

# Advisory Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men

## Towards a Stereotype- Free European Union: Opinion on Combatting Gender Stereotypes

*The Opinion of the Advisory Committee does not necessarily reflect the positions of the Member States and does not bind the Member States*

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A specific policy objective of the European Commission Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025 is to “challenge gender stereotypes”. The purpose of this Opinion of the Advisory Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men is therefore to collect good practices and lessons learned on addressing gender stereotypes, as well as inform relevant policy developments and actions in Member States. The Opinion addresses in particular masculinity norms and the role of men in gender equality, often understated in studies on gender stereotypes.

This Opinion first describes common stereotypes that apply to both women and men, as well as the harm they might cause to individuals and society as a whole (section 1). It then reviews some good practices and gives recommendations for action in several sectors (section 2) before introducing future perspectives for combatting gender stereotypes in the European Union (section 3).

## 1. Addressing gender stereotypes is a crucial issue for European societies

### 1.1. An identified obstacle to gender equality

Gender stereotypes are “preconceived social and cultural patterns or ideas whereby women and men are assigned characteristics and roles determined and limited by their sex, and present “serious obstacles to the achievement of real gender equality and feeds into gender discrimination.”<sup>1</sup> By consigning women to still undervalued roles in society, gender stereotypes strongly contribute, among others, to the persisting gender care, pay and gender gaps and labour market inequalities.

The Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) obliges State parties to take all appropriate measures “to modify the social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women, with a view to achieving the elimination of prejudices (...) which are based on the idea of the inferiority or the superiority of either of the sexes or on stereotyped roles for men and women.” The CEDAW Committee also underscores the link between gender stereotypes and gender-based violence: “traditional attitudes by which women are regarded as subordinate to men or as having stereotyped roles perpetuate widespread practices involving violence or coercion” (General Recommendation 19 on VAW, 1992; General Rec. 35, 2017).

The European Court of Human Rights has considered that “reference to traditions, general assumptions or prevailing social attitudes are insufficient justification for a difference in treatment on grounds of sex”<sup>2</sup>. The Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combatting Violence against Women and Domestic Violence sets the need for State parties to take “measures to promote changes in the social and cultural patterns of behaviour of women and men with a view to eradicating prejudices, customs, traditions and all other practices (...) based on the idea of the inferiority of women or on stereotyped roles for women and men” (Art. 12.1).

Gender stereotypes are intrinsically linked with sexism. Therefore, the Council of Europe has recommended actions for governments to address sexism in a number of sectors (the internet,

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<sup>1</sup> Council of Europe. *Gender Equality Strategy (2018-2023)*.

<sup>2</sup> European Court of Human Rights, *Konstantin Markin v. Russia*, 22 March 2012, application No. 30078/06, paragraph 127.

the media, the workplace, etc.).<sup>3</sup> Addressing gender stereotypes must be done intersectionally, by addressing other forms of prejudice and discrimination particularly racial and ethnic stereotypes. Furthermore, it should be noted that dismantling gender stereotypes would also help to combat discrimination of and hostile attitudes towards LGBTIQ persons.

## 1.2. Addressing the blind spot in anti-stereotype policies: masculinity norms

Although women are disproportionately affected by sexist behaviour, the issue of gender stereotypes also affects boys and men throughout their lives, limiting their personal development. For example, men working in care professions may experience prejudices at a societal level, which can have repercussions both in their professional and private life<sup>4</sup>. Such stereotyping also has an impact on the expression of emotions: when boys and men are told they should not seek compassion or support from their peers, they might isolate to the point that suppressed emotions will come out through toxic or violent means<sup>5</sup>.

In Sweden, a study on men and gender equality from 2014 showed that “traditional norms of masculinity are often the root causes” of men’s higher mortality, higher risk-taking and violence against women, children and other men. By fuelling “toxic masculinity”, gender stereotypes also reinforce criminal behaviours like LGBTIQ-phobia and maintain the inequality between genders.<sup>6</sup> Masculinity norms are seldom taken into account in policies against sexism.

## 2. Relevant sectors of action: good practices and recommendations

### 2.1. Education

Gender stereotypes may impact children at a very early stage in their development, for example with differences being made between toys and their advertising, games, clothes or behaviours which are deemed “more suitable” for girls or boys. In France, following an initiative by the Ministry of the Economy and Finance, all actors in the toy industry (manufacturers, distributors, advertisers) and public authorities signed a Charter on September 24<sup>th</sup>, 2019 (renewed in 2020) to promote gender diversity in the creation, distribution and promotion of toys.

A conscious effort on the part of society to change attitudes and to accommodate difference is a prerequisite for an inclusive society. **Education** plays a central role in this process.<sup>7</sup> In Spain, sexist and discriminatory stereotypes have to be removed from all educational materials.<sup>8</sup> Unconscious gender biases are also present in education methods, with differences in the attention given and varying evaluations for boys and girls with similar grades. Training of educators at all levels is thus crucial. The “Equal Early Childhood Education” project in Finland, led by feminist association *Naisasialiitto Unioni* (Women’s Union), trains professionals in early childhood education and care to become aware of and to dismantle cultural stereotypes linked to gender. In Portugal, the “Education Guides for Gender and Citizenship Project” is aimed at

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<sup>3</sup> Recommendation CM/Rec(2019)1 on preventing and combating sexism, adopted by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on 27 March 2019.

<sup>4</sup> Fagan and Norman, 2013.

<sup>5</sup> Mensline Australia. *Men and Emotions*.

<sup>6</sup> Swedish Government, *Män och jämställdhet*, 2014.

<sup>7</sup> Recommendation CM/Rec(2007) 13 on gender mainstreaming in education (...), 10 October 2007.

<sup>8</sup> Organic Law to Improve the Quality of Education (LOMCE), 2013.

teachers and schools counsellors, in order to mainstream a gender perspective in pedagogical practices and in school culture - gender equality being a central issue of the National strategy for education for citizenship.

Horizontal segregation is still taking place in **career orientation**<sup>9</sup>. Girls are more likely to choose or be encouraged to choose humanities subjects and paths in education, health and well-being (EHW)<sup>10</sup>, while boys are overrepresented in scientific paths or technical vocational training and apprenticeships in most European countries<sup>11</sup>. Recent research suggests that stereotypical expectations may even be stricter for boys.<sup>12</sup>

This is mostly due to gender stereotypes of “typically” masculine or feminine professions, talents and attributes, and the lack of **role models** for students who would want to break these barriers, in one way or the other. The lack of male teachers for instance has negative consequences on children’s education, and reinforces traditional gender stereotypes.<sup>13</sup> Seeing a greater proportion of male role models may enhance men's own internalization of care values and encourage more interest in female-dominated fields<sup>14</sup>. Finally, entrepreneurial skills could be included in education curricula from an early age, in order to increase the number of women entrepreneurs.

In Germany, the “*Cliché-free*” initiative provides **career-related data and information** without introducing gender biases, while *Girls’Day* and *Boys’Day* (also in Austria) are events that promote the less popular disciplines for each gender and encourage applications to relevant companies for each field. Several initiatives have thus emerged to lift conscious and unconscious obstacles preventing girls from joining Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) disciplines, like in Estonia (“ICT is everywhere”), Austria (“My engineering”) or Spain (“I want to be an engineer”). In Portugal, the ‘Engineers for a Day’ project (2017) aims to prevent and combat gender-based occupational segregation and is aimed at secondary school students and postgraduate students in basic education (vocational courses).

*The Advisory Committee recommends that the Member States work hand in hand with relevant industries as well as with educational authorities to **promote the use of non-gendered play and educational methods and materials.***

*The Advisory Committee also recommends that the European Union and its Member States carry out programmes to **debunk career gender stereotypes** for both girls and boys, starting from preschool, in particular regarding STEM, taking into account recommendations included in the Advisory Committee Opinion on how to overcome occupational segregation (2015).*

*The Advisory Committee recommends that the Member States fund research on and provide initial **teacher training** and continuous professional development on recognizing and addressing gender stereotypes and sexism.*

<sup>9</sup> EIGE. *Beijing + 25: the fifth review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in the EU Member States*, 2020.

<sup>10</sup> EIGE. *Study and work in the EU: set apart by gender*, 2018.

<sup>11</sup> Microsoft News. Andrew Trotman, “Why don’t European girls like science or technology?”, March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2017.

<sup>12</sup> Van der Vleuten et al., 2016.

<sup>13</sup> Fagan and Norman, 2013.

<sup>14</sup> Block and al., 2018.

## 2.2. Labour market

Gender stereotypes have a major impact on gender segregation of the **labour market**. For example, women are still underrepresented in **IT professions**<sup>15</sup>. To fight against it, Estonia has implemented programmes like “*Choose IT!*”, carried out together with IT companies to enable postgraduates to learn a new profession and become software developers, with 62% women participants. In Austria, the “*FiT – Women in crafts and technology*” programme fosters advanced training of women in non-traditional occupations. In addition to promoting such choices, it is also important to foster an inclusive organisational culture, including in the IT sector, for example by avoiding gender stereotypes in personnel practices or job descriptions and fighting harassment in the workplace.

**Entrepreneurship** can also be fostered among women, especially marginalized women such as women from rural regions of Europe, whose role is often minimized compared to that of their husbands, partners or relatives. This is the aim of the FADEMUR<sup>16</sup> “*Rurality*” Program, financed with public subsidies and private collaboration, which supports rural women’s entrepreneurial projects.

**The security sector**, including the military and the police are also traditionally masculine settings. However, efforts have been made to boost women’s representation in the Estonian and Swedish Defence Forces through targeted communication and a more inclusive human resources management. The impact of masculinity norms on police work is included in the curriculum in the training of police officers in Sweden, through the work of Malmö University.

Men need to be more included in **education, health and social work**. Germany for example has programmes such as a “Training of male counsellors as disseminators” and “National coordination centre for the protection of men against violence” that help end violence and promote gender equality. Regarding the **care sector**, defining standards for qualifications and career progression is a crucial step in tackling horizontal segregation, as it would help to recognise the complexity of these jobs and better compensate their value. Research has shown that men are more likely to enter female-dominated occupations if pay and career prospects are improved.<sup>17</sup>

Stereotypes are also among the root causes of vertical segregation that prevents women from occupying **leadership positions**. This is due to several factors, such as persisting discrimination and sexism in promotions. This is also due to the unbalanced sharing of unpaid care work and the persisting belief that the man should be the financial provider for the household. Finally, the lack of role models also deters women from seeking these promotions.

To overcome these barriers, policies to support gender balance in leadership positions, taking into account the size of the targeted enterprise (large company, SME, etc.), are key. For instance, Kristianstad University in Sweden, as part of the government supported programme “Gender Mainstreaming in Universities”, has reformed its funding for research to foster gender equality and women’s leadership. In Austria, the Federal economic chamber implemented the programme ‘*Zukunft.Frauen*’ to prepare junior female managers for higher management positions and increase role models of women as SME entrepreneurs. In France, the Copé-Zimmermann Law (2011) established the obligation of a balanced gender representation on boards of directors, with a minimum quota of 40% of each sex. To reach specific targets regarding gender balance in decision-making positions and boards, the Spanish Institute of

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<sup>15</sup> Eurostat. *Women in Science and Technology*, February 11<sup>th</sup>, 2019.

<sup>16</sup> Fédération des associations de femmes rurales (<http://fademur.es/fademur>)

<sup>17</sup> Bettio and Plantenga, 2008.

Women promotes different initiatives, such as “More Women, Better Companies”, where companies sign four-year voluntary agreements to reach these targets.

Gendered segregation in occupations and different working conditions also have an impact on the **health** of workers and result in differences in exposure to hazards and risk. Men are more likely to work in sectors with high levels of physical risks because they are considered more “masculine”, while women face less recognition of their work-related health problems (the neutral “worker” is often implicitly a man), and are more exposed to domestic accidents in unpaid work.<sup>18</sup> Work-related psychological disorders, that are less visible and recognized, affect women more, due to the sectors in which they are overrepresented, like the medico-social sector or retail trade. Women’s mental health also suffers from the double burden of combining a professional employment with a large responsibility for unpaid household and care work.

*The Advisory Committee recommends that the Member States **build closer links between schools and workplaces** to enable better-informed occupational choices for girls and boys. They should also encourage employers and other stakeholders to play a more prominent role in challenging negative and misleading perceptions of STEM or EHW careers, by providing accurate information about these fields, by promoting positive role models and by offering students opportunities to gain work experience.*

*The Advisory Committee recommends that the Member States **review gender segregation** in professional structures (companies, institutions, non-profit organizations, etc.) and occupations, and develop programmes, policies or **adopt legislation** to address the uneven share of women and men in different sectors, positions, jobs or professions and tackle related root causes.*

*The Advisory Committee recommends that the Member State engage with national social partners for campaigns **promoting entrepreneurship** among women.*

*The Advisory Committee also recommends that the Member States **support the adoption of the proposal for a Directive aimed at improving gender balance in corporate boards of the largest EU listed companies**<sup>19</sup>, alternatively recommends that Member States introduce measures to the same effect.*

*Finally, the Advisory Committee recommends that the European Union and its Member States collect more **gender-specific data on occupational health** (on working conditions and health hazards, both physical and psycho-social, as well as number of healthy life years after retirement by former occupations) in both formal and informal (ex: home) work places. Additionally, medical workers should receive training on work-related health problems that take into account the specificities of women’s health issues.*

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<sup>18</sup> World Health Organization. *Gender, Work and Health*, 2011.

<sup>19</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/GA/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52012PC0614>

### 2.3. Unpaid household and care work

Women still perform the bulk of unpaid household and care work and societal expectations often frame the task of reconciling work and family life as responsibility of women.<sup>20</sup> Social norms around participation in housework are established from early age, with fewer boys than girls helping with such activities on a daily basis.<sup>21</sup> The resulting additional workload for women creates a gender time gap and is an obstacle to women's full access to paid work and to pursuing a professional career, advancing into management positions, as well as engaging in other social or leisure activities.

A starting point in tackling this issue is increasing the provision of available, accessible, affordable and quality childcare facilities and other services, especially in rural areas. Statistical analysis of the impact of a variety of family-friendly measures on gender equality has shown that the provision of **subsidized childcare services** has had the most significant impact on reducing gender gaps in employment and promoting equal sharing of unpaid care.<sup>22</sup>

Another solution is to favour **family-friendly policies** in businesses. In Malta, the National commission for the promotion of equality (NCPE) awards the "Equality mark certification" to organisations that demonstrate a pro-active commitment towards equality between women and men, and to persons with family responsibilities, in the work place. Moreover, since 2014, Malta has been providing good quality childcare for free to parents in work and in education. In Spain, equality plans are compulsory for companies with more than 50 employees since 2019 where such measures can be tracked in an open registry to ensure their application.

Such policies also need to focus on partnership-based sharing of household and care responsibilities and thus **target fathers**. Estonia's 2017 media campaign "Grow Together" aimed at promoting fathers' involvement in raising and caring for their children. Even if there are still great disparities across Europe on paternity leave, progress has been made towards a greater presence of fathers in early days of childhood. Increased take-up of leave by fathers remains strongly linked to access to individual entitlement and high level of income compensation. Several Member States offer specifically tailored incentives to get more fathers to use their leave, like in France or in Sweden; Austria, Croatia, Germany and Italy offer bonus time or financial incentives of varying amounts to families where the father shares part of the leave.

*The Advisory Committee recommends that the Member States **increase the Barcelona targets**, on the basis of a proposal by the European Commission, as announced in the Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025 and the Proposal on the Social Pillar Action Plan, **to ensure provision of accessible, affordable and quality childcare** in a sustainable way, for employed parents and carers but also unemployed parents, to facilitate their return to the labour market.*

*The Advisory Committee encourages Member States to step up their efforts, by focusing on childcare provision **in their national recovery and resilience plans** and implementing country specific recommendations on childcare as part of the European Semester process.*

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<sup>20</sup> Eurostat. *The life of women and men in Europe – a statistical portrait*, "3.4 Childcare and Housework", August 2018.

<sup>21</sup> Bruckauf and Rees, 2017.

<sup>22</sup> European Social Partners. *Joint statement on childcare provisions in the EU*, November 2020.



*The Advisory Committee recommends that the Member States **support businesses that implement family-friendly policies and to provide targeted guidance to Crafts and SMEs**, in order to improve gender parity and economic productivity. An active involvement of national social partners should be encouraged.*

*The Advisory Committee also recommends that the Member States **address the unbalanced sharing of unpaid care work** including through granting men and women equal access to special leave of absence and flexible working arrangements. Member States should be encouraged to establish incentives in policy design to promote fathers' take up of parental leave.*

## 2.4. Media and politics

The **media** play a considerable part in conveying gender stereotypes, while it could also be used to spread a non-stereotypical and more inclusive vision to new audiences and the broad public. In France the *Conseil supérieur de l'audiovisuel* (CSA, Superior Council for Audiovisual Media), an independent authority, can issue warnings and guidelines. Its role was recently reinforced to target specifically issues related to the representation of women, making it an efficient tool in the fight against stereotypes in audiovisual media. Moreover, influential films and programmes available online via certain streaming services appear to have a positive impact on promotion of gender equality and the visibility of the LGBTIQ community.

Women are regularly hypersexualized in advertising, with long-term social consequences. Therefore, for example, the Observatory of Women's Image of the Spanish Institute of Women examines complaints about sexist advertisements, likewise, the Anti-Sexism Advisory Board of the Austrian Advertising Council. In the same perspective, the "Unstereotype Alliance", a global platform convened by UN Women, seeks to eliminate stereotypes from **advertising** and the media. With currently 152 companies, it has developed performance tools to fight discriminatory representations, like anti-stereotyped criteria in major advertising awards, support tools for marketing teams, etc.

The **language** used in daily life but particularly in the media is also critical to achieve gender equality.<sup>23</sup> In practice, using gender-sensitive language means, among other aspects, avoiding stereotypes, gendered adjectives, patronizing and sexist terms and expressions.

Women are also underrepresented in **politics**. Expressions of aggression, competitiveness, power and decisiveness are perceived positively as marks of leadership for men, but negatively for women. To address women's underrepresentation, Portugal adopted a law to raise the minimum percentage of women and men in the electoral lists to the national and European parliaments to 40%.

Estonian think-tank Praxis also launched a new project co-financed by the European Commission, "Nudging Women to Power", to improve women's access to high-level political decision-making by increasing awareness of the importance of gender equality in public policy making. In Finland, the aim of the project "Gender Matters ?", financed under the EU, Rights, Equality and Citizenship programme, is to promote gender equality in the media, politics and in the corporate sector, by providing trainings and information for journalists concerning

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<sup>23</sup> Menegatti and Rubini, 2017.

elections decision-making. It also promotes a more inclusive and intersectional understanding of gender.

*The Advisory Committee recommends that the Member States **collect quantitative and qualitative data, including statistics disaggregated by sex**, on the representation and role of women in their national media.*

*Building on the results, the Advisory Committee recommends that the Member States **address the two dimensions of women's representation in the media** outlined by the Beijing Conference of 1995:*

- 1) By adopting **measures to increase** women's participation in the media such as women journalists and experts on television and radio channels as well as in print and online media;
- 2) By adopting **gender guidelines on the content** of advertisement, entertainment and information to ensure a non-stereotyped and non-discriminatory representation.
- 3) By encouraging media **regulatory and self-regulatory bodies** to address gender stereotypes and women's under-representation in the media profession and content.

*The Advisory Committee recommends that the Member States encourage **training on gender-sensitive communication** for all professional profiles in the area of media and advertising.*

*The Advisory Committee also recommends that the Member States implement the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers recommendations on **balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision-making** (REC(2003)3).*

*Finally, the Advisory Committee recommends that the European Union and its Member States promote the use of **gender-sensitive language** in all its written and spoken communications, policy and legislative action.*

## 2.5. Migrants and persons with foreign background

Immigrants, asylum seekers, refugees and persons with foreign background are **specifically vulnerable** to cultural and gender stereotypes.

The Swedish Migration Board found that the **asylum process** was implicitly centered around a stereotypical figure of the heterosexual man who is a political refugee. Women who may be part of the household may be marginalized in the process, and not sufficiently part of the decision-making concerning their situation. As an outcome of the gender mainstreaming development work, the Swedish Migration Agency has reviewed their process and for example now issue bank cards to both partners in a household.

*The Advisory Committee recommends that the Member States, especially in the Schengen Area, fully take into account the specific needs and circumstances of **women migrants throughout the migration and asylum-seeking process**.*

*The Advisory Committee recommends that the European Union and its Member States provide **regular training to the border control/police officers on stereotypes and sexism.***

*Furthermore, the Advisory Committee recommends that the European Union and its Member States support public and private initiatives aiming at **debunking stereotypes against men, women and LGBTIQ migrants.***

## 2.6. Prevention of gender-based violence

**Online violence against women and girls**, including harassment and cyberbullying, has been skyrocketing in recent years and needs to be addressed specifically as a new type of Gender Based Violence. Moreover, when it comes to access of victims to justice, **judicial stereotyping** relating to gender represents one of the most significant barriers. It can for instance compromise the impartiality of judges' decisions, their opinions about witness credibility and, most importantly, their ability to understand the nature of the crime. More data is also needed on Gender Based Violence, through surveys for example like the Macro-Survey on Violence against Women 2019 in Spain.

Comprehensive **Sexuality Education** is crucial to promote a model of relationships that is respectful, consensual and equal. Sexuality education classes have for instance been reviewed in France in 2018. In Sweden, the annual campaign of the Swedish Gender Equality Agency, "Jealousy is not Romantic", spread through schools, youth clinics and social media to start the conversation about notions like consent. Similar programmes have been implemented in Spain ("Passion is not Possession", "Well-loving"). It is crucial that sexuality education also challenges norms of appearance and behaviour for individuals to combat gender stereotyping.

Toxic masculinity norms not only cause violence towards women but also **harm men themselves**. Men diverging from the norms (non-white, non-heterosexual, transgender, with disabilities, etc.) may suffer from this type of violence. Men are also deterred from reporting violence, especially in the case of sexual violence and intimate partner violence, because of stigmatization. These norms also prevent men who are abusers to modify their behaviour and impact on perceptions of violence, including in relation to the legal system and judicial stereotyping. Men who conform with this "toxic masculinity" also seek less medical help in regard to mental illness and instead self-medicate with alcohol and drugs<sup>24</sup>. Maintaining a strong image and repressing emotions can lead to depression and anxiety.<sup>25</sup>

*The Advisory Committee recommends that the European Union and its Member States continue **combatting online violence against women and girls, including harassment and bullying**, based on the previous recommendations of the Opinion of this Committee on Combatting online violence against women.*

*The Advisory Committee also recommends that the Member States continue **collecting data, including sex-disaggregated statistics, and carrying out awareness campaigns***

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<sup>24</sup> Nadeau and al., 2016.

<sup>25</sup> Iwamoto and al., 2018; Wong and al., 2017.

on the issues covered here, such as toxic masculinity and Gender Based Violence, and addressing gender stereotypes holistically, as intertwined with racial and ethnic stereotypes.

*The Advisory Committee also recommends that the Member States **reinforce age- and gender-sensitive comprehensive sexuality education** (CSE) and education against Gender Based Violence in schools' curricula to address gender stereotypes, foster sexual health, well-being, empowerment and equality, and prevent violence.*

*The Advisory Committee recommends that the Member States **build more victims' support structures, including some specifically for men**, to support victims of violence in their coming forward.*

*The Advisory Committee also recommends that the Member States strengthen **specialised training for police and judiciary** for them not to reproduce harmful stereotypes in law enforcement and judicial proceedings.*

### 3. Going forward in a troubled context

#### 3.1. The impact of COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has slowed efforts in the fight against gender stereotypes. It has also shed a light on the crude prevalence of violence against women and the persistent unequal gendered division of household and care work, both outside and inside the home. While due to lockdown measures some men became more involved in household work and care for the children, the **burden of household tasks** was mainly taken up by women. More women started working from home due to COVID-19, but 4% of women became professionally inactive during the pandemic compared to 1% of men.<sup>26</sup> In the wake of this crisis, 43% of French women are now considering working only part-time, which is a clear degradation of the situation since it undermines their economic independence and prevents them from pursuing the professional careers they may desire.<sup>27</sup>

Lockdowns also provoked a surge in **domestic violence** towards women and children all across Europe. Due to lockdown measures, women are isolated from support networks and resources that they otherwise would have been able to access more easily.

Finally, the crisis has also worsened the position of women in **media representation**. The proportion of women experts interviewed on French television plummeted from 38% in 2019 to 20% in 2020.<sup>28</sup>

*The Advisory Committee recommends that the European Union and its Member States **take into account gender equality** in all measures and financing as part of the response to and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.*

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<sup>26</sup> European Economic and Social Committee. Public Hearing on Gender and Teleworking (data from EUROFUND), January 15<sup>th</sup>, 2021.

<sup>27</sup> Empreinte Humaine / Opinion Way. *Baromètre T5, état psychologique des salariés français*. December 2020.

<sup>28</sup> French Ministry for Equality between Men and Women, Diversity and Equal Opportunities. *Chiffres clés 2020, Vers l'égalité réelle entre les femmes et les hommes*.

### 3.2. Perspectives at national and European levels

*The Advisory Committee recommends that the European Union ratify and implement the **Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence** (Istanbul Convention) at a European level and across all Member States.*

*The Advisory Committee recommends that the European Commission **propose an overarching Directive on Tackling Violence Against Women.***

*The Advisory Committee recommends that the Member States ensure a high level of ambition in **gender mainstreaming of national recovery and resilience plans** from the COVID-19 pandemic.*

*Finally, the Advisory Committee recommends that the European Union **ensure coordination** between the new SME Strategy, the Digital Education Action Plan, the Updated Skills Agenda and the Gender Equality Strategy, in alignment with the implementation of the Work-life balance Directive and with the allocation of specific funding within initiatives such as The Entrepreneurship 2020 Action Plan.*

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