

# Recommendations for Municipalities and Public Bodies

Underlying the Recommendations presented below is the notion of Equal Democracy. 'Equal Democracy' means women and men sharing public and private space, career and family care, participation in institutions and the labour market. It means building a society based on a real gender balance, on an equal relationship between men and women. It is a founding principle of all modern democracies and is one of the main objectives that the Member States and the EU institutions have committed themselves to pursuing through political actions and legislative measures.

In order to achieve the objectives defined by Equal Democracy, the role played by the Gender Equality Index is of fundamental importance. Conceived and constructed by the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), it aggregates data at the national and European level, to guarantee certification and transparency of the data, being published by an independent and recognised institute, full comparability, being applied by the EIGE a homogeneous methodology for data collection and processing, and time series granularity, being the index published biannually since 2013. The policy measures to be applied in order to achieve a high index score are manifold, as outlined in depth, though not exhaustively, in the chapters of the guidelines described above.

The Equality Index assigns each member country an overall score summarising its performance in the main domains defined by the EIGE: work, income, knowledge, time, power.

The following paragraphs list some useful suggestions for public administrations to improve their policies in each of these areas.

## *Work*

- Tax relief or incentives for companies that hire women;
- Strengthening of some incentives, e.g. for returning to work after maternity leave;
- Reducing the outflow from the labour market of new mothers;
- Review of support for mother entrepreneurs
- Reducing the exit from the labour market of temporary female workers;
- Incentives for the creation of women's enterprises and provision of low-interest credit to support the expansion and development of women's enterprises;
- Introduction of additional flexibility for teleworking for elderly parents with dependent children;
- Efficient use of part-time and reduction of involuntary part-time;
- Governance and monitoring of diversity and gender equality in companies and public administration;
- Definition of standards for the adoption of a gender policy in public and private companies and for the dissemination of information on gender equality;
- Introduction of a local gender equality certification system, differentiated according to company size/turnover.

## *Income*

- Definition of the gender pay gap in accordance with the law to clearly define situations of illegality or irregularity;
- Adoption of equal pay metrics at company level;
- Definition of guidelines for the adoption of a gender policy by companies;
- Support for working mothers and fathers (corporate welfare);

- Analysis of penalising factors for women and creation of credit/microcredit products for low-income women, victims of violence and single or divorced mothers;
- Reducing the maternity pension gap.

### Knowledge

- Cross-cutting promotion of gender equality principles at all levels of education and training;
- Introduction of the notions of gender *mainstreaming* in education;
- Revision of textbook requirements and training materials to incentivise publishing houses to ensure the visibility of women;
- Promoting interventions against early school leaving and educational and training disadvantage;
- Advanced training courses in STEM disciplines for women;
- Use of school spaces for thematic 'summer hubs' in the STEM area, such as Digital Girls Campus for female high school students;
- Strengthening of mathematics curricula in terms of hours and quality of teaching;
- Funding of public scholarships for female students in STEM faculties;
- Strengthening individual school guidance services to promote access to studies in STEM subjects;
- Review of ministerial and school activities for the orientation of high school students to the world of university and work;
- Promotion and guidance for obtaining vocational qualifications;
- Places reserved for female students in STEM faculties with admission tests, especially in universities with a very low female presence;
- Rethinking digital algorithms made by men for men;
- Support for female student-mothers at university;
- Introduction of gender quotas in university staff evaluation committees and gender-neutral evaluation of academic performance;
- Allocation of funds from the Ministry of Universities and Research to universities in consideration of gender differences in teaching staff and/or academic institutions;
- Strengthening of curricular computer courses and funding of extracurricular courses in compulsory schools to promote digital school literacy;
- Tax relief or incentives for private companies offering digital and computer literacy courses after school for female target groups;
- Organisation by public bodies of free after-school digital and computer literacy courses;
- Mandatory training for teaching staff on gender *mainstreaming* and gender stereotyping, especially in STEM subjects and those with high segregation.

### Time

- Measures to promote the sharing of parental responsibilities;
- Adoption of specific measures to promote paternity leave;
- Implementation of the crèche plan to ensure an increased supply of services for boys and girls aged 0-3;
- Strengthening the services of 0-6 educational poles and complementary services;
- Obligation or incentive system for large companies to set up company crèches or similar services;
- Tax relief for corporate welfare if linked to the provision of services or funds for day-care centres;
- Strengthening the possibility of splitting the last weeks of parental leave to facilitate return to work;

- Review the system of tax relief for costs incurred for care services for dependent children (e.g. babysitters), elderly parents (e.g. carers) or persons with disabilities (e.g. educators);
- Promotion of childcare, care for the elderly, disabled and personal assistance through tax-free goods;
- Conversion of allowances for vulnerable persons (e.g. care allowance) into guaranteed service hours;
- Extension of school hours and periods through curricular lessons or the establishment of summer services;
- Support the extension of full-time schooling with special reference to regions with a low development index.

#### *Power and political representation*

- Increase of the current gender quota for the composition of Boards of Directors (50%);
- Introduction of the obligation of transparency and publication of selection shortlists for senior management and pipelines for listed companies;
- Intervention on the 'par condicio' law to ensure equal time in the media for male and female candidates during election campaigns;
- Implementation of existing legal provisions on gender equality in electoral laws (e.g. double gender preference);
- Introduction of gender quotas in public administration governing bodies and related bodies to achieve gender balance in decision-making;
- Invest human, economic and instrumental resources on gender and equality policies, monitoring, rewards, controls, sanctions at all institutional levels;
- Identifying good practices against gender stereotypes;
- Promoting gender mainstreaming and gender budgeting ;

#### *Between gender knowledge and inclusive management.*

The diversity manager is primarily concerned with identifying as well as enforcing inclusion policies and practices within institutions and companies to enhance "diversity" When we talk about diversity, we refer to all differences between people: age, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, physical appearance, disability, religion and socio-economic status, political belief, cultural level, ways of living and thinking. The overlapping and interconnection of these differences with gender and the resulting mechanisms of discrimination and oppression are termed 'intersectionality'. Intersectional feminism, therefore, is concerned with deconstructing gender discrimination in connection with ableism, racism, ageism, homophobia, class and religious discrimination. Within this framework, Diversity Management can be defined as a strategic organisational approach, which considers people and their diversity as fundamental resources and in recognising the existence of diversity, also supports its diverse management. Underlying Diversity Management is the idea that each person is a 'leading actress' and the bearer of a set of values and expectations resulting from their personal history. The person constitutes an autonomous system of culture and the company, organisation or institution thus ends up becoming a set of cultures. These practices bear witness to the processes of organisational change and sustainable innovation towards which organisations wishing to invest in the enhancement of human capital and corporate social responsibility are heading. Organisations and workplaces, contrary to what they claim, are not neutral, but are structured according to gender symbolism. Studies on women's careers in the workplace are a laboratory for the everyday negotiation of 'between-gender' and 'of-gender' relations. However, contexts studied solely on the basis of gender are limited to date, primarily due to the exclusion in analyses of the interconnectedness of multiple oppressions, as defined by theorising on intersectionality (K).

Crenshaw, 2017). Adopting intersectional perspectives allows for the recognition that women's career experiences are not only influenced by gender, but also by ethnicity, sexuality, nationality, religion, social status, age, ableism, etc. They are also influenced by the organisational context, understood as both the culture of the organisation and the more specific team and group cultures. Intersectional perspectives, in this sense, offer an overall and less dichotomous view, making it possible to detect the intersection of the dimensions of double or triple cultural subordination that can live in work contexts. This is a basic reason to introduce in municipalities and public and private companies a diversity manager capable of making the intersectional analysis of the context, highlighting the different types of intersectional discrimination/multiple discrimination, as well as the disadvantages resulting from the combination of different identities in the intersection of sex and gender.

## 1. E-QUALITY PILLS

In the elaboration of the five training modules, of which these pages are guidelines, the E-Quality project developed and deepened five thematic areas of gender equality:

1. Access to medical care and reproductive and sexual health;
2. Violence and exploitation of women;
3. Access to employment, career and equal pay;
4. Recognition and valorisation of care work;
5. Representation in decision-making processes and empowerment of women.

This is followed by short extracts, 'E-quality pills', from the training modules, of the operational proposals developed through the collective work of the project partners.

### 1.1 Module 1: Access to medical care and reproductive and sexual health

In order to provide a coordinated and sustainable direction to disseminate Gender Medicine on the European, national and local territory and to guarantee the quality and appropriateness of the services provided by the various National Health Services, Local Health Authorities, University curricula, Municipal Administrations, and all public and non-public services, it is necessary to

- a) the provision of an interdisciplinary approach between the different medical areas and the humanities that takes into account the differences resulting from gender, in order to ensure the appropriateness of research, prevention, diagnosis and treatment;
- b) the promotion and support of biomedical, pharmacological and psycho-social research based on gender differences;
- c) promoting and supporting the teaching of Gender Medicine, ensuring adequate levels of training and refresher courses for all medical and health personnel;
- d) the promotion and support of public information on health and disease management from a gender perspective.

Consistent with these principles, the guidelines are divided into the following four areas of general objectives, for each of which specific objectives are detailed:

#### 1. Clinical pathways: prevention, diagnosis, treatment and rehabilitation

Specific objectives:

- a) Obtain a complete structural, organisational and human resources picture of instruments and services;

- b) Promoting, on the basis of epidemiological data, prevention and early gender diagnosis through screening programmes and their monitoring;
- c) Developing innovative solutions for access to services, also making the most of experiences already present on the national and international territory;
- d) Promote actions to apply a gender approach to health policies on the ground and on safety in the workplace.
- e) Analysing occupational health data taking gender differences into account: occupational accidents and illnesses.

## 2. Research and innovation

Specific objectives:

- a) Identify and implement Gender Medicine as a priority area in regional, national and, where possible, international research calls;
- b) Develop basic, pre-clinical and clinical biomedical, pharmacological and psycho-social research on Gender Medicine.
- c) Ensuring the inclusion in research calls of primary and secondary disease risk and prevention factors, differentiated by sex and gender: diagnostic, prognostic and predictive markers of response to therapy;
- d) Develop lines of research on 'Patients Reported Outcomes';
- e) Apply in the National Health Services, in the preventive, diagnostic, therapeutic and organisational fields, the innovations resulting from biomedical, pharmacological and psycho-social research on Gender Medicine

## 3. Training and further education

Specific objectives:

- a) Construct, validate and use tools dedicated to training in Gender Medicine that are effective and replicable;
- b) Planning training activities aimed at promoting and disseminating the culture of Gender Medicine;
- c) Promoting awareness of gender differences in health care, in order to transfer the acquired knowledge and skills into professional activities.

## 4) Communication and Information

Specific objectives:

- a) Identifying tools dedicated to the transfer of communication content to target audiences;
- b) To inform and raise awareness among health professionals and researchers about the importance of a gender approach in every field of medicine;
- c) Informing and raising awareness among the general population and patients on Gender Medicine, through communication campaigns and initiatives involving journalism and the media.

### *Governance strategy for the implementation of the Guidelines: the tools*

The dissemination of Gender Medicine, involving interventions in different areas, necessarily requires governance that ensures effective coordination of actions at national, regional, local and international levels, according to WHO principles. To this end, the following actions at territorial level are recommended for the implementation of the guidelines:

1. Identify a contact person in Gender Medicine;
2. Establish a Territorial Technical Group for the planning of activities;
3. Identify implementation methods;

4. To set up a network system for the promotion and development of Gender Health and Medicine, within which to involve feminist associations, women's movements in the area and some representatives of institutional elected representatives;
5. Define gender-stratified indicators to be included in the collection and processing of information flows and in the formulation of health budgets;
6. Activate an area on the services website dedicated to Gender Medicine supervised by the technical table;
7. Promote the definition of objectives for health care organisations that include: definition of interventions within the humanisation pathways that take gender specificity into account;
8. Include a Gender Medicine expert in corporate scientific committees, health boards, ethics committees and health commissions.

## 1.2 Module 2: Gender-based Violence and Exploitation of Women

Because of and in response to violence against women, the elimination of gender inequalities must be at the core of policies to reduce violence against women in a sustainable and long-term manner. Indeed, violence, gender and inequality are mutually determinative and require a broad and intersectional approach to eliminate violence and build responsible and resilient societies. Combating violence against women requires addressing the structural economic, social and political roots of inequality by mainstreaming intersectional equality policies in all areas and adopting approaches to eliminate inequalities. Intersectionality and mainstreaming of equality are essential elements of policy and implementation at European, national and local levels. Violence against women is influenced by economic, trade, employment, migration, security, social, educational and health policies and is a result of patriarchal culture.

### *Operational proposals*

Violence is no longer silent or confined to the private sphere, but is now recognised as a social problem. With the spread of numerous national and international information campaigns and the consolidation of legislative instruments to condemn this violence and protect victims, or rather *survivors*, the latter are more willing to talk about it and seek help. Therefore, increased political representation of women and marginalised groups will help reduce the prevalence of violence against women in society.

Municipalities can play a very important role in creating and implementing policies to combat and prevent gender-based violence. Below are some concrete proposals for municipalities:

#### 1. Designing participatory organisation systems for municipalities

Municipalities may establish a system that allows people exposed to systemic discrimination and the organisations representing them to express themselves collectively and provide their views through forums or meetings hosted in the municipality. This system would ensure active participation in the development or monitoring of municipal policies and procedures,

#### 2. A new way of building:

The Covid-19 pandemic was indicative of very deep problems in Europe, such as underfunded social and health care systems, unsustainable economic and employment systems that depend on the production and consumption of materials, or the gendered view of work that places the burden of crises on women. Women and marginalised groups have suffered the most from this crisis, both economically and health-wise. Addressing the Covid-19 crisis must take into account how current

systems and practices reinforce and consolidate inequality by shifting the burden of crises onto women. Therefore, recovery funds must first target the groups and communities that have suffered most from the crisis, in order to redistribute resources with women at the centre.

### 3. Create a reception service:

Municipalities can set up a reception system with different social and medical partners to provide support to marginalised women, especially women with disabilities, single women with children, migrant women and women living on the streets.

### 4. Countering and deconstructing criticism

The rise of the political right's criticism of women's rights has caused a setback in the areas of sexual and reproductive rights and violence against women (among others), while anti-feminist sentiments are becoming increasingly central, both in politics and online. Cross-border feminist solidarity and collaboration is essential to defend these hard-won rights and protect them

### 5. Spreading the culture of equality through education:

Children are a necessary starting point, as they are regularly led to develop gender stereotypes, such as in cartoons. The municipality can set up an awareness-raising programme aimed at children to combat ordinary sexism and deconstruct clichés of all kinds from an early age.

### 6. The work on digital violence:

Covid-19 accelerated the digital transition, affecting the prevalence and nature of sexual and gender-based violence. Integrating gender equality policies and addressing the causes and harms of online violence against women into EU digital policy, including in the forthcoming Digital Services Act, is necessary for women and girls to become empowered in an increasingly digital world. Digital approaches to violence against women must not only address online violence and harassment on social networks, but also deeper issues such as sexual exploitation (violent pornography or prostitution) and political violence against women online. They must also address other issues, such as the development of women's digital skills and their place in science, technology, engineering and mathematics. It is essential that progressive policy approaches are able to keep up with innovations and trends in violence against women.

### 7. Design of a guide for victims of cyber harassment:

Guides have been developed in several countries to address the different aspects and questions that arise when one is a victim, survivor or witness of cyber harassment. This makes it possible to raise awareness of cyber violence and harassment, to inform victims about possible legal remedies and to refer them to other specialised structures.

Despite resistance to ratification and delays in accession, the Commission's commitment to advance European legislation on violence against women, through the Istanbul Convention or other alternatives, remains promising. The adoption of the Istanbul Convention and directives on violence against women would provide a legally binding and secure legal framework covering all forms of violence and all victims. The Commission should also respond to Parliament's call for action on sexual exploitation and the significant inequalities in women's rights and protection in the EU, including by considering a directive on sexual exploitation. In addition to legislation, efforts should be made to secure existing measures by strengthening the monitoring and protection of women and its implementation at local, national and European level.

### 1.3 Module 3: Access to employment, careers and equal pay

This section presents the best proposals in the public sector of the EU member states, refers in particular to the objectives to be achieved in the public sector and presents guidelines to be adopted in the public and private sectors.

#### *Operational Proposals for the Public Sector*

- Adopt Gender Budgeting as a strategy to ensure gender equality;
- Take measures to improve gender pay transparency and reduce the pay gap;
- Adopt the 'gender test' that incorporates a gender dimension in the ex-ante impact assessment of new policies and regulations;
- Enforce the mandatory collection of statistical data on the number of women employed in the public sector and their remuneration;
- Linking public sector efficiency and performance to gender equality;
- Fixed quotas for female representation in the public sector (at least 1/3 for the under-represented gender);
- Create control mechanisms to ensure that the spouse's family income and potential career breaks are not included in a comparative evaluation of candidates for public selections;
- In the case of female candidates with better or equal qualifications, they must be preferred up to 50%;
- In areas of under-representation, equal numbers of women and men must be invited to interview;
- Job advertisements must also specify that it is part-time work, unless the nature of the work prevents this;
- Public-private partnerships: extend the gender quota to 30% in the boards of companies in which the public institution is a majority shareholder;
- Training should be used to promote and facilitate the reintegration and career progression of women upon return from maternity leave;
- Provide training for senior management staff to become Gender Equality Ambassadors;
- Use of equality language in public procurement.

#### *Recommendations for the Public Sector*

- Improve understanding of the underlying factors that hinder women's entry and advancement in the public sector, administration and public sphere, at all levels;
- Strongly promote the inclusion of women in decision-making positions;
- Establish and promote a fairer and less sexist distribution of care and domestic responsibilities between men and women;
- Improving the working conditions of women, including through measures to prevent parental burnout;
- Promoting smarter and more productive ways of working (including through remote working and flexitime);
- Exploit the opportunities offered by digital learning solutions to facilitate the development and career advancement of women in public administration;
- Pursue the overall management of the public sector and the attractiveness of public administration for women, compared to the private sector.
- Promote a shift to less gender-based sharing of care responsibilities by granting comparable leave for both parents and providing flexible options to eliminate gender stereotypes. Develop appropriate policies to enable women to care for family members equally.



- Promoting organisational change through training activities, including specific training programmes offered to men in senior leadership positions in the public sector;
- Leveraging digital solutions to promote work-life balance and career advancement opportunities.

#### *Operational Proposals for the Private Sector*

- Update the company policy on diversity and inclusion;
- Train leaders on diversity and inclusion;
- Adopt a fair promotion strategy and close the gender pay gap;
- Designing a supportive environment for women in the workplace;
- Offer benefits suitable for female employees;
- Recognise all team members equally (extra recognition for male-dominated roles);
- Avoid making assumptions about women's needs in the workplace and implement individual interviews;
- create a safe space where employees can be heard and feel valued.

### **1.4 Module 4: Recognition and valorisation of care work**

The approach used to address the issue of care is one based on human rights, both for caregivers and care recipients.

Care work can be divided into four aspects:

1. Caring as concern (recognition or identification of the need for care; taking responsibility for the need for care).
2. Giving care: Direct encounter between needs and care;
3. Physical work and direct encounter between the parties in the care relationship (Right to give care with rights).
4. Receiving assistance: importance of the inclusion of the assisted person (to know whether the need has been met in a way that respects his/her interests and rights).

The objective of the public institution must be to protect the rights of persons in a situation of need, persons on whom action is taken to promote their autonomy. This objective therefore requires to be defined with the 'participation of the target group(s) of the policy', i.e. people in a situation of dependency and their families, in particular women.

Is caring still a constitutive element of gender today, because women take care?

The liberal patriarchal culture has led to the privatisation/feminisation of women's care work/exploitation. How can this system be reformed today? The European strategy sets out an agenda to improve conditions for carers and care recipients. It calls for:

- enhancing access to services and improving care services;
- make the care sector more resilient and gender-balanced by improving working conditions and care responsibilities.

Support services must be expanded to meet current and future needs. Expansion must go hand in hand with improvements in quality, accessibility and cost-effectiveness.

Accessible care services are often lacking: the two priority areas are early childhood education and care and long-term care for dependent persons. The problem is particularly pronounced in rural and sparsely populated areas. With regard to children, the Barcelona agreements envisage coverage for the 0-3 age group of 33% and for the 3-6 age group of 90% by 2030. However, at the European level, Member States are converging on amending the Barcelona agreements to allow women and men access to paid work to a greater extent. With this in mind, the goal would be to increase the coverage of kindergartens to 50% and pre-schools to 96%. It is estimated that such an implementation can increase female employment from 2% to 32%.

Accessibility also means offering articulated solutions for parents with atypical working hours, thus meeting the needs of single parents. It is also necessary to promote adequately paid family leave to bridge the gap between the two genders and to introduce a lower cost of fees, commensurate with families' financial means, up to and including free of charge.

As far as the elderly are concerned, long-term care services need to be improved. The EU Charter of Fundamental Rights recognises the right of older people to lead a life of dignity and independence. Principle 18 of the European Pillar of Social Rights enshrines the right to quality and affordable long-term care, in particular home care and community-based services. The EU strategy calls for a choice of services in line with the person's needs. Digital transition and innovative digital solutions (telecare, telemedicine, robotics) can offer high quality solutions.

These two macro-areas of care and treatment require care implementation plans that take into account and address the achievement of two fundamental goals:

- Improving the working conditions of carers;
- Improving the work-life balance of caregivers.

#### *Operational proposals*

- Ensure adequate wages, improve training, offer professional status and create career paths for professional carers and caregivers;
- Implement measures to address gender stereotypes and gender segregation and make the care work profession attractive to both men and women;
- Define specific communication campaigns to combat gender stereotypes in care work;
- Implement ILO Convention 189 on domestic work and ratify the convention on harassment and violence in the care sector;
- Define legal migration routes at European level for this profession;
- Designing support measures for informal caregivers (counselling, psychological support, respite care);
- Ensure that parents and persons with care responsibilities are entitled to adequate leave at the workplace;
- Take care of data collection and monitoring of care and treatment needs and establish a mechanism for forecasting need over time;
- Promoting investment and ensuring an adequate financial resource framework.

## **1.5 Module 5: Representation in decision-making processes and women's empowerment**

What is needed to promote the quantity and quality of equal representation in the decision-making processes of institutional, political, social, economic and cultural organisations?

- Changing the rules of the system;
- Introduce quotas and/or equal corrections despite cultural resistance (countries with quotas are estimated to reach gender balance in 2026, those without quotas in 2038). The concept of meritocracy without equal opportunities is a deception.
- Invest human, economic and instrumental resources on gender and equality policies;
- Introduce monitoring, rewards, controls, sanctions at all institutional levels.

Women's empowerment is a multidimensional progressive process in which women or a group of women acquire power and are able to make meaningful choices for themselves and others in the personal, social, political and economic spheres. In order to promote it, it is necessary:

- Identifying good practices against gender stereotypes;
- Reducing the gender gap in the labour market;

- Reconciling work and life time;
- Promoting the sharing of care responsibilities;
- Harmonising the legislative framework for the implementation of the EU strategy.

#### *Operational proposals*

- Promotion of gender mainstreaming and gender budgeting;
- Introduction of gender impact assessment of every legislative initiative;
- consideration of barriers in the implementation of gender equality;
- support for fragility (social and economic hardship, presence of violence situations, labour exploitation) in the planning of interventions;
- promotion of Gender Public Procurement (GRPP) principles and tools
- strengthening of official statistics to improve the production of gender-disaggregated indicators;
  
- promotion of language conducive to civil dialogue and overcoming sexist expressions or manifestations;
- creation of a 'Cultural Pact' between the institutional world and civil society to ensure collective action for gender equality;
- strengthening the promotion of models for gender equality and overcoming stereotypes;