

Resolution 2589 (2025)¹

Women in the economy: employment, entrepreneurship and gender-responsive budgeting

Parliamentary Assembly

1. Women have always had their place in the economy and arguably have a longer experience than men in managing the relationship between the production of goods and services and the management of available resources, on a day-to-day basis. Recognition of this place, however, is not widespread and has been ignored, as in other areas such as science, the arts and literature. In a history of advances and setbacks, women have come a long way in affirming their economic value and independence. Nevertheless, as in all the other dimensions of equality between women and men, there is still a long way to go, globally.
2. The Parliamentary Assembly last addressed the subject of the place of women in the economy in 2018, with a report entitled “Empowering women in the economy” which led to [Resolution 2235 \(2018\)](#). The rapporteur, Ms Elena Centemero (Italy, EPP/CD), identified the main areas requiring action (gender pay gaps leading to pension gaps, difficulties in accessing employment, slower career progression, gender segmentation, glass ceilings) and stressed the fact that “equality between women and men in the economy is a precondition for advances in other spheres, including public and political life”.
3. A 2023 study by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) highlights notable advancements in two critical areas. Firstly, in the distribution of childcare responsibilities, where approximately 40% of fathers in several countries now take parental leave, albeit for systematically shorter periods than their female counterparts. Secondly, progress has been observed in transparency, particularly concerning gender pay gaps. In 55% of the 37 OECD member countries, private firms are now required to report on gender pay gaps.
4. Despite all the expert evidence and facts, the still ongoing negative effects and fallout from recent crises, including the global Covid-19 pandemic and the economic consequences of the conflicts in and outside Europe, have shown the fragility of progress towards gender equality and how much remains to be done. This is particularly evident with respect to the persisting imbalance of care responsibilities, still assumed mainly by women both in the home and in institutions, and the lack of financial recognition for this type of work. Therefore, slow progress is coupled with a real risk of backsliding, especially in the current context. The Assembly considers that more account should be taken of research that shows the potential of women, and more action taken to accelerate change.
5. Due to the persistent lack of recognition of their rightful place in the economy, women face greater discrimination compared to men. Both conscious and unconscious gender biases operate to their disadvantage, particularly in recruitment processes where women are asked to prove their dedication, determination and leadership abilities to a greater extent than their male counterparts. Moreover, the caregiving responsibilities that women predominantly assume and for which they are seen as indispensable tend to raise doubts about their perceived ability to perform efficiently within the economic sphere.
6. Although the number of women with higher education qualifications has risen, young women remain less likely than young men to choose science, technology, engineering or mathematics (STEM) as fields of study at graduate level. The existence of gender gaps in fields of tertiary study indicates that young women

1. *Assembly debate* on 30 January 2025 (8th sitting) (see [Doc. 16068](#), report of the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination, rapporteur: Ms Sena Nur Çelik Kanat). *Text adopted by the Assembly* on 30 January 2025 (8th sitting).



often do not build on good school performances to enter higher education in fields with better employment prospects, such as studies related to STEM and artificial intelligence (AI). The OECD explains this in part by the lack of self-confidence girls have in their mathematics and science abilities during school, and the lack of female role models for girls in STEM and AI fields, which means that young girls have little evidence to disprove the notion that mathematics and science are somehow more “masculine” disciplines.

7. The Assembly calls on European leaders to respond to one of the greatest challenges in establishing the place of women in the economy, which is changing mindsets. There must be a willingness on all sides to break the glass ceilings and mend the “broken rung” – the first step towards managerial positions for women. Those who have succeeded must act as champions and role models, showing that their achievements are attainable by many other girls and women.

8. Equality must be championed in all aspects of daily life, with particular attention to ensuring that traditions, identities and gender-specific cultural differences are not used to perpetuate existing inequalities. There is a need to address the negative effects of the intersectionality of gender and other grounds of discrimination, and to combat racism and all forms of intolerance that disproportionately affect women, especially those from diverse groups and disadvantaged backgrounds. Furthermore, inclusive approaches to diversity must be prioritised and concerted efforts should be made to challenge and dismantle pervasive stereotypes.

9. The Assembly also calls for gender to be mainstreamed in all policies, all budgets and all areas of government and governance, and for adequate funding to be earmarked for equality. Cross-cutting policies must ensure continuity in support for women’s equal participation in all areas. More disaggregated data are needed to identify root causes of inequality and clarify the orientations that should be taken, enabling evidence-based policy analysis that can more accurately address specific disparities and inform targeted interventions for achieving gender equality.

10. In light of the above considerations, the Assembly calls on Council of Europe member States as well as observer States and States whose parliaments enjoy observer or partner for democracy status with the Assembly to improve their law and policy with respect to gender-responsive budgeting. In particular, governments should:

10.1. ensure that gender-responsive budgeting is mandated in the budget law and budget documents, and that it is clearly defined within public finance management systems at the national, regional and local levels, and that gender-responsive budgeting tools are embedded at all stages of the budget cycle;

10.2. develop and introduce clear guidance and tools coupled with capacity building of public officials at all levels, to identify gender gaps through gender analysis and take specific action to address and close these gaps;

10.3. strengthen the accountability of budget execution with respect to gender equality and monitor results using gender impact assessment;

10.4. build the capacity of supreme audit institutions to audit expenditure through a gender lens and to evaluate whether intended gender outcomes have been achieved;

10.5. ensure that budgets are grounded in evidence-based policy analysis and publish regular, real-time expenditure reports that are publicly accessible, enabling parliament, civil society and the general public to see how resources are allocated to gender equality;

10.6. take steps to ensure that women can participate in budget discussions and have their voices heard.

11. With regard to employment, the Assembly calls on member States to make more efforts to:

11.1. impose pay transparency to expose gender pay gaps, and carry out effective reviews of these gaps in all public services and private businesses, accompanied by sanctions where differentiation persists;

11.2. develop and implement laws and policies to identify, eliminate and sanction racism and all forms of intolerance and discrimination, including intersectional discrimination against women from diverse groups in the labour market, which hinder their economic empowerment, and address the specific needs of disadvantaged groups;

11.3. eliminate conscious gender bias in recruitment, training and promotion processes, and learn to recognise and screen out unconscious bias;

- 11.4. ensure through legal measures, awareness-raising campaigns and media visibility that the workplace is seen as a safe space for everyone, and in particular women who are often the targets of multiple and persistent “micro-aggressions” and other forms of gender-based harassment;
 - 11.5. recognise the value of types of employment where women are in a majority, first and foremost in care and medical fields, and reward these skills and competences at their true value;
 - 11.6. promote women’s participation in traditionally male-dominated sectors, such as STEM, as well as in emerging sectors like the digital and green economy, by implementing targeted training and mentoring programmes, to improve gender balance in the labour market and foster a more inclusive digital and green future;
 - 11.7. develop specific grant programmes for women entrepreneurs who are starting businesses and start-ups, with accessible application requirements for women from diverse backgrounds, along with support and advisory services to guide them through the application process, and provide financial literacy training;
 - 11.8. ensure that technology used in human resources management takes into account diversity and intersectionality, and that automated decision making does not generate discrimination;
 - 11.9. adopt measures to improve gender balance in leadership roles across the economy, including on corporate boards, senior management and public-sector decision-making positions.
12. With regard to care and family responsibilities, the Assembly calls on member States to:
 - 12.1. enact legislation to support paid parental leave for both parents, flexible working arrangements and caregiving leave for those caring for children, elderly or disabled family members;
 - 12.2. provide affordable and accessible, high-quality childcare and elderly care services, thus reducing the caregiving burden that often falls disproportionately on women;
 - 12.3. promote the equal sharing of responsibilities through public awareness campaigns and policies such as paid paternal leave, in particular to encourage and incentivise men to share caregiving duties;
 - 12.4. introduce tax breaks or subsidies for families that employ caregivers or provide in-home care services;
 - 12.5. create programmes that ensure all children have access to universal early education to allow parents, particularly women, to engage in the workforce;
 - 12.6. ensure that leave for care responsibilities does not affect pension rights;
 - 12.7. include unpaid work in national statistics by gathering quantitative and qualitative data, particularly time-use surveys.
 13. Concerning education, the Assembly calls on member States to:
 - 13.1. ensure that, from the earliest age, school curricula avoid the gender bias and stereotyping which lead children to channel their energies into gendered and stereotyped roles and which, in particular, lead to girls losing confidence in their abilities in science and mathematics;
 - 13.2. provide equal opportunities for girls and boys to experience a broad range of theoretical and practical studies in different areas, and reinforce programmes such as job-information days or career fairs in schools for both parents and students and early work experience through education programmes and apprenticeships, to encourage girls’ interest in science-related subjects;
 - 13.3. organise extracurricular activities to enable girls to discover and exercise technological skills and computing competences, such as computer coding in non-competitive, game-based surroundings;
 - 13.4. provide training and further training for teachers to enable them to recognise and address their own conscious or unconscious gender bias.
 14. Finally, the Assembly calls on all Council of Europe member States as well as observer States and States whose parliaments enjoy observer or partner for democracy status with the Assembly to use the research and tools at their disposal to collect more disaggregated and intersectional data on gender-based discrimination in the economy in order to better address it at all levels, and to take into account the evidence showing that, if the full potential of women were realised, national incomes would rise considerably in the short and medium term.