



FROM GAP TO EQUALITY: PAVING THE PATH FOR WOMEN IN THE EU

policy brief





SUMMARY

The policy brief will showcase the European Union's initiatives and strategies to achieve gender equality, specifically in terms of equal pay and equal opportunities in the labor market. It also focuses on the Lisbon Treaty's legal framework for promoting gender equality and targets the continuing wage gap and underrepresentation of women in the workforce. The brief suggests options such as government supervision, educational programs, and business encouragement to ensure gender equality. It underlines the socioeconomic significance of gender equality in the EU, calling for a strategy that will build a more equitable and resilient European Union.



INTRODUCTION



The European Union (EU) is the world's number one human rights advocate and repeatedly tries to build an equitable society that emphasizes gender equality and human rights in general as its target. Although the EU promoted many initiatives for gender equality, with all the efforts, they still managed to fail with a noticeable gap in gender equality, especially in equal payment, where states face difficulties ensuring it. This lack reflects the system's difficulties in ensuring the existence of basic needs that may not affect women alone but society as a whole and the overall workforce. These flaws diminish the EU's efforts and aspirations of equal treatment, prompting a reevaluation of policies and enforcement mechanisms for effectively reducing the gender gap.



WHY DO WE NEED GENDER EQUALITY?

1

Gender equality is not just a concept; it is a matter much bigger than that. It is a matter of human rights and social justice, where everyone deserves a chance and an opportunity regardless of their gender. Promoting and ensuring its existence will create a more equitable society.

2

Gender equality is vital for the economy, offering more chances for economic growth and development. When women are allowed to participate and work equally, it would increase economic growth, reduce poverty, and boost the long-term competitiveness of the EU economy. For the economy offering a more chance for economic growth and development. When women are allowed to participate and work equally it would increase economic growth, and reduce poverty, improving it will generally boost the long-term competitiveness of the EU's economy and there are many more.

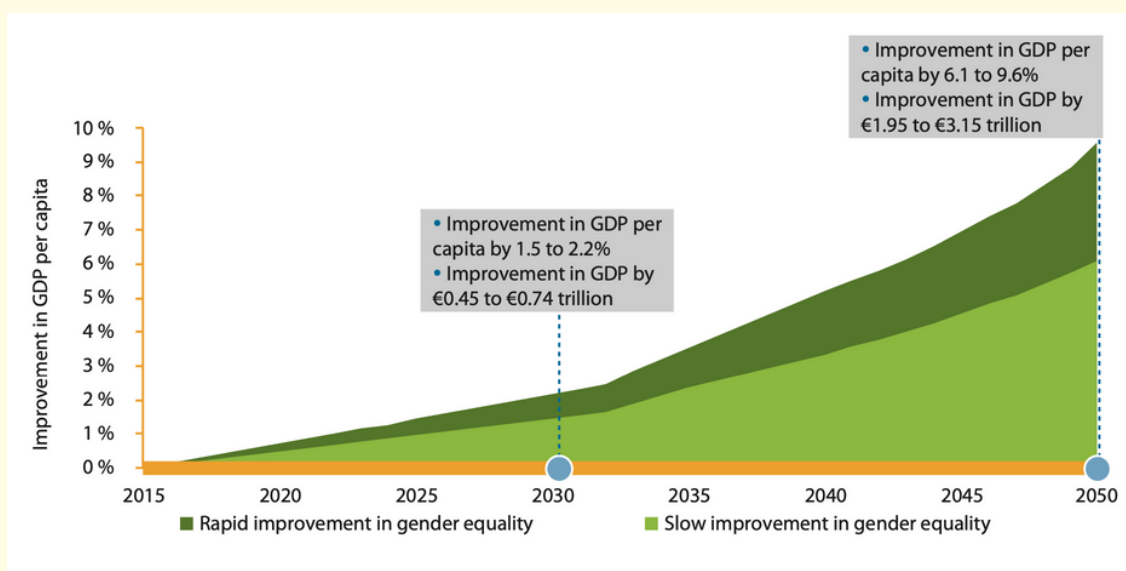


Figure 1:

Source: European Institute for Gender Equality – The effect of improved gender equality on GDP per capita



THE LISBON TREATY

The Lisbon Treaty is considered to be one of the most significant documents in the constitutional framework of the European Union (EU). It was founded on December 13, 2007, and came into effect on December 1, 2009, after all members ratified it. This treaty amended the two main treaties, the most important one being the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), which introduced several articles promoting gender equality. The Lisbon Treaty reaffirmed the EU's commitment to protecting and promoting gender equality, and the articles include the following: Article 8 of the TFEU, which states that the Union shall aim to eliminate inequalities and promote equality between men and women; Article 157 of the TFEU, which states that each member state shall ensure the principle of equal pay between male and female workers for equal work; and Article 153 of the TFEU, which declares that the Union should follow the objective of equality between men and women regarding labor market opportunities and treatment at work.

Although the treaty offered many excellent articles that protect against all forms of gender inequality, almost all EU members failed to follow the treaty's obligations and articles. This led to some controversy and prompted the EU to create a strategy plan on gender equality for the years 2020–2025. Despite their continuous efforts to eliminate this problem, unfortunately, it persists to this day in almost all member states. This can be witnessed in the figures provided below.

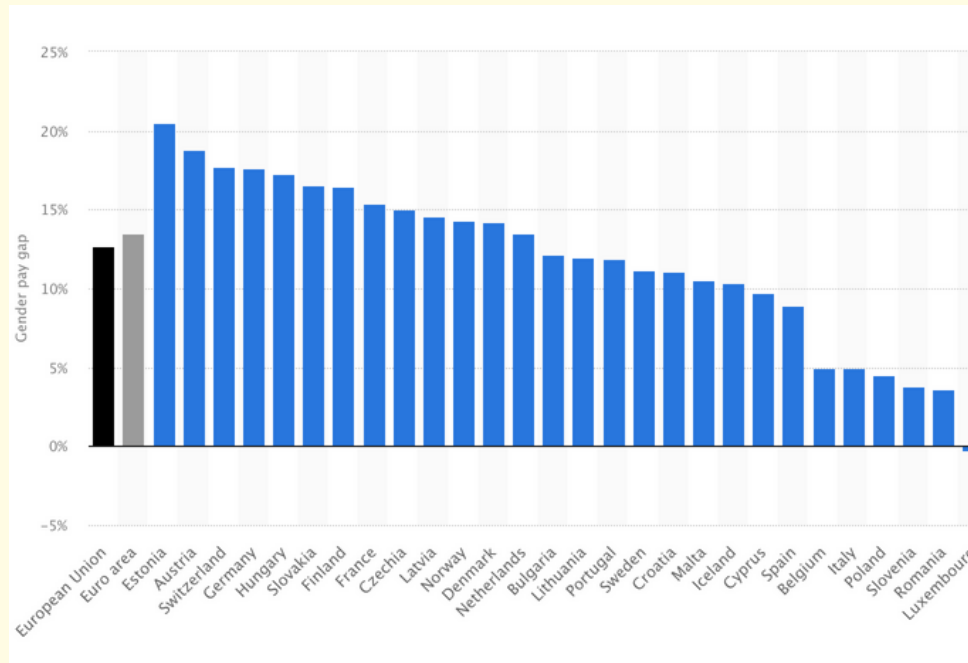
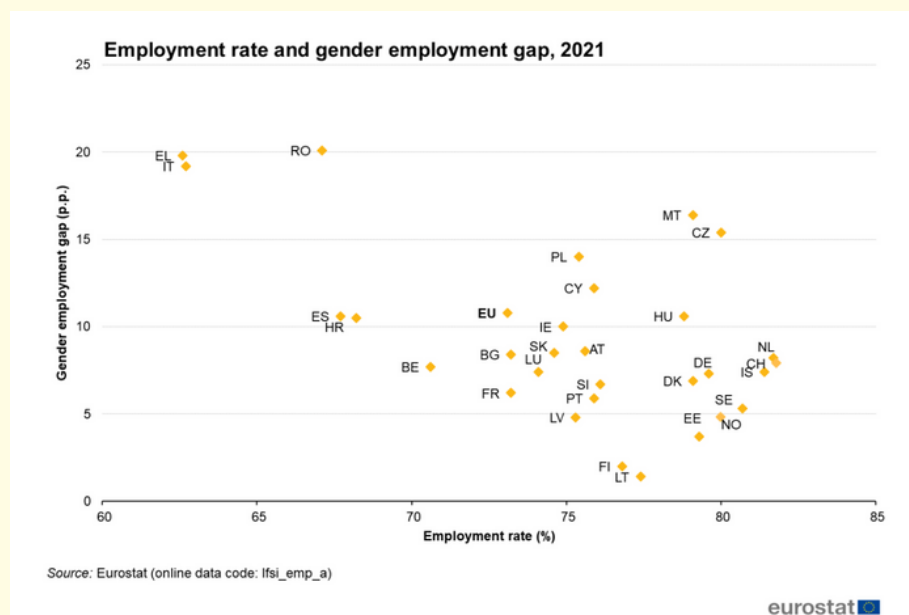


Figure 2:

Source: Eurostat, 2021 – The unadjusted pay gap between hourly earnings of male and female employees.

Figure (2) shows the gender pay gap in all EU member states, pointing the percentage difference in average gross hourly earnings between men and women. The graph displays that women in the EU earn on average 12.7% less than their male peers. Estonia has the highest pay gap at 20.5%, while Luxembourg stands out as the only country with no gender pay gap, at -0.2%. Unfortunately, in most other countries, the gender pay gap in earnings still remains an ongoing issue.

Figure (3) displays the analyzed data showing the difference in employment rates between men and women aged 20–64. The graph indicates that the average gender employment gap in the EU was 10.8 percentage points, which means that the number of men working was higher than that of women by 10.8 percentage points. Romania had the highest gap at 20.1 percentage points while Lithuania had the lowest gap at 1.4 percentage points. Unfortunately, the EU is lagging in the labor market as many member states still have a noteworthy gap with fewer women participating in the workforce.



Source: Eurostat (online data code: ifsi_emp_a)



Figure 3:
Source: Eurostat, 2021



RECOMMENDATIONS

1

Providing academic support and mentorship for all women: offering them a networking opportunity to foster their growth and giving them educational scholarships in areas where women are underrepresented especially, in the STEM sector.

2

Education awareness and emphasis on Male employee participation: Such programs should teach children at all levels about the importance of gender equality. Additionally, there should be mandatory educational programs in both public and private sectors that focus on educating employees, especially men, on the various forms of gender inequality. These programs will create awareness and emphasize the need for male participation in promoting gender equality.

3

Providing companies with funding and resources: encouraging companies to implement gender equality policies and programs and rewarding them through financing them and providing them with whatever resources they need.



4

EU monitoring of gender equality laws and strengthening it: Enforcing member states to create a sector in their government where employees would focus on gender equality and make sure to check on all companies and monitor them every few months to make sure they are not breaching any policy also in case if they are the government of a member state should create a penalty for companies that penalize that rule. In this, the state would be winning in both ways economically and socially; they reduce gender equality and receive penalties from companies that don't implement that rule.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, promoting gender equality in the European Union workforce and member states is not just considered to be an ethical necessity, but also a social and economic one. If managed properly, it could lead to significant development in these sectors. Therefore, a strategy that includes governmental monitoring, educational mentorship targeted scholarships, raising awareness through education, and encouraging companies through funding is needed. The path towards gender equality is crucial in creating a more resilient and equitable European Union, where each individual has the opportunity to participate and engage in any field they desire without any standards.



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