

Brussels / February 4 2025

EN

---

## TOWARDS AN EU ROADMAP FOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS

## CONTRIBUTION TO AN AD-HOC SOCIAL PARTNER CONSULTATION

---

*The European Confederation of Independent Trade Unions (CESI) is a confederation of more than 40 national and European trade union organisations from over 20 European countries, with a total of more than 6 million individual members. Founded in 1990, CESI is a recognised European sectoral social partner and advocates improved employment conditions for workers in Europe and a strong social dimension in the EU.*

The European Confederation of Independent Trade Unions (CESI) welcomes the European Commission's initiative to develop an EU Roadmap for Women's Rights, reinforcing the EU's commitment to gender equality and the fundamental rights enshrined in the EU Treaties and the Charter of Fundamental Rights.

As a European trade union confederation representing more than six million members across various sectors, CESI has advocated gender equality in employment, social rights and economic empowerment since 1990.

CESI urges the European Commission to adopt a comprehensive, ambitious, and enforceable Roadmap for Women's Rights that goes beyond declarative commitments and establishes concrete legislative, financial, and policy measures. A stronger, gender-equal Europe will require bold action, and CESI stands ready to collaborate with EU institutions, Member States, and further social partners to achieve this goal.

It is imperative that the Roadmap considers a complete set of implementation and enforcement tools, ranging from hard tools like legislative proposals and infringement procedures to soft policy tools such as the European Semester, EU funding and support for trade unions and inclusive social dialogue at EU and national level. In terms of EU funding, a rigorous agenda of gender budgeting across all EU funding mechanisms, funds and instruments will be instrumental.

According to CESI, the following core priorities should feature high in a new EU Roadmap for Women's Rights:

### 1. Freedom from violence and harassment

- The Roadmap must highlight that the newly adopted EU Directive on combating violence against women and domestic violence shall be fully implemented at the national level. It must stress that the EU should fully implement and enforce the Council of Europe's Istanbul Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women within the remit of its competences, as per EU Decisions 2023/1075 and 2023/1076 to accede to the Convention.

For matters outside the scope of the EU competence, the Roadmap must foresee further dialogues and incentives for adoption and implementation for EU Member States that have not yet ratified the Convention. This concerns above all Lithuania, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary and Bulgaria.

- Beyond the Istanbul Convention and the new EU Directive on combating violence against women, the Roadmap should also strengthen policies and workplace practices against sexual harassment and workplace violence, taking instruments such as the EU's multisectoral guidelines to prevent violence as a starting point.
- It should promote more mental health and well-being initiatives, particularly in highly feminised and high-stress sectors such as in care.
- Generally, it should also seek to further support and strengthen the role of trade unions and social partners in providing safe workplaces and advocating for victims of violence at work, including via an enhanced cooperation with national equality bodies.

## **2. Equal pay and economic empowerment**

- The Roadmap should set concrete actions to close the gender pay and pension gaps, starting with a full implementation and enforcement of the EU pay transparency directive 2023/970. It should propose an eventual evaluation of the Directive to assess whether its provisions need to be adjusted or strengthened.
- It should further facilitate and encourage national policy and sectoral social dialogue measures for more equal career progressions, transparent recruitment practices, and against algorithmic discrimination in hiring procedures.

## **3. Women's access to leadership and breaking glass ceilings**

- The Roadmap should pave the way for further gender quotas in companies and public services beyond the narrow scope of the EU Women on Boards Directive 2022/2381, to include public administrations and senior management across all sectors and not just in large stock-listed enterprises.
- It should facilitate dialogues in policy making, enterprises and social dialogue on more opportunities for part-time, flexible, and remote working arrangements also in managerial positions, to support work-life balance in practice above all for women.
- The Roadmap should also seek to promote training, mentorship, and sponsorship programmes for women in leadership positions.

#### **4. Fair distribution of care work and gender equality in care**

- The Roadmap should seek to enhance the economic value of care work and ensure fair wages, working conditions, and access to social security for care workers – which are by large majority women.
- It should promote policies and practices for equal sharing of domestic responsibilities, including non-transferable parental leave and flexible working hours, potentially going beyond the minimum standards set out in the EU Work Life Balance Directive 2019/1158.
- The Roadmap should also encourage further investments in accessible and high-quality childcare and long-term care services, taking the EU Child Guarantee forward and relieving domestic charges and opening new professional development opportunities above all for women.
- It should also foster exchanges of good practices to foster collaborative approaches to dismantle gender stereotypes and promote gender diversity within female-dominated sectoral workforces

#### **5. Quality education and digital inclusion for women**

- The Roadmap should develop initiatives to encourage women's participation in STEM fields, digital industries and entrepreneurship – and likewise seek to encourage more men to pick up training and employment in traditionally female oriented sectors, such as in care.
- It should promote gender-sensitive curricula that challenge traditional gender stereotypes and foster inclusivity among children, pupils and students.
- It should also strengthen training programmes especially for women to adapt to changing labour markets, particularly in digital and AI-driven sectors.
- In broader terms, the Roadmap should address AI-based and algorithmic discrimination of women in employment and beyond, too. AI tools should be trained with gender-neutral data, algorithms should be gender-neutral too. Too often, female parameters are underrepresented.