

U. A feminist policy for the European Union

A feminist, anti-racist policy is needed in a Europe, where the borders are becoming increasingly restrictive and where racist and fascist parties are growing ever stronger. Sweden has been a member of the European Union (EU) since 1995. Feminist Initiative must use the opportunities for cooperation and influence offered by EU membership, to promote gender equality and equal opportunity throughout Europe and the world, while combating patriarchal structures, racism and militarisation.

The EU currently consists of 28 Member States. The Member States reached agreement on the EU's basic laws, in the Treaty on European Union, which govern the functioning of the EU and what the EU can decide on. The governments of the Member States are represented in the Council of the European Union (the Council). The European Parliament (the Parliament) is the EU's elected assembly, whose 751 members have been elected by the EU's citizens in direct elections, where Feminist Initiative took their first seat in the 2014 elections. The European Commission (the Commission) is the institution that submits proposals for the decisions taken by the EU. The EU Member States and the Parliament decide who will lead the Commission.

The majority of decisions taken by the EU are decided jointly by the Council and the Parliament. Thus, the decisions are based on the various preferences of each Member State's government and each member of the European Parliament and the decisions are to a large extent based on compromises. Basically, the decisions reflect the political reality existing in the Member States, which are determined by those persons entitled to participate in ordinary elections. Feminist Initiative should therefore pursue its European policy based on the assumption that the EU can be changed, and should actively participate in the EU's decision-making processes in order to steer the EU in the political direction we represent.

The EU's basic laws, the Treaty, give the EU the right to make a range of decisions that directly affect the people living in Europe. As a feminist organisation, Feminist Initiative is opposed to the centralisation of power and the degrading of democratic processes. We therefore believe that the principle of subsidiarity should take precedence in the work of the EU, i.e. decisions should be taken as close to the citizens of the EU as possible. The EU should only decide on matters of common interest and where there is clear advantage to be gained by making the decision at EU level. This could concern e.g. encouraging individual Member States to raise their standards, where the national level is inadequate, such as for issues of discrimination and for certain environmental issues. Feminist Initiative believes that the EU's role should be to set minimum levels for matters such as discrimination and human rights, but not to restrict individual Member States who wish to implement stronger protection in these areas. In matters of common interest, where the EU does not take a decision, the EU can nevertheless act as a positive force for change.

Feminist Initiative wishes to ensure that, in all its activities, the EU upholds its common values which, in accordance with the EU Treaty, consist of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, which also apply explicitly to minorities. We

believe that the actions of the EU and its Member States should be based on these values in respect of issues affecting everyone living in the EU, whether they are citizens of an EU country, have the right to live in an EU country, or are currently living in the EU undocumented.

Feminist Initiative believes that the EU can play a positive role in the world and disseminate the fundamental values and basic rights on which the EU was founded. The EU must nurture the growth of democracy and human rights in its surroundings and cease to cooperate in the areas of militarisation and rearmament. The EU should not build its prosperity at the expense of poorer countries. We are generally in favour of the EU concluding cooperation agreements with non-EU countries, and we believe that the EU should continue to expand by admitting new Member States.

1. FI will seek to ensure increased protection against discrimination in the EU, particularly for vulnerable groups such as Roma, the undocumented, people with disabilities, LGBT people, and visible and religious minorities.
2. FI will safeguard freedom of movement within the EU.
3. FI will seek to ensure a migration and asylum policy that creates open and safe routes to the EU and protects asylum rights, the UN Convention on Human Rights and the Refugee Convention.
4. FI will combat human trafficking and violence against women.
5. FI will seek to integrate gender equality and equal rights into the EU's decision-making processes and to ensure that the EU institutions set a good example in these areas.
6. FI will endeavour to ensure that democracy, respect for human rights and rule of law are fundamental principles that are valued, at the least, as highly as the economic conditions of candidate countries when enlarging the EU.
7. FI will seek to ensure that the EU establishes an effective and workable mechanism for dealing with situations where Member States violate the EU's fundamental values, including with respect to democracy, the rule of law and respect for fundamental rights.

U.1 EU as an institution

Transparency, influence and democracy

The Lisbon Treaty, which entered into force in 2009, has given the European Parliament more influence over EU legislation, which is a positive step from a democratic perspective. Nowadays, most EU legislation is adopted jointly by the Parliament and the Council. The Lisbon Treaty also introduced a citizenship initiative that allows one million citizens to encourage the Commission to submit legislative proposals.

At the same time, through the Lisbon Treaty, the EU has taken further steps towards supranationality and centralisation. The European Council, which is the organisation within the EU that is comprised of the heads of state and government of the Member States and which determines the EU's general policy direction and priorities, still suffers from a complete lack of transparency in practice. The institutionalisation of the European Council with an elected President, which was introduced by the new Treaty, has further removed the European Council from the regular legislative activities. The new High Representative with responsibility for foreign affairs and security policy and the EU, who is a commissioner and representative for the EU in matters of foreign policy, makes it easier for the EU to speak with one voice on foreign policy issues. This new function simultaneously increases the distance to the national level and contributes to the EU cooperation acquiring a State-like structure, without the democratic transparency required for it to appear legitimate.

The democratic deficit that the EU suffers from is also due to a general lack of transparency within the EU institutions. There is a lack of transparency, but also a lack of relevant information for EU citizens to understand how the EU works, how the decisions taken in the EU affect their lives, and how they can influence those decisions. Responsibility for this lies with the EU institutions and with the Member States, but also with the political parties in Europe, who participate in EU cooperation in different ways. The new approach to appointing the President of the Commission was tested in 2014 when the political groups in the Parliament each proposed a candidate for the post and allowed the European parliamentary elections to decide which of the candidates would be the parliament's candidate. In principle, this gives EU citizens greater opportunities to influence the EU institutions. This is a more transparent approach than was previously the case, when the Member States presented their candidate for the Parliament's approval. However, the new approach places great demands on the EU institutions, the Member States' governments and the political parties, both at European and national level, to inform EU citizens about the importance of the European elections.

1. FI will seek to ensure increased transparency, reduced supranationality and reduced centralisation of the European Union's activities.
2. FI will seek to increase the under-represented groups' access to knowledge about and understanding of how the EU works, and about how EU citizens can exercise influence over the decisions taken by the EU.

EU institutions, activities and representation

Women and minority groups, such as young people, people with disabilities, LGBT people and racialised people, are still under-represented in all EU bodies and political decision-making processes. EU measures in this area have been inadequate and mainly limited to non-binding texts and undertakings.

In their activities, the EU institutions must act as role models for the Member States, in particular in the area of non-discrimination and equal rights. An even gender distribution must be pursued in all parts of the organisation. In cases where the Member States propose candidates for special posts in

the EU institutions, as in the case of the members of the Commission, Feminist Initiative will seek to ensure that the countries propose two candidates of different gender. In their nominations, Member States should also take account of equal representation from an inter-sectional perspective. Service personnel at all levels of EU institutions and members of the Parliament, the EU Regional Committee and the European Economic and Social Committee, should receive mandatory training in inter-sectional perspectives.

In addition, the EU needs a functioning mechanism for gender equality and equal treatment in all policy areas. Each EU institution should develop a strategy for this, adapted for the respective roles in the decision-making process. As far as the Commission is concerned, the impact assessment carried out on all of the Commission's proposals should include a specific account of the impact of the proposal on gender equality and equal treatment, and the proposal should clearly state how these aspects are taken into account. A simple objective that gender equality and equal treatment must be taken into account when the proposal is implemented can never be adequate to meet the requirement. A specific gender equality analysis should always be carried out before the draft EU budget. An active overall responsibility for integrating gender equality and equal treatment should exist at the senior political level within the Commission. In Parliament, one member of each committee must have a special responsibility for integrating gender equality and equal treatment into the ongoing work. In addition, all senior officials in EU institutions and Members of Parliament, the EU Regional Committee and the European Economic and Social Committee should receive training in methods of integrating gender equality and equal treatment into policy and decision-making processes.

The EU institutions, the Council and Parliament conduct their activities in different countries. The Council and the Parliament have complete meeting rooms in Brussels (Belgium), Luxembourg and Strasbourg (France) respectively. The Council holds its meetings in Luxembourg during the months of April, June and October, and for a few days each month, the Parliament moves to Strasbourg, where it has its formal seat. This is an obvious waste of resources that entails huge costs in terms of both money and environmental impact. Parliamentary meetings in two different countries are estimated to cause an annual additional cost of EUR 180 million and 19 000 tonnes of increased carbon dioxide emissions. It is the Council, consisting of heads of state and government in the EU Member States, which decides where the EU institutions should have their headquarters and where they should conduct their business. The decision is contained in a protocol to the EU treaty.

1. FI will seek to ensure the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission have their headquarters in Brussels. The Parliament, the Council and the Commission should carry out all their activities there.
2. FI will seek to ensure binding texts are adopted to promote gender equality representation in the EU institutions.

3. FI will seek to ensure that the Member States propose a candidate of each gender for each post in EU institutions that are filled through nominations. In addition, consideration shall be given to an intersectional perspective regarding representation.
4. FI will seek to ensure that officials at all levels in EU institutions and members of the European Parliament, the Committee of the Regions and the Economic and Social Committee receive mandatory training in intersectional perspectives and human rights.
5. FI will seek to ensure that effective mechanisms are established for integrating gender equality and equal treatment into all EU policy areas that follow throughout the decision-making process.
6. FI will seek to ensure that proposals for the EU budget always undergo a comprehensive analysis based on gender equality and anti-discrimination.
7. FI shall seek to ensure that the Commission takes active responsibility at the highest political level for integrating gender equality and equal treatment into its activities.
8. FI will seek to ensure that senior officials at EU institutions and Members of Parliament are trained in methods to integrate gender equality and equal treatment into policies and decision-making processes.

Economic Monetary Union (EMU)

The rules for EU economic policy are formulated in the EMU and in the Stability Pact (an agreement to prevent Member States from expanding public spending to an extent that is disproportionate to incomes, all in relation to the EU average). In 2003, Sweden had a referendum about membership in the third and final stage of the EMU about whether the Swedish Krona should be replaced by the Euro, as a consequence of the decision-making of currency and monetary policy being transferred from Sweden's Riksbank to the European Central Bank. In accordance with the current Treaty, a Member State must/may participate in the third stage when the economic requirements, the convergence requirements, are met.

Sweden meets the requirements, but has declared unilaterally, non-legally binding but politically binding, that we still want to remain outside. Prior to the referendum in 2003, several investigations were carried out to show the consequences of EMU membership. The EMU investigation showed that countries with a large public sector may have difficulties. It was considered that the objectives of the EMU required that taxation and public spending should be made less dependent on economic cycles and that there was therefore 'a risk that the welfare state would need to be reduced in scope'. The same result was reached by another investigation, the Stability Study. It noted that the EMU rules are not politically neutral and stated: 'They are not as tough for countries with low taxes, where public assets are also sold off'.

The EU's economic policy guidelines underline the need for tax cuts and reductions in public spending. For example, it has been pointed out to Sweden that there is a need to increase efficiency and improve the conditions for competition in the public sector. If Sweden joined the EMU, it would have to give up the possibility to counteract international macroeconomic disturbances by changing interest rates. With common interest rates, disruptions must instead be tackled by adjusting wages and prices, which places increased demands on the adaptability of the labour market. The National Institute of Economic Research stated that it may be necessary for wage increases to be 'adjusted downwards in event of demand shortages'. Wage flexibility and flexible labour markets are key concepts within the EMU. The demands for labour mobility must increase, both with and between countries. The basis for economic independence is a job with a living wage. In the EMU, full employment is not the overriding objective of economic policy. The EMU exerts strong pressure for cut-backs and privatisations in the public sector, which means poorer social welfare and security for women and, in many cases, a restriction on women's labour market. The subordination that women live in makes women as a group more dependent on a policy that regards health and social care as a clear duty for society and who want to promote each woman's right to financial independence.

Reductions in welfare systems affect women more than men. Decreased security of employment and demands for geographical flexibility affect women more than men. Membership of the EMU would thus have different effects on the conditions of men and women. Today in the EU, we also see that economic policy forces many women to choose between employment and children. The result is a low rate of childbirth in many countries. If the issue of Sweden's accession to the third stage of the EMU becomes relevant, it must be subject to a referendum before a decision is taken in the Riksdag.

1. FI will seek to ensure that the issue of Sweden joining the EMU must be decided by a referendum.
2. FI will seek to ensure that the existing EMU rules are reformed, so that social welfare and full employment become overall goals.

EU's internal market

The EU's internal market is intended to ensure the free movement of goods, services, labour and capital. Free movement has priority relative to other rules. This means, among other things, that no individual country can have stricter rules or more stringent legislation in an area if it is perceived as anti-competitive and a violation of free movement. National laws intended to improve the environment, strengthen consumer protection or restrict alcohol imports will be subordinate.

The freedom of movement in the services sector is regulated in the Services Directive. Feminist Initiative believes that activities belonging to society's human infrastructure (preschool, school, education, healthcare, etc.) should be exempted from the Services Directive. The Directive also includes a free right of establishment, which could mean that private groups could take over operations that are currently governed by municipal/regional democratic decisions. Trade unions have also highlighted the risk of wage dumping.

The EUROPE 2020 strategy (see the section 'EUROPE 2020') entails that the EU should become the world's most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy, capable of sustainable economic growth, with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion. That goal must be achieved at the same time as the demographic map in Europe is changing rapidly. In future there will be significantly fewer citizens of working age, who will be required both to maintain the production of goods and services and to provide for a larger group of pensioners. In order to achieve the goals of EU2020, the Commission believes it is important to have a well-functioning and coordinated labour market, i.e. the single market must work. Feminist Initiative considers it essential that the welfare system is developed with a feminist perspective. It is a perspective that strongly contributes to changes in the labour market, demography, democracy and thus the total economy of our whole society, not just the business economy.

1. FI will safeguard freedom of movement within the EU.
2. FI will seek to ensure that rules governing consumer protection, the environment and alcohol policy must be minimum rules, with the ability for individual countries to have more stringent requirements.
3. FI will seek to ensure that the Services Directive is restricted.
4. FI will seek to ensure that the free flow of labour does not lead to the abolition of the Swedish model for collective bargaining.

TTIP – Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership

TTIP is an agreement that has been negotiated between the EU and the USA since 2013. The agreement covers trade in goods and services, investments and public procurement, ranging from municipal to state activities. The agreement is described as a free trade agreement, i.e. to reduce or eliminate trade tariffs between the countries. Today, the tariffs between the EU and the USA are already relatively low. Thus, the new agreement is not so much about reducing tariffs between the EU and USA, but rather about removing or reducing differences in standards or regulations for the products and services covered by the agreement (so-called non-tariff trade barriers). Since the USA and the EU have very different standards and regulations in several areas, common rules may mean that the EU countries will be required to accept a lower standard for e.g. environmental and consumer protection. If the EU and the USA ultimately reach an agreement, it will create the world's largest free trade area, where corporate rights take precedence over the states' rights.

Feminist Initiative is against trade agreements between the EU and the USA and between the EU and other

countries, such as CETA, within the WTO framework, when such agreements make it more difficult for states to protect sectors from privatisation, as well as lowering environmental, animal and consumer protection. Feminist Initiative considers instead that a trade agreement must be based on respect for human rights, the environment and fundamental democratic principles of self-

determination. In the light of what has emerged from the TTIP negotiations so far, Feminist Initiative is critical of TTIP because of:

- Increased imports of fossil fuels from the USA, which will have a negative impact on EU emission targets.
 - Lower standards for chemicals used in manufacturing products due to significant differences between USA and EU chemicals legislation.
 - The extension of patent rights should be stopped, because they risk preventing technological, scientific and cultural development.
1. FI will seek to ensure that the Commission terminates the negotiations on TTIP with the USA. Companies should not be able to sue States for democratic decisions that adversely affect companies' investments (i.e. the investor-state dispute settlement (ISDS) mechanism).
 2. FI will seek to ensure that the introduction to the European market of GMO products and other banned products is prohibited.
 3. FI will seek to prevent trade agreements that lead to poorer conditions for workers and the environment.
 4. FI will seek to stop agreements that make it difficult for EU Member States to use public procurement as a tool for social development, ecological sustainability and protection of labour rights and human rights.

EUROPE 2020

Following the financial and economic crisis that started in 2008, a new growth and employment strategy was launched, EUROPA 2020 (EU2020). The aim of the strategy is to strengthen the economy, create increased growth and more jobs, and to bring the EU out of the economic crisis by 2020. In 2011, EU2020 replaced the previous Lisbon strategy. The priority areas of the strategy are education, employment, research, environmentally-friendly growth and poverty reduction. The social challenges facing the Member States and the EU regarding the lack of gender equality, increased racism and xenophobia, as well as the exclusion of people with disabilities, are only mentioned modestly in the strategy. There are no political strategies to tackle the problems. Since some of the objectives identified in the EU2020 strategy fall outside the scope of Community legislation, each Member State may choose how the national policy should be designed to meet the objectives. This has meant that particularly the environmental and social aspects of the strategy have disappeared from focus in many countries.

The EU2020 strategy focuses largely on labour market reforms and strives to achieve a labour market characterised by Flexicurity. The concept of Flexicurity is based on a link between flexibility and security, where employers can benefit from labour market flexibility to more easily employ and

dismiss workers, while job-seekers/unemployed people will be provided security through unemployment benefits and where they can quickly return to work. However, research shows that Flexicurity undermines labour rights because the model degrades the work environment, creates larger numbers of insecure jobs and weakens the trade unions' position in the labour market. The Swedish national goals also focus on the labour market and strive, inter alia, to reduce social exclusion through labour market measures and increased employment rates. The problem with this approach is that human rights and human security in society are highly dependent on people's situation in the labour market and their ability to produce.

1. FI will seek to ensure that sustainable development strategies will focus not only on economic development, but also on promoting ecological and social development.
2. FI will work to ensure that an equal opportunity and non-discriminatory perspective permeates the strategies, in order to increase participation and inclusion in society, regardless of individuals' background and ability.
3. FI will seek to maintain and strengthen labour rights, ensuring that secure employment (i.e. permanent employment) is full-time as a rule throughout the labour market.
4. FI will seek to ensure that individuals' human rights are respected, and that the security of individuals is guaranteed, regardless of their situation in the labour market.

The integration and budgeting of gender equality within the EU

The Treaty of Nice establishes and defines the principles of integrating gender equality in the sense that inequalities should be removed for all work within the organisation. The Commission has adopted this strategy as its tool for implementing and enforcing legislation and political commitments. Gender equality integration is a horizontal strategy that requires powerful and joint action by a variety of actors in public institutions. Although some new gender equality-related mechanisms have been established in the Commission since 2000, their impact has been reduced year on year due to a lack of resources, inadequate training, an unclear mandate, and the absence of effective political leadership at the highest level.

There are 22 committees in the Parliament. They all operate within areas where a gender perspective is necessary to achieve equality. Most committees have stated that they have a positive approach to integrating gender equality, but so far, few committees have established strategies that give them something to relate to and follow in their work, and this has also not been included in the planning for future work. This is not only important for the work in the committee and for awareness of gender issues in the political and legal work, it is also important for providing the Member States with good examples of what should characterise the political work if we are to achieve a world without discrimination.

1. FI will seek to ensure the establishment of a special unit for monitoring and developing gender equality integration within all the European Commission's Directorates-General (DG). The unit should be tasked with setting up a gender equality integration strategy every two years for every policy area under the Directorates-General.
2. FI will seek to ensure that a budget committee is established for gender equality issues within the Commission's Directorate-General for budget, and that it carries out a specific gender equality impact assessment of the EU budget each year. This analysis of the budget will serve as part of the evaluation of gender equality integration, which the Parliament's Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality (FEMM) may issue an opinion on.
3. FI will seek to ensure mandatory training on gender equality and anti-discrimination for Commissioners, for senior officials and within all management training for EU officials.
4. FI will seek to ensure effective gender equality integration in European anti-discrimination programmes and actions.
5. FI will seek to ensure the introduction of a budget item for gender equality activities for each Commission unit.
6. FI will seek to secure additional funding for the work on gender equality and anti-discrimination within the EU, both for NGOs and for the EU's institutions.
7. FI will seek to ensure that gender equality and anti-discrimination are prioritised at all levels in the EU organisation.
8. FI will seek to ensure that gender equality integration strategies are established for all committees in accordance with their policy area and working methods.

U.2 Feminist policy in the EU

A strong feminist movement in Europe and the world

A key element in efforts to combat discrimination and promote human rights is to mobilise, support and collaborate with feminist parties and initiatives in Europe and around the world. A strong anti-racist, feminist movement in Europe is also the strongest counter-force to racist, nationalist, Nazi and fascist parties that are mobilising around Europe and the world. Several of them can already be found in the European Parliament and there is a major risk that the group will grow. By counteracting structural discrimination, we can also prevent racist and conservative forces from gaining strength. Clarity is required in the priorities to promote human rights by the EU institutions, and political pressure is required from civil society. We must also organise ourselves in political parties through feminist parties in the EU Member States. More feminist parties are now taking shape in Europe and our long-term goal is to unite as a feminist party group in the European Parliament.

1. FI will seek to create forums for the exchange of knowledge and experience between different feminist parties in the EU and in the EU candidate countries.
2. FI will seek to ensure that there are lists for feminist initiatives in at least seven EU countries at the European Parliament elections in 2019.
3. FI will seek to strengthen and highlight feminist movements and initiatives outside the EU.

A Europe free of racism and discrimination

Europe today has a strong trend towards increased nationalism, xenophobia and racism. Racist parties are winning victories in both national elections and in elections to the European Parliament. They are entering political assemblies and becoming part of the political establishment. Minority groups such as Roma, Jews, Muslims and LGBT people encounter racism and discrimination, which risks being normalised. This development also leads to a setback for women's rights and gender equality.

It is more important than ever that the protection against discrimination contained in the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, and expressly stated in the EU's Treaties, is implemented. At present, there is EU legislation against discrimination based on gender, race and ethnicity, both inside and outside the workplace. However, there is no comprehensive protection against discrimination based on age, religion and belief, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression.

In 2008, the Commission presented a proposal for EU legislation against discrimination outside of working life based on age, disability, sexual orientation, religion or other beliefs. The proposal has been approved by Parliament, but the Council has not yet reached agreement on the proposal. Feminist Initiative considers it unacceptable that EU legislators have failed to agree to implement the protection against discrimination that clearly follows from the EU's Treaties as one of the EU's fundamental values. In addition, we believe that the EU should provide comprehensive protection against discrimination of transgender people, which is not only based on gender correction, which follows from current practice.

Europe's Roma are a particularly vulnerable group, who live in several EU countries in indescribable poverty and marginalisation as a result of institutionalised racism and discrimination. In order to change the situation for the Roma in Europe, the efforts to promote social inclusion, which are the starting point for the existing EU framework for Roma inclusion, are inadequate. The work to change the situation for the Roma must have a clear rights perspective and EU institutions and Member States must take joint responsibility to counter the widespread racism against Roma (antiziganism), which is the fundamental reason why Roma have been marginalised and discriminated since they arrived in Europe in the 1300s. Organisations working for Roma rights, where the Roma themselves are represented, must have increased influence over EU policies in this area.

The EU is home to about 600 000 people who do not have citizenship and are therefore considered to be stateless. Some have recently arrived in the EU, while others have lived in the EU for several generations and have parents who have no citizenship. Many of these people are Roma, who originally come from countries in the Balkans, and their lack of citizenship is often the result of discrimination. In many cases, stateless people living in the EU do not have the same rights as EU citizens in terms of access to social security and healthcare, the right to study and work. All people living in the EU should be able to live a dignified life with equal opportunities, including people without citizenship.

The EU must also pay special attention to the situation of LGBT people. A common anti-discrimination law that also concerns LGBT people is a prerequisite for LGBT people to live in the EU on equal terms. At the same time, the Commission must work strategically with the Member States in order to counteract anti-discrimination and violence against LGBT people in various ways, primarily by drawing up a joint action plan for LGBT people's rights. When a Member State fails to protect its residents' human rights, it violates the basic conditions for EU cooperation. According to the EU's fundamental values, as described in the EU's Treaties, EU cooperation must be based on, among other things, democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights. In order to be granted admission to the EU, an applicant country is required to meet these requirements. A country cannot become a member if it does not meet the so-called Copenhagen criteria, which include the country establishing stable institutions that guarantee democracy, the rule of law, human rights and protection for minorities. If the country ceases to meet these criteria after it has become a member of the EU, there are limited options to force the country to do so, especially in cases that do not involve the application of EU law.

The EU must impose high standards on countries that are granted membership of the EU in terms of democracy, respect for human rights and the rule of law. In assessing the candidate countries for membership of the EU, the human rights situation must be prioritised at least as highly as economic conditions. The EU must also act when countries that have been granted EU membership violate the EU's fundamental values, for example by systematically discriminating on grounds of sex, sexual orientation, disability, ethnic and cultural origin, and otherwise when the rule of law is threatened. In order to be able to act efficiently and effectively in such situations, the EU needs a review mechanism that regularly evaluates the situation in the Member States on objective grounds, enabling action to be taken as soon as there is a risk that the country will violate the EU's fundamental values. It is reasonable that such a review mechanism should be linked to some form of sanctions against Member States that do not correct a situation, where they are violating the EU's fundamental values.

1. FI will seek to ensure that the Commission actively monitors that Member States comply with the EU legislation against discrimination and take steps against countries that violate this legislation.

2. FI will seek to ensure rapid adoption of the Commission's proposal for a directive against discrimination in the workplace on grounds of age, religion and belief, disability and sexual orientation.
3. FI will seek to ensure that the EU's work to change the situation for Roma has a clear rights perspective, that EU institutions and Member States take joint responsibility to counter antiziganism and that organisations working for Roma rights, where the Roma themselves are represented, will have greater influence over EU policy in this area.
4. FI will seek to raise the issue of stateless persons in the EU.
5. FI will seek to ensure that the Commission and Member States jointly work strategically and long-term to counter discrimination and violence against LGBT people, and that the EU will provide comprehensive protection against discrimination and violence against transgender people.
6. FI will endeavour to ensure that democracy, respect for human rights and rule of law are fundamental principles that are valued, at the least, as highly as the economic conditions of candidate countries when enlarging the EU.
7. FI will seek to ensure that the EU establishes an effective and workable mechanism for dealing with situations where Member States violate the EU's fundamental values, including with respect to democracy, the rule of law and respect for fundamental rights.

U.2 An active gender equality policy

In the area of gender equality, the EU has the authority to legislate on labour market policy issues and in some areas of social policy. Since 1976, there has been EU legislation against discrimination based on gender in the work place. Since then, legislation has been introduced on gender equality regarding social security and pensions, access to services, legislation on maternity leave and on the protection of pregnant employees.

Nevertheless, there are outstanding gender equality issues in EU policies, and particularly in exactly those areas that the EU has the power to make an impact. Women's employment, wages and pensions are well below those of men. Women are not equally represented among power brokers and decision-makers, whether on the boards of listed companies or in political assemblies. In addition, violence against women is a major problem in the EU's countries. These conditions mean that women in the EU do not have their human rights respected, and are not allowed equal democratic influence in society. The Commission's gender equality strategy for the period 2010-2015 expired without the Commission adopting a new gender equality strategy, despite extensive lobbying from both the European Parliament, the Member States and civil society. As of 2016, the EU's gender equality efforts are therefore governed by a working document that has not been adopted by the Commission, and which is not anchored among the Member States or the Parliament. This downgrading of gender issues does not live up to the position they have in the EU's Treaties. In practice, this means that human rights are downgraded on the EU's agenda. Feminist

Initiative believes that gender equality efforts at EU level should be prioritised, and that the Commission should take gender equality issues seriously by developing a strategy that is focused and that puts political pressure on Member States to tackle gender discrimination in the EU.

In autumn 2012, the Commission proposed a directive on gender balance on corporate boards, setting a target of 40% women on the boards of large listed companies. Feminist Initiative believes that the proposed directive, which mainly describes how the appointment of board members should be addressed and contains a rule on positive discrimination, is an important initiative for promoting gender equality among power brokers.

1. FI will seek to ensure that the EU has high ambitions with clear objectives in terms of gender equality, based on the fact that increased employment among women and economic equality is primarily a question of human rights, and not a potential for increased growth.
2. FI will seek to ensure that gender equality efforts at EU level take account of multiple forms of discrimination and that gender equality measures take account of living conditions for different groups of women.
3. FI will seek to ensure that EU legislation increases the proportion of women on corporate boards.

Employment in numbers

In order to influence the situation of women in the labour market in Europe, methods are required that can counter the gender segregated labour market and combat discrimination against women, including women with minority backgrounds and women with disabilities in the labour market and within social security systems. Providing women with the option to be self-sufficient is crucial for the opportunity for economic independence and for greater gender equality in society as a whole. Women's participation in the labour market is significantly lower than men, despite the fact that women in the EU generally have better qualifications and achieve better educational outcomes than men. This results in women being more likely to end up in positions of financial dependency.

One of the goals mentioned in EU2020 is to increase the employment rate for women and men between the ages of 20 and 64 to 75%. According to the latest statistics, from 2015, the average employment rate in the EU is 69%. However, the employment rate among women is lower than men, 64.3% of women aged 20-64 are employed, compared to 75.9% of men in the same age group. If only full-time employment is taken into account, the difference increases to 18.1%, because women are more likely to work part-time. Among older people, aged 55-64, the employment rate is 46%, which is also lower among older women than older men. This means that women's pensions in the EU are 39% lower than men's on average. It is therefore necessary that the EU2020 strategy for growth and employment has a stronger gender equality dimension that takes account of the norms and structures that restrict women's opportunities for economic independence.

One of the most important factors behind the gender gap in employment, as the Commission also points out, is the uneven distribution of care responsibilities between men and women. The latest survey, conducted in 2015, shows that the average employment rate for women with a child under six years of age was 8.8% lower than for women without young children. This difference is more than 30% in several Member States. This shows the difficulty for women to combine childcare and care duties with paid employment.

In the 2002 Barcelona target, which was intended to eliminate barriers preventing women from having gainful employment and to expand access to childcare, the objective was that 33% of children under the age of three, and 90% of children from the age of three up to the compulsory school age, would receive childcare by 2010 at the latest. However, only eight countries have achieved both goals, while an increasingly common trend in the EU shows that childcare places for older children are decreasing. In other words, there is a low level of interest among EU Member States to enable women to combine working life and family. Monitoring jointly agreed goals is therefore an important part of the work. Feminist Initiative is therefore encouraged that childcare is one of the 20 principles of the social pillar (see the chapter 'The social pillar, pensions and combating poverty'), which also highlights the importance of a more equal distribution of care responsibilities in order to improve women's participation in the labour market and career development.

Further measures that can help to increase employment among women is that the non-discrimination legislation is enforced and that rights within tax and benefit systems are individualised. Women's occupational work cannot be treated separately from health and social care issues, or from the individualisation of tax and social security systems. The opportunity for all adults to have individual economic independence is a prerequisite for gender equality.

1. FI will seek to ensure that necessary policy measures are taken in all areas that affect women's employment opportunities, in order to ensure that the employment targets for women in EU2020 are achieved.
2. FI will seek to ensure that the EU actively works to develop methods to eliminate discrimination against women (including women with minority backgrounds and women with disabilities) in the labour market and in social security systems.
3. FI will seek to ensure that an intersectional perspective is applied in the EU's and Member States' future employment strategies.

Wage discrimination

Although there is EU legislation on equal pay for equal work, women earn an average of 15% less than men in the EU (the difference is up to 33% in some countries). This difference has remained largely unchanged, in spite of the EU's Employment Equality Directive. In order to tackle discrimination against women, both within and between sectors and professions, robust measures

are required at all levels within the Union. An EU employment strategy must contain specific and targeted gender equality goals.

1. FI will seek to ensure that measures are taken to eliminate wage discrimination based on gender and to facilitate the participation of women, people with disabilities and minorities in the labour market, particularly in terms of education, reintegration and pensions.
2. FI will seek to ensure gender balance in systems for lifelong learning, vocational education and other education systems.
3. FI will seek to ensure gender balance in access to bank loans and banking services in order to compete in the international market.
4. FI will seek to ensure a European wage survey and practical action plans to address wage discrimination.
5. FI will seek to ensure that steps are taken to address discrimination in the labour market against people with non-European backgrounds.
6. FI will seek to ensure an employment strategy with specific gender equality goals in all areas.
7. FI will seek to ensure that legislation and the Directive on equal pay for equal work will be followed and sanctions introduced.

The social pillar, pensions and combating poverty

In many ways, it is a human right and a prerequisite for gender equality to have access to social security systems. These systems vary greatly between the EU Member States, and there are major differences in the extent to which they are designed to ensure equal opportunities for women and men. As a result, the European Commission launched the pillar of social rights pillar to give people new and effective rights. The pillar is divided into three categories dealing with equal rights and access to the labour market, fair working conditions and social security & social inclusion. **The pillar contains 20 principles and rights that are necessary to support well-functioning and fair labour markets and welfare systems. The pillar is primarily designed for the Euro area, but is open to all Member States that want to join.**

Feminist Initiative broadly welcomes the proposals presented, such as the improvement of access to preschool activities and childcare, the application of minimum wages to prevent poverty among employees, equal opportunities for all people in employment, social protection, education and access to good-quality health and social care throughout their life. We are pleased that the pillar emphasises the importance of shared responsibility in parenting and domestic work as a prerequisite for gender equality. As a consequence, the pillar suggests that the minimum period of parental leave should be increased to at least four months, which in turn cannot be transferred to

the other parent. The proposal is an important gender equality measure, but Feminist Initiative will seek to achieve a longer minimum period and that parental leave should be individualised.

All obstacles preventing women from entering and remaining in the labour market should be eliminated to achieve an accessible labour market. The labour market must be equal for everyone and everyone must have the same rights and conditions for a pension. In the present situation, the gender-based distribution of domestic chores leads to women bearing the main responsibility for care work. This has led to the gender pay gap being as high as 28% in some Member States. This means that over an entire working life, the gender gap in pensions is 40% in the EU. Women are at greater risk of poverty and social exclusion. Furthermore, many pension systems in EU Member States still give only 'secondary rights' to many women based on their spouses' employment. As a result, the majority of older people living in poverty are women.

EU Member States' pension systems also discriminate against migrant and asylum-seeking women, as they often rely on how long a person has lived in a particular country. In particular, migrant and asylum-seeking women are more often employed on terms that provide limited opportunities to save for a pension, which means that as elderly people they may live in extreme poverty. Undocumented women are often excluded completely from a system that would allow them to engage in work that would entitle them to a pension. Women who are unable to work because of a disability are in a similar situation, as they only receive a state pension. Single parents, older women or women working in a family business, such as agriculture or fisheries, are also adversely affected by these pension systems. It is therefore extremely important that women receive adequate benefits through social protection systems, especially when they retire. The feminisation of poverty is a constant trend in European societies today. This clearly demonstrates that the current framework for social protection systems and the EU's entire social, economic and employment policies have not been designed to meet the needs of women.

In order to ensure a better life for older women, we must remove the structural factors that contribute to inequalities in pension systems, including the organisation of health and social care, as well as the balance between paid and unpaid care work, inequalities in the labour market, the gender pay gap and direct discrimination in pension systems.

1. FI will seek to ensure individualised parental leave with an increased minimum period.
2. FI will seek to ensure that an addendum is made to the Working Time Directive (2003/88/EC) so that the organisation of work is adapted to the needs of both women and men to reconcile private and professional life, including a general reduction in working hours and the creation of work schedules that are possible to combine with family responsibilities.
3. FI will seek to ensure measures to improve the provision of health and care services in the EU. Member States should be able to formulate recommendations for how to meet

the need for subsidised care services in Europe (by organising and financing childcare and care for other people who cannot take care of themselves). The aim should be to provide childcare for 90% of all children in the EU from birth until the compulsory school age, and to have reached an adequate level of care services for other people who are unable to take care of themselves.

4. FI will seek to ensure that special rights and guaranties are established in relation to the possibility to combine private and working life, when there are dependant family members (such as children or cohabitants with disabilities).
5. FI will seek to ensure that care for the elderly is an obvious principle for a stable and well-functioning labour market for all.
6. FI will seek to ensure that a broad survey is carried out to investigate how pension reforms affect women's lives in the EU, focusing on an individualisation of pension benefits (including social security and taxation systems generally).
7. FI will seek to ensure that strategies are developed to guarantee a full state pension for everyone, regardless of the extent to which a person has worked in the country.
8. FI will seek to ensure that strategies are developed to provide a pension system for people with disabilities without a pension (or only a pension based on part-time employment), which safeguards their economic independence during their old age.
9. FI will seek to ensure that clearer objectives and specific gender equality targets are developed within the EU's strategy to combat poverty and social exclusion, including policy measures to support all types of families, including single-parent families. Specific policy measures must be taken to support women from groups that are at greater risk of poverty and social exclusion, such as asylum-seeking women, women with non-European backgrounds, women from ethnic minorities, elderly women, women with disabilities, undocumented women and LGBT people.
10. FI will seek to ensure social security systems that safeguard individuals' human rights and guarantee the security of individuals, regardless of their situation in the labour market.
11. FI will seek to ensure that the European Fisheries Fund (EFF) and support for rural development through the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) are integrated, and that the EU's social security system is designed to give women and men the same benefits and obligations.