

S&D

EU Charter of Women's Rights





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Preamble

All people are equal and shall live their lives free of violence and discrimination.

Gender equality is a core value of the European Union. It is a fundamental right enshrined in the Charter of the Fundamental Rights of the European Union, its Treaties, as well as the key principle of the European Pillar of Social Rights.

Gender equality and women's rights are indispensable and indivisible parts of human rights and the basis of the rule of law and resilient democracies. Achievements of gender equality and women's rights are vital and a precondition to ensure freedom, security, justice, inclusion and well-being for the whole of European society and to reach the full potential of the Union in all areas.

In order to achieve full gender equality, it is necessary to address the underlying causes and instances of inequality, intersectional discrimination and biases, like structural inequalities and stereotypes, which result in discrimination and unequal treatment of women in all their diversity. To this end, it is crucial to implement the principles of gender mainstreaming and gender budgeting in all legislation and policies of the Union and the Member States.

This Charter sets uniform, Europe-wide standards for women's rights and shall serve as a guide towards gender equality in the enactment and implementation of all Union policies at European and national level. It also reaffirms the commitment of the Union to achieve gender equality and ensure respect and protection of fundamental rights of women in all their diversity, whilst preventing any setbacks in their accessibility and enjoyment.

The European Commission, European Parliament and European Council therefore recognise the rights and principles set out hereafter and underline the importance of protecting these rights.

CHAPTER 1: **Education**

Article 1 **Gender Sensitive Curriculums**

1. Every woman and girl has the right to enjoy inclusive education. The gender perspective shall be incorporated into school curriculums with the aim to raise awareness about and address the intersectional historic discrimination of women and girls and to empower the next generations to overcome stereotypes, discrimination and inequalities in order to foster and sustain gender equal societies. Raising awareness among boys and men from early age onwards about the existing structural inequalities based on patriarchal systems and the need to change them as well as fully including them in the work for gender equality, is key for reaching gender equal societies.
2. Every woman and girl has the right to fully access all areas of higher education. Measures aimed at encouraging women and girls to specialise in professions in which they are underrepresented shall be supported. Particular focus shall be given to professions with positive societal and economic impact to ensure that women are well equipped for future economic transitions and developments. Therefore, it shall be ensured in particular that:
 - a. girls and women have access to all different specialisations in education and are encouraged to pursue diverse courses, including those connected to male-dominated professions;
 - b. gender perspective is incorporated into the school curriculums to address historical discrimination of women and girls and gender stereotypes and that women's impact on historical, economic and societal developments is acknowledged.

Article 2 **Equal Access to Education**

1. Every woman and girl shall have access to education. No woman shall be discriminated when pursuing her education. Equal representation of women in key fields of studies must be ensured, as this is crucial to empower women to benefit from their rights, to achieve gender equality and to reach the full potential of the Union.
 - a. Women and girls shall be positively encouraged to pursue education on university level in sectors which are expected to be central in the future European economy, such as the science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) sector, in light of the digital and green transition

- b. To ensure that women have equal access to education, measures promoting women to pursue degrees in sectors in which they are underrepresented, such as the STEM sectors, shall be promoted. Towards that end, public universities shall be encouraged to introduce measures such as quotas or reserved lists for women applying to the programmes connected to the male dominated sectors. Measures to encourage men to enter female dominated studies shall be promoted.
- c. At the same time, boys shall be encouraged to enter female dominated sectors, like care, which is crucial for the future of our societies.
- d. Appropriate public funding shall be allocated to the promotion of women's and girl's education. In particular, measures that encourage women and girls to pursue degrees with positive societal and economic impact shall be introduced.

CHAPTER 2: **Economic Independence**

Article 3 **Full Participation in the Labour Market**

1. Women in all their diversity shall have the right to exercise a job of their choice without discrimination.
2. Gender equality must be ensured in all areas including participation in the labour market. Any laws and practices that may actually or potentially discriminate against women shall be prohibited, especially those concerning hiring, employment conditions and career progression.
 - a. Gender mainstreaming shall be incorporated into all policies, legislation and impact assessments in order to ensure fair and equal gender participation in the labour market. Measures aimed at improving gender equality in employment shall be introduced, such as employers' reporting and disclosure obligations that provide gender sensitive information on pay levels, career progression, leave arrangements and any other relevant indicators.
 - b. The rights of groups experiencing multiple and intersectional forms of discrimination, including women with disabilities, racialised women, incl. women of colour, migrant and ethnic minority women, older women, women with lower education levels, women with health problems, single mothers, LGBTIQ+ women and women in rural and depopulated areas shall be protected and promoted. In this regard, the concept of combat-

ing multiple types of discrimination and the integration of intersectional analysis shall be incorporated throughout the European Union's and its Member States' policies, also concerning labour market policies.

3. Every woman has the right to fair and adequate wages as well as the right to access social security, without discrimination, that provide for a decent standard of living and ageing. Towards that end, the principle of equal pay for equal work or work of equal value must be respected and enforced. The gender pay and pension gaps shall be appropriately tackled and eliminated. In particular, the challenge of establishing equal pay for work of equal value across different occupational sectors must be tackled in order to reach a fairer valuation and thus better remuneration in sectors, which are traditionally female dominated and low paid.
4. A gender perspective shall be incorporated in vocational education and training policies in order to ensure women's full participation in the labour market, especially during economic transitions such as the digital or green transition. Particular measures that aim to facilitate the return of women who have been on parental leave to the labour market and measures to encourage fathers to take over their care responsibility shall be introduced with the view to reach the "equal earner -equal carer" model.
5. Since women's economic independence and empowerment is central to achieving gender equality and guaranteeing women's rights, the European Union and the Member States should ensure that high-level positions, including jobs in the STEM sector, are equally accessible to all women.

Article 4

Tackling Horizontal Pay Segregation

Sectoral segregation, which is a major reason for the gender pay and pension gap, shall be eliminated. Towards that end, it shall be ensured that in particular that the following are introduced:

- a. clear definition of the value of work;
- b. gender neutral job evaluation tools and classification systems;
- c. clear and non-discriminatory criteria that allow for a better evaluation and for fairer remuneration for work in all sectors, and particularly in highly-feminised sectors such as care.

Article 5

Work-life Balance

1. Every woman has the right to a fair and healthy work-life balance. The disproportionate share of unpaid domestic and care work shall be addressed by introducing measures aimed at improving a fair division of such work between women and men.

2. Gender sensitive education and awareness raising programmes that address the unequal division of unpaid work and the consequential disadvantageous position of women in the labour market shall be introduced. Employers shall establish a framework for flexible working arrangements for all to encourage a fairer division of such work and shall incorporate the gender perspective into their internal policies.

Article 6

Parental and Care Responsibilities

1. Every parent has the right to a fair distribution of child care. No woman shall be discriminated against in the labour market because of her choice to bear or raise a child or children. Men on the other hand shall be encouraged and not be discriminated against when fulfilling their fair share of care work, as this is a precondition to reach a gender equal society and an equal earner – equal carer system.
2. In order to achieve a fairer distribution of parental care, paternal leave shall be introduced and at least a half of the parental leave shall be non-transferable between the parents.
3. Quality child-care shall be affordable, easily accessible and guaranteed for all children from the age of zero in all Europe, including rural areas. Measures aimed at supporting single parents to actively participate in the labour market shall be introduced.
4. Quality, affordable and accessible care for elderly and persons with disabilities, in particular in rural areas, must be guaranteed.
5. Relevant legislative framework and investments should be provided to facilitate a transition towards a true care economy. This includes carer's leave and extended possibilities for flexible working conditions for workers providing care or support to a relative.

Article 7

Tackling Economic Violence

1. Every woman has the right to economic autonomy, which is central to achieve gender equality and to guarantee women's rights, safety and dignity.
2. Wages and individual social benefits shall be paid into a bank account held individually by the beneficiary or if jointly, only under the condition that this is in agreement with both partners. Such payments into a third-party account shall be prohibited.

Article 8

Tackling Gender Bias in Taxation

1. Fiscal policies shall not discriminate against women and shall support women's economic independence.
2. Gender biases in taxation shall be addressed and eliminated. Gender perspective shall be incorporated into fiscal policies to accommodate for the different socio-economic needs of women and to contribute to the elimination of any and all harmful gender roles. In particular the following shall be addressed:
 - a. implicit biases in work-related tax deductions and exemptions, such as favourable tax treatment of extra working hours, which benefit mostly professions that are currently occupied in mostly by men;
 - b. economic disincentives for second earners entering the labour market, in particular under the joint taxation scheme;
 - c. taxation on goods, such as menstrual products and beauty products, which disproportionately affect women and lead to women bearing a larger VAT burden. The pink tax, referring to the products marketed toward women being more expensive, shall be eliminated, as this phenomenon constitutes a form of gender-based discrimination.

CHAPTER 3:

Equal Representation

Article 9

Equality in Political Decision-Making

1. All women have the right to be equally represented in decision-making processes in politics and to take an active role in political decision-making, at all levels. Women's civic participation shall be strengthened and supported, including the integration and appropriate funding of women's rights organisations.
2. To ensure equal representation in political decision-making, measures promoting parity in political bodies, such as quotas, reserved lists or zip-lists, shall be promoted and implemented.
3. The Union and the Member States should promote equal representation of women in political decision making on all levels.

Article 10

Tackling Harmful Practices in Politics

1. No woman exercising a public mandate shall be subjected to harassment or any other discriminatory or derogatory treatment online or offline. Given that any such treatment is a form of gender-based violence and often has a silencing effect, making women refrain from taking up political and public posts leading to an unequal distribution of political power, specific measures tackling harassment of women public officials shall be introduced to ensure that women can fully and freely exercise their political mandate.
2. All political institutions, including national and local governments, parliaments and any other decision-making bodies, as well as political parties, shall introduce gender sensitive codes of conduct in order to enhance gender equality and eliminate discrimination of women in politics. Mandatory anti-harassment courses for public officials shall be introduced, including effective sanctions in the case of non-compliance with rules.

Article 11

Equality in Economic Decision Making

1. All women have the right to be equally represented in economic decision-making. Obstacles, such as gender-based discrimination and established gender roles shall be eliminated.
2. Companies shall introduce measures to enhance equal representation of women on company boards and in management positions to ensure fair representation so that they can benefit from the economic advantages of gender balance in management.
3. Mandatory gender sensitive programmes and trainings shall be introduced for directors of public companies that shall be a role model for private companies and lead by example. Such programmes shall contribute to the elimination of harassment and discrimination of women and to the promotion of women participation in economic decision making within the company.

Article 12

Gender Sensitive Business Culture

1. No woman shall be subjected to any kind of discriminatory or derogatory treatment at her place of employment or while exercising her professional duties. Given that women are often disproportionately affected by harmful gender stereotypes and discrimination in professional settings, companies shall include the gender perspective in their codes of conduct with the aim of ensuring gender equality and eliminating all forms of harassment, including sexual and psychological harassment, discrimination, derogatory treatment and any and all harmful practices that put women in a disadvantageous position.

2. Gender sensitive anti-harassment training programmes that aim to eliminate harmful gender stereotypes and any implicit biases that may negatively affect women at work shall be introduced for all staff, and especially for staff at management level, including effective sanctions in the case of non-compliance with rules
3. Companies shall implement internal policies that aim to ensure gender equality within their structures. Periodical reporting duties shall be introduced on such companies. Such reports ought to be made public and include information on any and all efforts taken to ensure gender equality, necessarily including gender sensitive information on pay levels.
4. Women entrepreneurship shall be promoted. Appropriate public resources shall be allocated to ensure women's entrepreneurial literacy and skills and to ensure equal business opportunities for men and women.

CHAPTER 4: **Tackling Gender-Based Violence and Harassment**

Article 13 **Dignity, Safety and Security**

1. Gender-based violence is a violation of human rights. Every woman has the right to live with dignity and in freedom, free of any forms of violence, harassment, coercion or discrimination in both the private and public sphere. Given that women experience disproportionate and gendered forms of violence, gender-based violence (GBV) must be defined as a type of crime listed under Article 83(1) TFEU and tackled specifically.
 - a. Definition of GBV must include, but shall not be limited to, femicide, physical violence, psychological violence, sexual violence, including sexual harassment and rape, denied access to Sexual Reproductive Health Rights (SRHR), female and intersex genital mutilations, forced sterilisation, stalking, sexist hate speech both online and offline, including against women in politics and public sphere, socio-economic deprivation, coercive control and domestic violence. The definition shall specifically address gender-based cyber violence. Different forms of harassment and other harmful practices online, including cyberbullying, cyberstalking, doxxing, deepfakes, revenge porn, shall be tackled, as they constitute a form of gender-based violence and are harmful practices that perpetuate discriminatory gender stereotypes that disproportionately affect women and therefore shall be appropriately addressed and eliminated.
 - b. The gender perspective shall be incorporated into all policies and legislation aimed at tackling and eliminating all violence. There shall be spe-

cific definitions, procedures and sanctions that appropriately address the needs of women in tackling all forms of GBV, including domestic violence and sexual harassment. Secondary victimisation and so-called “institutional forms of violence” shall also be tackled specifically and appropriately, as they have serious harmful consequences on women and girls and on society as a whole.

- c. All victims of GBV shall have access to justice without prejudice and should be able to claim fair damages. GBV victims should be able to access specialised support that takes into account their specific needs.
2. European standards on GBV prevention and support for victims of GBV shall be established. These standards shall include accessible and well-financed gender-sensitive support services for survivors of gender-based violence and their families and dependence, as well as training and awareness raising educational campaigns throughout the lifelong learning cycle

Article 14

Gender-sensitive Education and Training

1. Gender sensitive education about GBV, which exists offline as well as online, shall be mandatory part of any school curriculums to address and eliminate GBV and its underlying causes, such as harmful gender stereotypes and toxic masculinity, and transgender-related harassment, hate speech and discrimination. The Union shall support those efforts by fostering cross-border cooperation between Member States, creating platforms for sharing best practices relating to gender-sensitive education and providing freely available, evidence-based, age-appropriate information and materials aimed at advancing gender equality among children and adolescents, including intersectional prevention measures.
2. Gender-sensitive training programmes for law enforcement, judicial authorities and healthcare professionals in order to ensure proper handling of cases of gender-based violence, including interpretation of evidence and comprehensive support for women victims, especially in domestic violence cases, shall be established.

CHAPTER 5:

Health and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR)

Article 15 Health

1. Gender inequalities and gender biases in the healthcare is endemic and can lead from harmful to detrimental outcomes for women. Gender bias in health-care settings must be tackled through specific measures like addressing health-care research inequity, and promoting equal participation of women working in healthcare and research.
2. Every woman has the right to the highest standard of health care, provided without discrimination, and guaranteed throughout her lifetime. This right includes, among others, access to timely, affordable and adequate health care and related services, affordable medicines and vaccines, and access to comprehensive information in regard to such.
3. To ensure full enjoyment of that right, gender perspective must be considered in all health-related policies and especially in health and clinical research.

Article 16 Maternal and Abortion Health Care

1. Every woman has the right to freely decide about her body and life and to have her bodily autonomy and self-determination guaranteed and respected. A woman's body is not for sale or exploitation.
2. Every woman has the right to universal maternal care of the highest standard, which is essential for the full realisation of women's right to health and related rights, such as the right to decide about her body and life. Interference with access to such care shall constitute a human rights violation.
3. European standards on maternal health care shall be established, including European gynaecological, obstetric and perinatal standards, in order to ensure full and equal enjoyment of any and all rights enshrined in this charter, and especially the right to universal maternal health care and abortion care.
4. Every woman has the right to legal, safe, universal and affordable abortion care and services provided without discrimination.
5. No woman shall be subjected to any kind of degrading treatment when accessing abortion services. Interference with access to such services shall constitute a human rights violation. Denial of abortion care may also amount to torture or cruel treatment, which may lead to death. Measures that may actually or potentially

hinder women's ability to fully exercise that right, such as mandatory counselling or disproportionate waiting periods, shall be prohibited.

Article 17

Informed Family Planning

Every woman has the right to freely decide whether, by what means, and when to have children. No women shall be forced into unintended or undesired motherhood. People in gender transition processes shall not be subjected to compulsory sterilisation.

1. Every woman has the right to accessible and affordable fertility treatments as an integral part of the healthcare system, without any form of discrimination and especially without discrimination based on sexual orientation or civil status.
2. Every woman has the right to modern, high-quality, affordable and easily accessible contraception. Contraceptive methods shall be promoted, as contraception is one of the best means to empower both men and women and enable them to make informed decisions regarding family planning.
3. In order to ensure full realisation of these rights, objective, freely accessible and comprehensive information relating to contraception and fertility treatments must be provided.

Article 18

Information and Education on SRHR

1. Every woman has the right to live in a society that is educated and aware of the problems that mostly or entirely affect women, and especially those regarding sexual and reproductive health. To achieve that objective, comprehensive and age-appropriate sexuality and relationship education shall be incorporated as mandatory into school curriculums, necessarily for both boys and girls. Such education shall include the gender perspective and provide objective, up to date and evidence-based information on SRHR, contraception and family planning as well as sexuality and relationship matters, in line with the rights and principles laid down in this charter and other relevant international standards.
2. Every woman has the right to free access to comprehensive, evidence-based and objective information relating to her health and to available healthcare services, including on sexual and reproductive health and rights.

CHAPTER 6: **Feminist Foreign Policy and Crisis Management**

Article 19

Gender Sensitive Crisis Management

1. Gender perspective shall be incorporated into crisis management policies to account for the specific needs of women in times of crisis, including war, humanitarian and climate change related crisis. In particular, issues affecting only or mostly women in time of crises, such as sexual exploitation or human trafficking, must be specifically addressed and tackled. Gender-based violence as a weapon of war shall be unequivocally recognised as a war tactic and a war crime. Crisis support services shall have gender sensitive policies in place to support women.
2. On the Union level, in times of crisis, the Union shall foster cooperation between Member States to ensure that women can fully exercise their fundamental rights, including those enshrined in this charter.

Article 20

Gender Perspective in Foreign Policy

1. Gender perspective shall be incorporated into the foreign policy and external actions of the Union and the Member States. In particular it shall be ensured that:
 - a. gender perspective is always considered in development aid policies and appropriate funding is given to programmes working towards gender equality, including sexual and reproductive health and rights;
 - b. gender perspective is incorporated into the analyses, impact assessments and data collection regarding the external financing and engagement in policy dialogues with third countries;
 - c. gender perspective is incorporated in all peace building actions, fostering meaningful participation of women and marginalised groups.
2. Migration policies of the Union and the Member States shall take into account the specific needs of migrant and asylum-seeking women. It shall be ensured that these women can fully enjoy their human rights, necessarily including the sexual and reproductive health rights and access to gender-based violence victim services.

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The S&D Group is represented by 139 MEPs across 26 EU countries. The S&D Group is the second largest political group in the European Parliament and our MEPs work in all parliamentary committees and interparliamentary delegations.

We stand for an inclusive European society based on the principles of solidarity, equality, diversity, freedom and fairness. We campaign for social justice, jobs and growth, consumer rights, sustainable development, financial market reforms and human rights in order to create a stronger and more democratic Europe and a better future for all citizens.

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