

# 69<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women



## EESC contribution to the EU's priorities at the sixty-ninth session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (UN CSW69)



*The sixty-ninth session of the Commission on the Status of Women organized at the United Nations takes place at a decisive moment for women's rights globally. Women and girls around the globe are faced with a backlash in spite of many achievements during the last decades. 30 years after the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, time has come for a renewed commitment to gender equality worldwide.*

*The EESC acknowledges the positive developments in gender equality in Europe in recent decades and urges the EU and the Member States to increase the pace of progress, be more ambitious, be vocal about the shrinking space for civil society and block any backlash against women's rights, which are under attack, in particular by extreme-right political parties.*

### **Gender parity in governance**

The EESC suggests that the EU, Member States and political parties commit to attracting women to politics by combating stereotypes, offering training and creating safe spaces online and offline, and consider measures to encourage the election and appointment of women to key positions, such as quotas, zipped lists, co-chairing, split terms of office and proposing male and female candidates.

## National action plans to end violence against women

The EESC urges all Member States to allocate sufficient resources to their national action plans to end violence against women and design them in consultation with civil society organisations. Preventing femicide and violence against women requires proper legislation, awareness-raising campaigns, training in schools and financial independence for women. Special training is required for all personnel in contact with survivors (police, healthcare services, social workers, lawyers and judges), and care facilities and shelters should be set up in all regions. Measures are needed to protect and separate children from their abusers, grant asylum to abused migrant women so they can avoid deportation, acknowledge all types of violence, including that perpetrated by an intimate partner, and develop a consent-based definition of rape.

The EESC urges all EU Member States to ratify and implement the ILO's Violence and Harassment Convention 190 and the Istanbul Convention and calls for their ratification to be promoted among countries acceding to the EU in the future.

Social partners can play a key role in addressing violence and harassment at work. In the light of adopted EU Directive 2024/1385 and ILO Convention 190, EU social partners could discuss the possibility of updating the European autonomous framework agreement of 2007 on harassment and violence at work, to be implemented in all Member States.

## Just transition

The EESC believes that an EU just transition framework should include a skills strategy to address pre-existing gender inequalities. Specific attention should be paid to women and girls in the Global South and in rural areas, who are disproportionately affected by the triple planetary crisis. It is necessary to map skills needs, develop appropriate training programmes and establish meaningful and enforceable access to fully compensated training hours. Boosting women's entrepreneurship in general, and in green sectors in particular, as well as closing the gender gap in the workforce will make the EU more competitive.

## Digital gender gap

To bridge the digital gender gap, the EESC suggests investing in digital literacy training, affordable access to the internet, digital devices and women-led technology projects and promoting STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) education and careers for women and girls. Women's perspectives must be included in the design, development and deployment of artificial intelligence (AI) and algorithms, to make AI socially sensitive and inclusive.

## Gender care gap

The excess of unpaid care responsibilities negatively affects women, as it either undermines their professional careers and economic situation, contributing to the pay and pension gaps, or leads to physical and mental exhaustion and time poverty. To close the gender gap in unpaid care responsibilities and help women stay in the labour market, the EESC reiterates its call for a European Care Guarantee, including childcare, to provide affordable, accessible and quality healthcare and care services for people in the EU.



As a last resort, women and men who leave the labour market to care for family members should be supported by safety nets, such as longer paid family leave, basic income schemes and 'care credits' for pension plans according to national rules.

Taking care of people sustains our economies, as it ensures the wellbeing of working adults and the development of future generations. Therefore, the care economy, which also comprises unpaid work, should be viewed as a collective responsibility, to better address individual and societal needs as well as systemic inequalities. Considering that more women are employed in the care sector, with lower wages, it is important to value their work, by improving wages and working conditions, and attract more men.

## Women, peace and security agenda

The EESC calls for the original vision of the Beijing declaration for non-violent conflict resolution and local peacebuilding to be reinforced and for a strong and ambitious long-term EU strategy on inclusive foreign policy that puts gender equality, human rights, feminist diplomacy and social justice at its core.

Women's social movements have been very vocal in combating war, conflict and injustice, ensuring equal and fair representation in decision-making bodies and raising awareness of the abuse of women in conflict zones. As such, women's perspectives in conflict resolution will benefit de-escalation and peace processes.

## Focus on the future

To advance further towards an effective gender equality we must address the intersection with other forms of discrimination (e.g. sexual orientation, race, origin, disability, socioeconomic background, age). More gender-disaggregated intersectional data are needed to shape and follow up on strategies and hold governments and institutions to account.

Online violence against women is a new phenomenon, to tackle through preventive and awareness-raising measures and a strong legal framework to deal with perpetrators and hold online platforms to account. Special attention must be paid to sexual digital forgeries where women's images are used in pornography. The EESC wants to see more action to combat violence against women online (especially in view of the growing amount of sexual digital forgery in pornography).

We need to care for women's physical and mental health, to implement measures to address economic violence and to ensure that women's sexual and reproductive health and rights are respected.

Our health systems and pharmaceutical and medical treatments should pay more attention to the biological specificities of males and females. Further research and data are necessary to improve women's physical and mental health. Sexual and reproductive health and rights still need to be reinforced across all Member States so that all women who need attention preventively or as a treatment can access it.

We must explore further how to use national and EU budgets to improve gender equality. The EESC recommends that the EU and Member States use gender budgeting tools at all levels of the budgetary process and a gender lens in fiscal policy. The participation of civil society and social dialogue are also crucial to identify the areas to be addressed.

The EESC commends the EU for the structural engagement of youth delegates in the preparation of the CSW and invites all Member States to do the same and ensure an active role for youth.

Since the adoption of the UN's 2030 Agenda, the EESC has been calling for an overarching EU Sustainable Development Strategy and a long-term commitment even beyond 2030. The Sustainable Development Goals need to be tackled as a whole, not on a one-by-one basis, to allow gender mainstreaming across all policies.

Gender equality cannot be achieved without the active work of civil society organisations, especially women's rights organisations, including those providing legal services. Youth organisations play a key role in promoting engagement through community mobilisation and volunteer work and facilitate intergenerational dialogue. To this end, they need to be properly engaged in the discussions and legislative processes and supported financially so that they can continue their work.

[Recommendations taken from the Opinion SOC/821]