



This project is funded by the European Union.



Technical Assistance for Strengthening  
Fundamental Rights Sector Coordination Project

# WOMEN'S RIGHTS

## FACTSHEET



WEglobal





## Introduction

Today, women's rights encompass the steps towards ensuring that women enjoy their fundamental rights and freedoms equally with men in every field, from participation in decision-making processes to working life or family life. These rights also include protection from all forms of discrimination and violence, and the strengthening of their position and status. In addition to the developments needed in the economic, social and cultural fields, states also have legal, administrative and judicial responsibilities to ensure the full enjoyment of these rights and equality in legislation and practice. This has paved the way for many advances to be made in this field at national and international levels, especially since the second half of the 20th century.



## International Standards

### United Nations (UN)

- ✓ UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)
- ✓ UN General Assembly, Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, 20 December 1993, A/RES/48/104
- ✓ Recommendation Rec (2002) 5 of the Committee of Ministers on the Protection of Women against Violence
- ✓ United Nations Development Programme Gender Equality Strategy 2022-2025
- ✓ 2004 OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality

### Council of Europe

- ✓ Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence
- ✓ Recommendation Rec (2002) 5 of the Committee of Ministers on the Protection of Women against Violence
- ✓ Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy 2024-2029

### Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)

- ✓ 2004 OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality
- ✓ OSCE Decision No. 4/18 Preventing and Combating Violence against Women



## European Union Acquis and Policy Framework

In the world, 14 of the 20 countries that rank highest in terms of equality between men and women are members of the European Union (EU). Equality between men and women is a fundamental principle of the EU and a common or shared value stated in Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union. Thus, the EU has reached a position that sets standards in terms of equality between men and women and women's rights.

Articles 21 titled "non-discrimination" and 23 titled "equality between men and women" of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights prohibit all kinds of discrimination on the basis of gender and regulate that equality between men and women must be ensured in all areas.

The EU created a solid legal framework in this regard with its Directives, which aim to ensure equality between men and women and to combat discrimination in matters related to the workplace and working life and in access to goods and services. This legal framework as a whole established norms and standards on equal treatment and equal opportunities in the EU and pioneered important policy changes in Member States in terms of protection from discrimination.

Moreover, there are significant efforts at the Union level to mainstream the gender equality perspective in all policy areas and to develop specific measures to ensure equality.

However, the majority of binding legal measures adopted by the EU focus on employment and labour markets and aim to improve equality between men and women in economic life, focusing on economic growth and competitiveness.

Due to the Union's emphasis on the economic field, issues such as combating violence against women and domestic violence or supporting women's participation in decision-making mechanisms have only recently become the subject of binding legal measures in the EU.

The widespread occurrence of gender-based prejudices and stereotypes, sexist discourses and cases of gender-based violence and harassment in addition to ongoing discrimination and inequalities in all areas of social life show that progress in the field of equality between men and women is not irreversible, requiring the EU to develop binding measures in these areas.

Especially since the beginning of the 21st century, in addition to binding measures in the EU and all Member States, the Union also focuses on initiatives aimed at strengthening equality between men and women, covering a wider area and focusing on strengthening coordination and cooperation between Member States.

## Founding Treaties and EU Charter of Fundamental Rights

### Treaty on European Union

Article 3(3): It shall combat social exclusion and discrimination, and shall promote social justice and protection, equality between women and men, solidarity between generations and protection of the rights of the child.

### Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union

Article 8: In all its activities, the Union shall aim to eliminate inequalities, and to promote equality, between men and women.

Article 157(1): Each Member State shall ensure that the principle of equal pay for male and female workers for equal work or work of equal value is applied.

Article 157(4): With a view to ensuring full equality in practice between men and women in working life, the principle of equal treatment shall not prevent any Member State from maintaining or adopting measures providing for specific advantages in order to make it easier for the underrepresented sex to pursue a vocational activity or to prevent or compensate for disadvantages in professional careers.

### Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union

Article 23: Equality between men and women must be ensured in all areas, including employment, work and pay. The principle of equality shall not prevent the maintenance or adoption of measures providing for specific advantages in favour of the underrepresented sex.

Article 21(1): Any discrimination based on any ground such as sex [...] shall be prohibited.

## Examples of Various Binding Acts of the EU

- ✔ Directive 2006/54/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 July 2006 on the implementation of the principle of equal opportunities and equal treatment of men and women in matters of employment and occupation (recast)
- ✔ Council Directive 2004/113/EC of 13 December 2004 implementing the principle of equal treatment between men and women in the access to and supply of goods and services
- ✔ Directive (EU) 2022/2381 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 November 2022 on improving the gender balance among directors of listed companies and related measures
- ✔ Directive (EU) 2023/970 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 10 May 2023 to strengthen the application of the principle of equal pay for equal work or work of equal value between men and women through pay transparency and enforcement mechanisms
- ✔ Directive (EU) 2024/1385 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 May 2024 on combating violence against women and domestic violence

## Policy Documents of the EU: Cooperation and Coordination Framework

### EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025 (COM/2020/152 final)



### EU Gender Action Plan (GAP) III An Ambitious Agenda for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in EU External Action (JOIN/2020/17 Final)

- ✓ The EU taking more active role in this field with a gender-transformative, rights-based and intersectional approach
- ✓ Greater coordination, cooperation and transparency
- ✓ Basic action areas: ensuring freedom from all forms of gender-based violence; promoting sexual and reproductive health and rights; strengthening economic and social rights and the empowerment of girls and women; advancing equal participation and leadership; implementing the women, peace and security agenda, addressing challenges and harnessing the opportunities offered by the green transition and the digital transformation
- ✓ Leading by example, by establishing gender-responsive and gender-balanced leadership at top EU political and management levels, which requires leadership buy-in, investing in knowledge, resources and pooling action with EU Member States
- ✓ Reporting and communicating on results, putting in place a quantitative, qualitative, and inclusive monitoring system to increase public accountability, ensure transparency and access to information

### Institutional Mechanism in the EU: European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE)

The EIGE was established by Regulation (EC) No. 1922/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 December 2006. It is an independent body that acts within the framework of EU policies and initiatives with the aim of collecting, analyzing and disseminating data and information on issues related to its mandate, and making this data and information comparable.

The EIGE supports knowledge-based policy-making processes by providing technical assistance to the European Commission, the European Parliament as well as Member States and candidate countries.

The objectives of the Institute are to contribute to and strengthen the promotion of gender equality, including gender mainstreaming in all EU policies and the resulting national policies, and the fight against discrimination based on sex, and to raise EU citizens' awareness of gender equality.

Its duties include carrying out surveys in Europe on the subject, setting up and coordinating a European Network on Gender Equality, and disseminating information regarding positive examples.

The EIGE's areas of activity are:

