



Commission outlines remaining key challenges on gender equality

Brussels, 5 March 2015

Ahead of International Women's Day (8 March), the European Commission is reaffirming its commitment to tackle gender inequalities across the EU. According to new [Eurobarometer statistics](#) published today, a large majority of citizens (76%) believe that tackling inequality between women and men should be a priority for the EU. According to the latest Eurostat data, the gender pay gap remains stagnant for another year running - per hour women earn 16.4% less than men. The Commission's annual [Report on equality between women and men](#), also published today, shows that despite some progress gender equality remains an unfinished business.

"Europe cannot afford to underuse the potential of 50 percent of its population. Even though equal chances for women and men are more than ever becoming a reality, there is still a long way to go. For every euro a man earns in Europe, a woman still earns only 84 cents. Women are still underrepresented in leadership both in business and in politics. And worst of all, one in three women has experienced physical and sexual violence. This is unacceptable. I am committed to addressing these challenges and to achieve tangible results." said Věra Jourová, EU Commissioner for Justice, Consumers and Gender Equality.

Key findings from the Eurobarometer include:

- **Around nine in ten Europeans (91%) agree that tackling inequality between men and women is necessary to establish a fairer society.** A similar proportion (89%) agree that equality between men and women will help women become more economically independent.
- **Violence against women** (especially sexual violence), and the **gender pay gap** are the two areas that the EU should address most urgently, according to 59% and 53% of Europeans respectively.

The **2014 Report on equality between women and men** shows that although gaps between men and women have narrowed in recent decades, inequalities within and between Member States have grown overall and challenges remain in critical areas:

- **For every hour worked women earn on average 16.4% less than men.** This figure is above 20% in Czech Republic, Austria, Estonia and Germany. **Closing the gender pay and pension gap has been frustratingly slow.** The latter has reached 39 %. Women still tend to be concentrated in less well-paid sectors.
- **The prevalence of gender-based violence is still alarmingly high.** A third of women in the EU report having experienced physical and sexual violence. More figures are available in the [EU-wide survey on violence against women](#) published by the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights
- **Gender gaps in employment and decision-making have narrowed in recent years, but women still account for less than a quarter of company board members,** despite representing almost half of the employed workforce (46 %). Also, the extent of gender equality varies substantially across Member States and has not reached all groups. Deficient work-life balance policies hamper women's employment and therefore the potential for economic growth.
- **Women are more likely to have a higher education degree (over 60% of new graduates are female), but are significantly under-represented in STEM^[1] studies and careers,** in research and in senior posts at all levels of education, including higher education.

The EU is acting to advance gender equality:

- The EU has issued [country-specific recommendations](#) and used co-funding opportunities with the European Structural and Investment Funds to promote female employment, investment in early childhood education and care facilities, accessible long-term care and the reduction of tax-benefit disincentives for women to work. (See 2014 Report on equality between women and men, chapter 1)

- The EU has supported specific actions, such as national governments' campaigns against gender-based violence and grass-root projects led by non-governmental organisations. (See 2014 Report on equality between women and men, chapter and adopted legislation and practical measures on victims' rights (see [MEMO/15/4465](#) and [IP/15/3045](#)) to protect women and girls from gender-based violence.
- All male members of the European Commission have given their support to the UN campaign [#HeforShe](#) aiming to make gender equality an issue for both men and women. This reflects the Commission's strong support for women's rights and women's empowerment. The [#HeforShe campaign by UN Women](#) calls for the more active engagement of men in the fight against such discrimination, since they play a pivotal role in changing the social norms that affect women.
- The Commission is also celebrating outstanding women entrepreneurs who have brought their innovative ideas to the market. On Monday 9 March, Carlos **Moedas**, Commissioner for Research, Science and Innovation, will launch the 3rd edition of the [EU Prize for Women Innovators](#) to give public recognition to three remarkable women and inspire others to follow in their footsteps.

Next steps

The Commission will continue its work with Member States, NGOs and stakeholders to drive forward gender equality at all levels, strengthening and consolidating the gains made in the past and meet the new challenges in the period ahead. The focus will be on "finishing the unfinished business" to close the gaps in pay, employment, pensions and decision-making, and to eradicate gender-based violence.

The Latvian Presidency will table Council conclusions on the gender pension gap that will contribute to shaping a policy response to this issue. Legislative proposals such as the Women on Boards Directive or the Maternity Leave Directive must now be agreed in the Council by Ministers from the Member States as well as by the European Parliament in order to become law. Member States will also notify measures taken to improve pay transparency. This follows the Commission's [Recommendation on Equal Pay Transparency](#) giving Member States, for the first time, a toolbox of measures to tackle this issue.

For more information

Eurostat press release on the latest gender pay gap figures: <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat>

Factsheet - Eurobarometer on gender equality:

http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb_special_439_420_en.htm#428

2014 Report on equality between women and men: http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/document/index_en.htm#h2-2

Factsheet - what is the EU doing for gender equality?: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-15-4563_en.htm

Gender equality: <http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/>

European Commission – Gender pay gap: http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/gender-pay-gap/index_en.htm

Webpage of Věra Jourová, EU Commissioner for Justice: http://ec.europa.eu/commission/2014-2019/jourova_en

Follow the Commissioner on Twitter: [@VeraJourova](#)

Follow EU Justice on Twitter: [@EU_Justice](#)

[1] Science, technology, engineering and mathematics. The two broader fields of study grouped here are "science, mathematics and computing" and "engineering, manufacturing and construction".

Annex

Figure 1: Women's and men's employment rates and gender pay and pension gaps in the EU^[1]

Women's and men's employment rates and gender pay and pension gaps in the EU

Source: Eurostat, LFS

	Women's employment rate in 2013	Men's employment rate in 2013	Gender Pay Gap in 2013	Gender gap in pensions in 2012
EU-28	62.6	74.2	16.4	38.5
Austria	70.8	80.3	23	38.9
Belgium	62.1	72.3	9.8	27.5
Bulgaria	60.7	66.4	13.5	35.3
Croatia	52.8	61.6	7.5	25.2
Cyprus	62.2	72.6	15.8	35.2
Czech Republic	63.8	81.0	22.1	13.7
Denmark	72.4	78.7	16.4	9.2
Estonia	70.1	76.7	29.9	5.2
Finland	71.9	74.7	18.7	26.5
France	65.6	73.7	15.2	36.8
Germany	72.5	82.1	21.6	45.1
Greece	43.3	62.7	-	25.1
Hungary	57.0	69.7	18.4	15.7
Ireland	60.3	70.9	-	38.2
Italy	49.9	69.8	7.3	31.3
Latvia	67.7	71.9	14.4	16.2
Lithuania	68.6	71.2	13.3	12.3
Luxembourg	63.9	78.0	8.6	43.6
Malta	49.8	79.4	5.1	18.8
Netherlands	71.6	81.3	16	40.0
Poland	57.6	72.1	6.4	24.6
Portugal	62.3	68.7	13	32.0
Romania	56.2	71.6	9.1	30.7
Slovakia	57.8	72.2	19.8	7.2
Slovenia	63.0	71.2	3.2	25.6
Spain	53.8	63.4	19.3	32.2
Sweden	77.2	82.2	15.2	30.1
UK	69.3	80.4	19.7	40.9

Figure 2: Percentage of women in Government, national parliaments and boards of the largest publicly listed companies in the EU

Percentage of women in Government, national parliaments and boards of the largest publicly listed companies in the EU

Source: European Commission Database on women and men in decision-making

	Senior ministers			National parliaments (single/lower house)			Board members of largest publicly listed companies		
	2003	2010	2014	2003	2010	2014	2003	2010	2014
EU-28	24	26	28	22	24	28	9	12	20
Austria	27	43	29	34	28	31	6	9	17
Belgium	36	33	21	36	40	38	6	10	22
Bulgaria	19	17	33	26	22	20	11	11	18
Croatia	17	16	19	23	25	26	-	16	19
Cyprus	9	17	8	11	13	14	6	4	9
Czech Republic	-	0	18	-	22	20	-	12	4
Denmark	28	47	30	38	38	39	13	18	24
Estonia	9	8	43	17	23	20	15	7	7
Finland	44	55	59	37	40	42	12	26	29
France	21	34	47	12	19	26	5	12	32
Germany	46	38	38	32	33	36	10	13	24
Greece	6	17	5	9	17	21	8	6	9
Hungary	13	0	0	10	9	10	11	14	12
Ireland	14	20	27	13	14	16	7	8	11
Italy	9	22	41	12	21	31	2	5	24
Latvia	25	21	29	20	19	18	17	23	32
Lithuania	-	13	20	-	19	24	-	13	17
Luxembourg	37	27	27	20	20	28	4	4	12
Malta	-	22	7	-	9	13	-	2	3
Netherlands	31	25	38	38	41	37	8	15	25
Poland	-	25	32	-	20	24	-	12	15
Portugal	17	29	20	21	30	31	4	5	9
Romania	21	12	20	11	11	14	21	21	11
Slovakia	0	14	0	19	16	20	8	22	18
Slovenia	14	26	40	13	16	38	23	10	20
Spain	25	50	36	31	37	41	3	10	17
Sweden	52	46	50	45	46	44	18	26	28
UK	24	16	23	18	22	23	15	13	24

Figure 3: Representation of women and men on the boards of large listed companies in the EU, October 2014

Representation of women and men on the boards of large listed companies in the EU October 2014

