



International Women's Day 2018: Women's empowerment matters for the future of Europe.

Brussels, 8 March 2018

The Commission is marking International Women's Day with the release of its 2018 report on equality between men and women, as well as a presentation of a report on women in tech. We are not there yet.

The Commission has acted to trigger change. It put forward a [proposal](#) to improve the work-life balance of working families, an [Action plan](#) to tackle the gender pay gap and called to put an end to violence against women through funding and awareness-raising [actions](#).

The 2018 gender equality report shows that progress has stalled in certain areas: women still take on the majority of caring responsibilities in families, the gender pay gap has stagnated at 16% for years and violence against women remains a problem.

Frans Timmermans, First Vice-President said today: *"The issue of gender equality is high on the agenda, but progress is still slow on the ground. To achieve real change for women we need to turn awareness and intentions into action. That means adopting the new legislation the Commission has proposed on work-life balance, joining the Istanbul Convention and implementing the policies we have already agreed on to tackle the gender pay gap and fight violence against women."*

Věra Jourová, Commissioner for Justice, Consumers and Gender Equality, added: *"Gender equality is not just about women. It is about our society, our economy and our demography. We want to guarantee that women are truly equal to men in front of the law. We will also continue work to empower women, so they can make their own choices when it comes to their careers and their families."*

Mariya Gabriel, Commissioner for the Digital Economy and Society, said: *"Europe's future will be digital and it is in our hands to make it inclusive. Women and girls cannot be left out of the digital transformation of our economy and our society. Our 'Women in digital agenda' will be about enabling, empowering, encouraging and motivating women and girls to close the gender digital divide."*

The report shows that women still face challenges in different areas:

- While European women are better educated than men (44 % women aged 30-34 vs 34 % men got university degree in 2016), they remain largely under-represented in decision-making positions in companies and still earn 16 % less than men on average across the EU.
- Women are also under-represented in politics. In six countries (Greece, Croatia, Cyprus, Latvia, Hungary, and Malta) women represent less than 20 % of parliament members.
- The gender gap in employment has stagnated for the last few years at around 11 percentage points. There has been no noteworthy catch-up between low and high performing Member States.
- 44 % of Europeans in average think that women should take care of their homes and families. In one third of EU Member States, it is no less than 70 % of Europeans who think so.
- Violence is still too wide-spread: One in three women in Europe has experienced either physical and/or sexual violence since the age of 15. Also 55 % of women in the EU has experienced sexual harassment.

Empowering women in the digital age

The tech sector will create 500,000 new jobs by 2020. Unfortunately, European women might miss out on such opportunities and so will Europe's economy. Women's participation in the ICT and digital sector has not improved much over the recent years. The Commission published today an additional study on women in the digital age, showing that more women in digital jobs could create an annual €16 billion GDP boost in the EU. However, only 24.9% of women in higher education graduate in tech-related fields. When it comes to entrepreneurship in tech, female owned start-ups are more likely to be successful, but only 14.8% of start-up founders are female, found the study.

To increase the participation of women in the digital sector, Commissioner Gabriel outlined today [plans](#) to promote role models in the IT sector, challenge stereotypes, promote digital skills and education and

advocate for more women entrepreneurs. The initiative for women in digital will run throughout 2018 and 2019.

Background

Equality between women and men is a fundamental value of the European Union and one that has been enshrined in the Treaty from the very beginning, as the Rome Treaty included a provision on equal pay.

The Commission's work on gender equality policy is based on the "[Strategic engagement for gender equality 2016-2019](#)", which focuses on five priority areas:

- increasing female labour-market participation and the equal economic independence of women and men;
- reducing the gender pay, earnings and pension gaps and thus fighting poverty among women;
- promoting equality between women and men in decision-making;
- combating gender-based violence and protecting and supporting victims; and
- promoting gender equality and women's rights across the world.

For further information:

[2018 report](#) on equality between men and women

[Study 'Women in the Digital Age'](#)

[Initiative to increase women's participation in the digital sector](#)

European Institute for Gender Equality [press release](#) on the women in tech

[The Annual Fundamental Rights Colloquium on Women's Rights in Turbulent Times](#) addressed violence and harassment against women as well as the economic and political inequality between women and men, particularly focusing on the gender pay gap and on work-life balance.

The launch of [Spotlight Initiative](#) by the European Commission together with the United Nations addresses gender-based violence at global level.

[2017 Gender Equality index](#)

[Violence against women awareness-raising video](#)

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