

# EUROPEAN EXPRESSION

QUARTERLY  
REVIEW ON  
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## GENDER EQUALITY & MAINSTREAMING

*Guest editor: Divina Alexiou*

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### The bleeding economy

By not giving women equal salaries and equal access to jobs as well as not stimulating fertility rates, we hurt the economy in multiple ways; and we cannot have proper fiscal policies if we don't consider gender equality as a central pillar.

*Divina Alexiou, Diversity and gender equality expert*



### The solution

To eradicate trafficking in human beings, we must reduce the demand for all forms of exploitation by breaking the cycle of profits that fuels demand.

*Myria Vassiliadou, EU Anti-Trafficking Coordinator, European Commission*

### Expectations and perceptions

What women and girls are trying to achieve is often quite different from what their male counterparts are trying to attain.

*Ambassador Laura Thompson, Deputy Director General, International Organization for Migration*



### Gendered Socialization

From princesses to toy household appliances in the pink girls' section and from superheroes to mechanical building materials in the blue boys' section, parents and children are guided towards gendered choices in purchases that reinforce gender stereotypes.

*Judi Mesman, Professor of Diversity in Parenting and Development, Leiden University*

### Gender differences

Women are consistently more concerned than men about climate change and are more willing to make changes to their own consumption and lifestyle to reduce emissions.

*Kate Cahoon, Project Coordinator at GenderCC – Women for Climate Justice*



### Emerging dynamics

Demographic change and pension reforms have put a new focus on the challenges for older women.

*Philippe Seidel Leroy, Policy Officer, AGE Platform Europe*

### The "sandwich generation"

54% of young people experienced discrimination in education, 50% when looking for a job, 42% at the workplace and 29% when looking for accommodation.

*Johanna Nyman, President of the European Youth Forum*



### Binary v. Diversified legislation

There are social roles that when performed by women deceive the expectations of those who incorporate traditional gender roles.

*Silvie Vale, Scientific writer on Gender & LGBT Issues, Impakter*

### Rules for gender roles

There are social roles that when performed by women deceive the expectations of those who incorporate traditional gender roles.

*Ana Paula Saraiva, Independent Researcher*



### A challenged feminist movement

Feminism is an inclusive movement, but organized political feminism is not, as it has excluded American women whose views are outside the accepted notions of the US political establishment.

*Mai Abdul Rahman, Post-Doctoral Fellow at Howard University, Washington, DC, President of American Palestinian Women's Association*

### Women as drivers of biodiversity

A majority of the world's 1.5 billion people living on \$1 a day or less are women, who rely most heavily on those natural resources susceptible to climate change. Educating and empowering girls and women from an early age will help create awareness among the future generations.

*Shouraseni Sen Roy, Associate Professor, Department of Geography and Regional Studies, University of Miami*



### Women in Europe

European women are disproportionately impacted by cuts in public budget spending and face an increase of unpaid work. Women are therefore also referred to as "the buffer" in times of economic crisis.

*Anke Stock, Senior Specialist - Gender & Rights  
Sascha Gabizon, Executive Director  
Women in Europe for a Common Future*

### Political accommodation of ethnic diversity

Western democracies are switching from the old forms of assimilation, whereas migrant minorities were expected to assimilate with the existing cultural norms, towards "new relations of democratic citizenship".

*Ervis Martini, UNESCO Chair, Marin Barleti University*



### The good news

Fathers who spend the most time with their children, also experience the best careers and the highest wages!

*Desiree Hoving, Independent Science Journalist*

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- Editorial – Beyond what's just and fair – The cost of inequality.....05  
*Divina Alexiou*
- The gender dimension of Trafficking in Human Beings .....07  
*Myria Vassiliadou*
- Why gender matters: The importance of mainstreaming gender  
into Europe's current migration reality .....09  
*Ambassador Laura Thompson*
- The parenting origins of gender inequality..... 11  
*Judi Mesman*
- Mainstreaming gender into a polluted stream? Promoting gender  
equality and climate justice ..... 13  
*Kate Cahoon*
- Reconciling work and care, a necessity for older women..... 16  
*Philippe Leroy Seidel*
- Social inclusion, Women and a changing Europe: the vicious circle ..... 18  
*Johanna Nyman*
- A gendered perspective on the forced and coerced sterilization of transgender  
individuals and corrective sex surgeries of intersex infants in EU countries.....20  
*Silvie Vale*
- Invisible Leaders: Women in Local Government in Portugal.....23  
*Ana Paula Saraiva*
- Arab American Women and the US Gender Discourse .....26  
*Mai Abdul Rahman*
- Gender Mainstreaming and Climate Change in the Global South .....30  
*Shouraseni Sen Roy*
- Gender mainstreaming in sustainable development – Agenda 2030  
as a new driving force for gender equality .....33  
*Anke Stock & Sascha Gabizon*

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# Reconciling work & care a necessity for older women

The president of the European Commission Jean-Claude Juncker put his programme under the motto of a 'fresh start for Europe'. Part of this translated into the withdrawal of a directive on maternity leave, voted by the European Parliament in 2008 and never put on the European Council's agenda. This move was the occasion for the Commission to put the debate around work and family life on a new basis, and in 2015, it published a roadmap, proposing the modernisation of leave schemes around parenthood. This reignited the discussion about work-life balance and gender equality in the labour market. For a long time, the discourse about work-life balance was focussed on young parents only, who need to both care for their children and continue working. In still too many cases, it is mainly women who drop out of the labour market to care for their children full-time, which risks jeopardising their career progression, access to work-related social protection benefits such as unemployment or pension insurance and their chances to find a qualified job in later life.

While these arguments are important, it is often overlooked that work-life balance is a challenge to older workers as well, and that even in old-age there is a gender bias against women in the distribution of roles.

## Challenges faced by older women in the labour market

If in the EU-28, only about one out of two persons between 55 and 64 years are in



Philippe  
Seidel Leroy

Policy Officer, AGE  
Platform Europe

employment (53.3%)<sup>1</sup>, the difference between men and women is remarkable: 46.9% for women in this age group against 60.1% of men.<sup>2</sup> This gap of over 13 points translates persisting traditions of women leaving the labour market earlier than men, but also in family roles. According to Eurofound data, 18% of men and 22% of women in this age group regularly provide care to family members.<sup>3</sup> Older workers who are faced with diseases in their family have often no other choice than to withdraw from the labour market and to provide care by themselves, as quality long-term care services are often either absent or not affordable. Women are fulfilling this role more often, as they have in many cases a lower income than their partner, incomes affected by the life-long consequences of the gender pay gap, gender segregation in different professions and shorter careers of women due to childcare tasks. Currently, the gender pension gap is estimated at almost 40%<sup>4</sup>, with high variations between Member States.

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1 Eurostat 2016, Employment rates by sex, age and citizenship (%), 08 September 2016. Available from: <<http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/database>> [12/9/16].

2 *Ibid*

3 Eurofound 2015, Working and caring: Reconciliation measures in times of demographic change, 2015. Available from: <[www.eurofound.europa.eu/sites/default/files/ef\\_publication/field\\_ef\\_document/ef1534en.pdf](http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/sites/default/files/ef_publication/field_ef_document/ef1534en.pdf)> [12/9/16].

4 European Commission and Social Policy Committee 2015, The 2015 Pension Adequacy Report: current and future income adequacy in old age in the EU. Volume 1, p. 21. European Union, 2015.

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## Emergence of carer's leave as a European topic

The European Commission roadmap contained a possibility of the '[i]ntroduction of Carers' Leave, i.e. new provisions on carers' leave for elderly or ill dependants'<sup>5</sup>. This novelty echoes a call that civil society organisation have been voicing for years.<sup>6</sup> Also, the European Parliament has called repeatedly for leave schemes that support informal carers<sup>7</sup>.

Schemes exist in some Member States; however they are often focussed only on short-term emergency leave in case of health problems with family members. In the light of the numbers above, it seems important to support family carers both by measures to reduce their working time and to be able to combine working and caring, rather than dropping out of the labour market entirely. Also, care periods should be credited with full rights to social protection, including the accumulation of pension rights, access to unemployment benefits after a care period and health insurance, which might stop with the end of an employment relationship in some Member States. To encourage men to take up carer's leave on an equal basis to women, it should also be sufficiently remunerated to be a real option for primary earners in a family.

## Carer's leave – a panacea?

The argument runs often that generous leave schemes such as parental or carer's leave run against gender equality in the labour market, as those who are using them will face reduced work incomes and career prospects after the leave. While the combination of work and care on a part-time basis can already mitigate many of these negative outcomes, parts of argument are very valid. Also, caring is an activity that is not comparable to leisure time: By definition, family carers are not trained for this activity, increasing the emotional stress and burnouts among informal carers are very common. Therefore, it is not sufficient to create leave schemes.

The root of the problem is the absence of formal long-term care services, which would take up the most specialised and hardest tasks in caring for people with severe health conditions. Currently, the budgetary restrictions applied across Europe have resulted in a reduction of care infrastructures, an increase of out-of-pocket payments by care recipients and supported by no means the increase of health care and long-term care needs to come. An initiative on establishing a quality framework for long-term care (for example from the WeDO project<sup>8</sup>) could help in establishing European quality criteria and fighting elder abuse at the same time.

At the same time, family carers will always contribute their time and energy for a better living of their relatives. Therefore, services should also be developed for them: training and peer counselling, respite care arrangements to be able to take a break from their work and care responsibilities and supporting formal long-term care services that take their role fully into account. Each person with long-term care needs is different, and the family should have a prime role in organising care around them.

In conclusion, a fully-fledged strategy for carers is needed to address the problems of care and pension gaps for older women. It must contain legislative measures, such as a carer's leave fully covered by social protection rights, but also investment to make the care infrastructure in Europe ready for demographic change. A new 'pillar of social rights', as currently discussed, should therefore contain targets on the development of long-term care services and services to support informal carers.

To allow this development, budgetary flexibility in the EU should be better used, for example by exempting social investment from the deficit rules of the Stability and Growth Pact. The 'pillar of social rights' should not remain a paper tiger, but transform into better services for European citizens.

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5 European Commission 2015, New start to address the challenges of work-life balance faced by working families, p. 4, August 2016. Available from: <[http://ec.europa.eu/smart-regulation/roadmaps/docs/2015\\_just\\_012\\_new\\_initiative\\_replacing\\_maternity\\_leave\\_directive\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/smart-regulation/roadmaps/docs/2015_just_012_new_initiative_replacing_maternity_leave_directive_en.pdf)> [12/9/16].

6 COFACE 2015, European Reconciliation Package: 2014: Year of Reconciling Work and Family Life in Europe, March 2015. Available from: <[http://ec.europa.eu/smart-regulation/roadmaps/docs/2015\\_just\\_012\\_new\\_initiative\\_replacing\\_maternity\\_leave\\_directive\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/smart-regulation/roadmaps/docs/2015_just_012_new_initiative_replacing_maternity_leave_directive_en.pdf)> [12/9/16].;

AGE Platform Europe & European Women's Lobby 2014, Joint AGE-EWL Paper on Improving the Situation of older Women in the EU in the context of an ageing society and rapidly changing socio-economic environment, March 2014. Available from: <[www.age-platform.eu/images/stories/Publications/papers/EWL\\_AGE\\_gender\\_paper\\_2014\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.age-platform.eu/images/stories/Publications/papers/EWL_AGE_gender_paper_2014_FINAL.pdf)> [12 September 2016].;

Eurocarers 2014, Enabling Carers to Care. Proposal for an EU-level strategy in support of informal carers, 2014. Available from: <<http://eurocarers.org/userfiles/files/policy/Carers%20strategy%20-%20Enabling%20carers%20to%20care.pdf>> [12 September 2016].

7 European Parliament 2013, Impact of the crisis on access to care for vulnerable groups, European Parliament Resolution of 4 July 2013, 2013/2044(INI), A7-0221/2013. Available from: <[www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=TA&language=EN&reference=P7-TA-2013-328](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=TA&language=EN&reference=P7-TA-2013-328)> [12 September 2016].

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8 WeDO 2012, European Quality Framework for Long-Term Care Services. Principles and guidelines for the wellbeing and dignity of older people in need for care and assistance, 2012. <[http://wedo.ttp.eu/system/files/24171\\_WeDo\\_brochure\\_A4\\_48p\\_EN\\_WEB.pdf](http://wedo.ttp.eu/system/files/24171_WeDo_brochure_A4_48p_EN_WEB.pdf)> [12/9/16]

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### The vicious cycle

Lack of funding to mainstream gender among staff results in gender-blind budgets that do not cater for staff gender capacity building needs; staff who are not trained to use gender lenses fail to see the need for increased gender sensitisation internally and externally.

*Cecilia Ragazzi, Gender Advisor, Mercy Corps*



### The marketing drawback

Certain institutions are attracted to gender mainstreaming because adopting its policies can help them polish their image and appear progressive.

*Johanna Lähti, PhD Researcher, University of Tampere*

### Women leadership

Women prefer teamwork and egalitarian processes in juxtaposition to men who rely more on their own abilities and prefer strict hierarchical structures.

The leadership of the main international actors by women could lead to shaping a more democratic and egalitarian social culture.

*Alexandra Alexandridou, Analyst at Center for International Strategic Analyses*



### The implementation deficit

As long as government legislations and policies give attention to customary law the implementation of gender equality policy framework will not be possible.

*Eyerusalem Amare Wolde, Doctoral Candidate in Gender Studies, University of KwaZulu-Natal*

### From MDGs to SDGs

Contrary to the lapsed Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) agenda calls for a systematic gender mainstreaming approach in its implementation.

*Ruth Nekura, PhD Researcher, University of Cape Town*



### Three gender mainstreaming tools

1. gendering of statistics
2. implementing the 'gender test'
3. gender budgeting the state budget

*Aurélie Notebaert, Gender and Diversity specialist*

### Historical stereotypes

The discrimination of women in terms of employment in the male-dominated energy sector can be traced back to historical and stereotype-relevant factors.

*Gunel Huseynova, PhD Researcher, Azerbaijan State Economic University*



### Ordinary role models

We must not only learn more about the struggles and stories of women around us, but transmit them through our actions onto our children – both boys and girls, so that they too can become agents of change.

*Josianne Gauthier, Lawyer, Director of Caritas Canada*

### Internalized oppression

Deep within our psyche and throughout our childhood, we embody oppression until we become self-policing adults who in turn also judge and police others against the desire to break down boundaries.

*Kristie Druzca, Gender and Social Development Specialist, International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center*



### The Greek case

Greece is a country where the value of family is traditionally considered to be strong and a factor of major importance for citizens' well-being. However, deterioration of standards is the result of a prolonged financial austerity that caused unemployment, insecurity and poverty.

*Erasmia Bitsika, Hellenic Coast Guard Officer, Criminologist*

### A humanitarian crisis

Refugee women and girls are part of a dangerous framework, from war-zones back home – where they were threatened by conflicts and sexual violence – to the high-risk journeys fleeing their home countries.

*Valerie Zambianchi, MSc. Global Development*



### Gender Mainstreaming appropriateness

The enormous potential of the gender mainstreaming strategy was both a strength and a weakness. Mainstreaming is not an end in itself while at the same time is no longer optional.

*Lejla Gačanica, PhD Researcher, University of Mostar, Initiative Women Citizens for Constitutional Reform*

### Is Themis (Justitia) blind?

Courts can also make discouraging decisions for women who decided to report cases of violence. In a sentence of a European court, the groping of men against women at work was considered not a crime, but as a "playful attitude".

*Mariangela Zito, Researcher at Institute for Studies on Innovation and Transformation of Production and Work*



### A gender and Social Inclusion lens

The economic empowerment of women is one of the important tools for mainstreaming gender.

*Balkrishna Silwal Sharma, Gender & Vulnerable Groups Advisor, Sakchyam Access to Finance for the Poor Programme/UKAID*

# EUROPEAN EXPRESSION

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