



# Press kit

**Informal meeting of Gender Equality Ministers  
27 February 2024  
Egmont Palace, Brussels**



*This press kit contains information on the agenda for the Informal Council, press opportunities and background information on the European issues to be discussed.*

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## Programme

The programme for the delegations is indicated in grey. Press opportunities are indicated in blue.

The Media Centre will open one hour prior to the commencement of the handshake/doorstep ceremony.

### 27 February 2024: Informal meeting of Gender Equality Ministers (Brussels)

8:00 – 9:00	Arrival of Ministers Handshake and doorstep
9:00 – 10:45	<b>Session 1: Looking back at key achievements and lessons learnt</b> Speakers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- State Secretary for Gender Equality, Equal Opportunities and Diversity Marie-Colline Leroy</li><li>- Prime Minister Alexander De Croo</li><li>- Commissioner for Equality Helena Dalli</li><li>- Heads of Delegation</li></ul>
10:45 – 11:30	Family Picture Official signature of the Trio Declaration on Gender Equality
11:30 – 13:15	<b>Session 2: Looking ahead 2030</b> Speakers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- State Secretary for Gender Equality, Equal Opportunities and Diversity Marie-Colline Leroy</li><li>- Director of EIGE Carleen Scheele</li><li>- Heads of Delegation</li></ul>
13:15 – 14:45	Lunch
14:45 – 15:45	<b>Conclusions</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- State Secretary for Gender Equality, Equal Opportunities and Diversity Marie-Colline Leroy</li><li>- Commissioner for Equality Helena Dalli</li><li>- President of FEMM Committee European Parliament Robert Biedroń</li><li>- President European Women's Lobby Iliana Balabanova</li></ul>
16:00 – 16:30	Press Conference

Press will be accompanied to the press conference room 15 minutes in advance.

The Media Centre will close two hours after the conclusion of the press conference.

# Background information

## Session 1: Looking back at key achievements and lessons learnt

Gender equality is a human right and a fundamental principle of the EU, and it is also a prerequisite for an inclusive and sustainable economy and the functioning of democracy. During the past 4 years, **there has been significant progress to advance gender equality at European level**, in large part as a result of enhanced political commitment given to this policy field. This informal meeting is being held at a **pivotal moment shortly before the end of the current mandate of the European Parliament, and close to the end of the term of office of the European Commission.**

The progress made during the past 4 years included the creation of the first ever gender equal College of Commissioners, the nomination of a Commissioner responsible for Equality, an ambitious Gender Equality Strategy drawn up by the Commission, and a draft of legislative proposals and initiatives. Meanwhile, sustained efforts have been made by the EU Member States, in particular within the Council, and by the European Parliament, to advance and promote gender equality, including through the adoption of EU Directives. There has also been significant engagement by civil society and an ongoing public mobilisation in support of women's rights and gender equality, triggered in part by the #MeToo movement, and in response to the gendered impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

During the current political mandate, there have been many important **legislative measures, programmes, and initiatives** to combat all forms of gender-based violence, to promote women's economic empowerment and address gender gaps. To name but a few major decisions: the EU Ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combatting Violence

against Women and Domestic Violence is a significant step in creating the first EU-wide framework for combatting violence against women and girls. The recent agreement on the EU Directive on Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence is an important step forward in setting minimum standards for several crimes such as non-consensual sharing of intimate images or cyber harassment. Victims of gender-based violence will now have strong and clear rights in relation to access to justice, referral to support services, protection and support.

The Work-Life Balance Directive included paternity leave, carers' leave and flexible working. The Pay Transparency Directive strengthens the application of the principle of equal pay for equal work or work of equal value between men and women through enhanced monitoring of the pay gap as well as stronger enforcement measures. The proposals for the Directives on Standards for Equality Bodies enhance the role and independence of equality bodies to better enforce non-discrimination and prevent discrimination.

And yet, despite the many advances made towards gender equality, significant gaps remain to be tackled if we truly want to transform the European Union into a real Union of Equality. The 2023 EIGE Gender Equality Index score for the EU has barely shifted and currently stands at 70.2 points out of 100 with a worrying growth in disparities between EU Member States. Importantly, the index shows a slight increase in gender inequalities this year in several areas: economic situation, time spent in social activities, health status and access to healthcare.

**"Women still earn on average 13% less per hour than men."**

**European Commission Annual Report for 2023**

According to the European Commission Annual Report for 2023, women still

earn on average 13% less per hour than men and women's pensions are on average 29% lower -. At least one third of all women and girls in the EU are survivors of physical or sexual violence and 50% of all women have experienced sexual harassment. When it comes to political power, men still hold more than 75% of all ministerial portfolios in the EU.


Meanwhile, Europe is facing multiple and interwoven crises. **No crisis is gender neutral, and women's and girls' lives are particularly affected by the current challenges.** The consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, the effects of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine with its cost-of-living crisis, and the impact of climate deregulation all have strong and multidimensional effects which are linked to pre-existing structural gender and intersecting forms of discrimination.

At the same time, we have seen a **backlash against women's rights and gender equality**, with the reassertion of traditional roles based on gender stereotypes which undermine women's equal participation in public life and in the formal labour market.

## **Session 2: Looking ahead to 2030**

With a view to **looking back at achievements and towards the opportunities and challenges ahead**, the Belgian Presidency is organising this informal meeting to reflect on lessons learnt. In addition to that, it will discuss both the **content of the future European gender equality agenda** as well as the ways to **strengthen the institutional mechanisms** available for setting out this policy.

In this perspective, this informal meeting convened by the **Belgian State Secretary Marie-Colline Leroy** will bring together the Belgian Prime Minister Alexander De Croo, the EU Ministers for Gender Equality, the Commissioner for Equality Helena Dalli, the President of the FEMM Committee of the



European Parliament Robert Biedroń, the President of the European Women's Lobby Iliana Balabanova and the director of the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) Carlien Scheele.

The Belgian Presidency of the Council **aims to protect all citizens against discrimination and gender-based violence**, to **strengthen the institutional mechanism** for gender equality policy and **prepare the equality agenda** for the new legislature. A specific focus will be given to the **economic empowerment and financial independence of women** as a pathway to substantive gender equality. The planned Council Conclusions tabled by the Presidency will seek a new political commitment to bridge existing gender employment, care, pay and pension gaps and to fight against gender stereotypes in this field. Inequality in terms of wealth and financial decisions is both a symptom and a cause of gender inequality.

## Website and sources

Website	<a href="http://www.belgium24.eu">www.belgium24.eu</a>
WhatsApp	Join us on <a href="https://whatsapp.com/channel/0029VaFqS8T4yltFsR0mvU2m">https://whatsapp.com/channel/0029VaFqS8T4yltFsR0mvU2m</a>
X	<a href="https://www.x.com/EU2024BE">https://www.x.com/EU2024BE</a>
Threads	<a href="https://www.threads.net/EU2024BE">https://www.threads.net/EU2024BE</a>
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