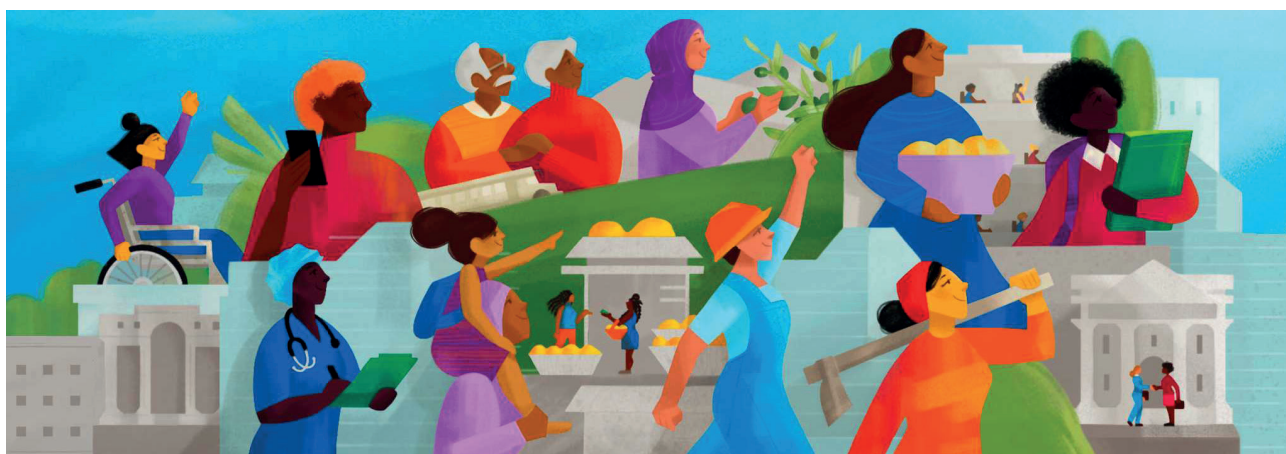


68th Meeting of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women



EESC Declaration at the sixty-eighth session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (UN CSW68)

A gender lens on poverty



Working towards a more equal Europe and a more equal world is a founding principle of our Union, but it is also one of the main ambitions of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), as the house of organised civil society.

The EU has made a lot of progress towards gender equality, but there is still a long way to go. We are committed to helping pave that way, and to work towards global gender equality.

Our commitment is also demonstrated by our first ever participation in 2024 in the annual meeting of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (UNCSW68).

*As an official advisory body representing Europe's organized civil society, the EESC will actively engage in the UN CSW to advocate for policies that contribute to advancing gender equality, including regarding actions to reduce poverty among women and girls and strengthening institutions and financing with a gender perspective, **in line with the EU's priorities.***

Under the theme of "Accelerating the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls by addressing poverty and strengthening institutions and financing with a gender perspective", we will present the innovative input our Committee has developed to empower women and young girls, and to address the economic and social inequalities they struggle with still today.

To that purpose, the EESC has encapsulated the years-long work on opinions, resolutions and action plans into ten action points. These actions reflect our multifaceted approach to advancing gender equality, tackling poverty, and fortifying institutions, all underpinned by a resolute dedication to fostering a gender perspective in financial frameworks. They represent European civil society's collective path towards that goal and the EESC is fully committed to this endeavour.

1. Violence against women and protection of victims

The EESC has called on strong legislation which protects women from **all forms of violence**, including institutional violence, harassment at work, sexual violence, among others.

Policies that aim to counter this violence must not be neutral but must be drawn up based on a **clear and unequivocal gender perspective**.

Victims must be protected, and given access to proper compensation.

2. Addressing poverty among women and girls

Poverty disproportionately affects women and girls. The EESC is committed to addressing this disparity by advocating for targeted policies, **economic empowerment programs**, and **social safety nets to uplift women** from poverty.

Through **adequate minimum incomes and decent wages**, women must be given access to the economic and financial capacities to make sure they are not left behind.

In parallel, the EESC has been working on strategies to address the accentuated problem of **homelessness**, recognising that it has risen among several population groups, in particular young people, women, and the LGBTIQ community.

3. Care and Health

The EESC has called for ensuring **accessible healthcare services**, promoting **sexual and reproductive health services (SRHS)**, and challenging stereotypes that impact women's well-being. We have notably recognised the importance of targeting the gender imbalances linked to mental health, by calling for **gender-tailored mental health support** and treatment.

We called for "a 'Care Deal for Europe', which should ensure the provision of greater quality services for all throughout the life-cycle" and for Member States to invest in the availability of high-quality, affordable, accessible and diverse care services.

At the same time, the EESC recognises the need to tackle the **disproportionate distribution of care responsibilities** among women and men, by proposing dedicated care guarantees and protecting formal and informal caregivers.

4. Equipping institutions with the finance to reduce poverty among women and girls

The EESC recognises the need to **develop financial mechanisms that empower institutions** to effectively address and mitigate the levels of poverty and inequality among women and girls.

The EESC advocated a European Semester process that always takes into account the social dimension of economic decisions when coordinating EU economies and formulating proposals to boost their sustainable growth.



The Committee advocates in particular the adoption of fiscal models that make it possible to maintain reasonable and adequate social benefits, support public and social services and distribute the tax burden equitably.

The EESC asked for specific objectives and targets for all of the 20 principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights (EPRS), including for gender equality,

5. Equality, anti-discrimination and intersectionality

Striving for equality on all fronts, the EESC promotes anti-discrimination measures and recognises the intersecting factors that contribute to inequality. Our initiatives champion policies that **address discrimination based on gender, ethnicity, race, and other intersectional dimensions**.

We have worked on strengthening the equality strategies at European level, and we have also focused on the particular situations of Roma women and women with disabilities

We advocated the adoption of an intersectional approach to gender equality, also when addressing multiple forms of discrimination.

6. Women in the labour market

Promoting **equal opportunities**, ensuring **fair representation** and closing the **gender-pay gaps** are necessary steps to achieve a gender-neutral labour market. The EESC recognises the many challenges and obstacles still faced today by working women, and continues its work on the field. The gender gap in employment for people with no or low qualifications and those facing intersectional discrimination needs to be tackled by improving their skills.

The EESC strongly supported the strengthening of **equal-pay measures and labour market opportunities** for women in the post-pandemic economic tools developed at the European level.

The Committee has supported and asked for a reinforcement on binding pay transparency measures, notably with the support of social partners by means of **collective bargaining**.

At the same time, we recognise the challenges posed by the **digital transition** and by new forms of work, and their imbalanced impact on women. The EESC presented its reflection on how **teleworking conditions** can be improved, so they do not exacerbate the unequal distribution of domestic work.

In parallel, the Committee also works on solutions to close the **digital gender gap**, by fighting to increase the digital literacy of young girls and fostering female participation on the technological and digital markets.

7. Empowering women as leaders

Female voices need to be represented in **leadership** positions across sectors, and women need to be empowered to gain access to such positions.

The EESC has called for an office of European Women's Business Ownership, both at the European Commission and at national ministries' levels, and for the appointment of a Women's Enterprise Envoy within the Commission. These roles would allow the development of data and annual policy to enable a female-friendly environment in entrepreneurship.



Simultaneously, we have been strong supporters of the Women on Boards Directive, and recognised the need to **increase women representation in senior roles** and to have **greater transparency** on the management of talent inside companies.

8. Social Policy

The EESC has a recognised history of reinforcing social policy at the EU level and has been at the forefront of many important demands, from strengthening **social dialogue** and reinforcing **collective bargaining** to setting to improve the implementation of the **European Pillar of Social Rights**. We also recognise the need to strongly **link the European semester to social policy**, making possible for Member States to have the necessary investments on social protection.

The EESC believes that EU should **set minimum social standards**, fully compliant with the Charter of Fundamental Rights and this process should be subject to thorough consultation **with the social partners and civil society organisations** at EU and national level.

Throughout all these important conquests and demands, we recognise the particular protection that must be given to women and girls, bearing in mind the intersectionality perspective.

9. Education

Education is the cornerstone for the empowerment of young girls and women, by challenging stereotypes and ensuring equal opportunities in the future. The EESC believes that the digital and green transitions provide an unique prospect to **investing young girls' skills and competences** that enable them to thrive in the future labour markets. But there is also an opportunity to invest in **inclusive lifelong learning** for women who already have started their career.

Our Committee has also worked on issuing recommendations at both national and EU-level, to **improve women representation in science**, notably in universities and research institutions. There is a need to attract more girls into STEM fields (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) and make research and innovation career paths more appealing to women

Women with low levels of skills and qualifications need additional support to improve their position in the labour market, as the gender gap in employment is widest for people with no or low qualifications and those facing intersectional discrimination

We have stressed the importance of education in challenging gender stereotypes and the need to develop training and mentoring opportunities for women.

10. Access to essential services

The EESC works towards **eliminating barriers to access essential services**, vital for ensuring women's well-being. To that effect, we adopt an intersectional gender-lens when working on issues such as **housing, energy poverty** and **access to water resources**.

Our Committee is at the forefront of a call for an **EU Blue Deal**, a comprehensive policy to water management and water scarcity. We recognise the importance to work on the issue of water poverty, and on doing so we are looking into the position of women and young girls' access to these resources.