mirror priorities on women's rights and equality between women and men. The EU and Member States have a duty to apply gender budgeting across all policies, including the EU budget, national budgets, recovery funds, and the operations of institutions such as the European Investment Bank (EIB). Gender impact assessments must be carried out systematically in all budgetary decisions, with clear mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation of outcomes.

The Commission should work closely with DG BUDG to **promote inclusive public spending processes, including consultations with feminist economists and civil society experts**. A 'Gender-Responsive Budgeting Toolkit' should be developed, building on existing tools by EIGE, the EWL and PpDM, to support both EU institutions and Member States in mainstreaming equality throughout the budget cycle. The Commission should also establish an annual inter-institutional hearing, in collaboration with the European Parliament, on the gender impact of the EU budget.

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Adequate and sustainable funding for women's rights organisations is essential, particularly in the current context of political backlash, shrinking civic space, and increased demand for services and advocacy. EU funding must support grassroots feminist organisations, advocacy, services, evidence-based research, and ensure accessibility across all funded programmes. Dedicated funding should also be made available for migrant women, including support for language, employment and social inclusion programmes.

EU funding must be conditional on respect for fundamental rights. Member States that criminalise civil society or label organisations as 'foreign agents' should not have access to EU funds. The Daphne Programme and other relevant funding mechanisms must be equipped with sufficient and sustainable resources to prevent and combat violence against women and girls. The EU must also maintain its commitments to equality in its external action and development cooperation.

PpDM calls for **increased and guaranteed funding for EIGE**, as the only EU agency producing independent, evidence-based data on gender equality, including the Gender Equality Index. PpDM,

EWL and its member organisations must also be adequately resourced as critical partners in the implementation of the EU's equality between women and men agenda.

As the Gender Equality Strategy 2026–2030 will be implemented during the negotiations for the **Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) 2028–2034**, it is essential that equality between women and men is embedded as a transversal objective in the Common Provisions Regulation. The next MFF must earmark sufficient resources for equality between women and men and apply gender-responsive budgeting across all EU programmes and instruments. This includes the application of frameworks such as PEFA and the SDG indicator 5.c.1 on gender budgeting.

PpDM supports the creation of a dedicated **Intersectional Equality Fund** in the next MFF, specifically aimed at supporting grassroots women's organisations working with marginalised groups, such as Roma women, women with disabilities, black and Asian women, migrant and refugee women, and older women. **At least 1% of the total EU budget should be earmarked for equality between women and men initiatives.**

Considering proposed changes to **EU funding delivery through National Reform Programmes (NRPs)**, **it is essential that civil society, particularly women's organisations, are meaningfully involved at all stages of design, implementation, and evaluation.** Participatory and accessible funding must be guaranteed for their engagement.

Finally, **PpDM urges the European Commission to prioritise EU accession to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).** This step is crucial to strengthen the EU's leadership on women's rights globally and ensure coherence with its internal and external commitments to gender equality.

15. ADDRESSING MULTIPLE DISCRIMINATION

Equality between women and men cannot be achieved without addressing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination. Intersectionality must be embedded as a legal principle guiding all EU equality law and policies. The new strategy must fully operationalise intersectionality, including through disaggregated data collection and analysis, targeted policies, and dedicated funding. Special attention should be given to Roma women, migrant and refugee women, women with disabilities, older women, and those in rural and remote areas. An EU-wide legal definition of intersectionality and its application across all policy areas is necessary.

A coordinated Data Strategy on sex-based violence should be developed across Member States and the EU, including the **collection of qualitative, disaggregated data on the different groups of women targeted by violence**, for example, women with disabilities (disaggregated by *type* of disability), black and Asian women, Roma and Sinti women, migrant and women living in rural areas and in remote islands.



16. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ITS IMPLEMENTATION

The next EU Gender Equality Strategy must **include a robust implementation and monitoring framework**. We recommend the **adoption of a Gender Equality Scorecard, with annual reporting against indicators derived from the EIGE Gender Equality Index. Structured dialogue with women's organisations must be institutionalised at EU and national levels**. Clear targets, timelines, and financial resources are essential to ensure accountability. The Strategy must remain resilient to backlash and commit to defending fundamental rights and democracy for all women and girls.

A mandatory annual progress review of the Strategy should be introduced, involving independent experts and women's organisations. An EU accountability mechanism must be created to monitor and investigate backsliding in Member States.

It must value the **role of women's organisations as strategic partners in defining, implementing and evaluating public policies, therefor systematic inclusion of collectively organised women in all phases of equality policies**. And for that, it is **most needed structured and sustainable funding for grassroots organisations led by women**.

FINAL NOTE

Sexism, misogyny, sexual violence, hate speech, and inequalities between women and men must be recognised and addressed as systemic and structural threats to democracy, healthy development, learning, and the safety of children, young people and women, particularly in the digital sphere. It is essential that the **EU unequivocally positions itself as a space that upholds equality between women and men, freedom, and human dignity, and never one where silence, censorship, or complicity with discriminatory discourses is tolerated**.