

(English version)

Question for written answer E-000921/26
to the Commission
Elena Kountoura (The Left)
(5 March 2026)

Subject: Incorporating binding measures into the upcoming Gender Equality Strategy in the areas of employment, health and education

According to EIGE's new Gender Equality Index for 2025 ⁽¹⁾, despite some progress having been made in the EU towards achieving gender equality, this progress remains disproportionately slow and fragile. Deep-rooted gender inequalities and stereotypes continue to hinder the achievement of equality in a big way. Meanwhile, in critical areas such as employment ⁽²⁾, health and education, there appears to be stagnation or even backsliding in many Member States ⁽³⁾.

For instance, in the health sector, progress has effectively stalled and in some Member States performance has deteriorated over the last five years ⁽⁴⁾. Despite the high participation rate of women in the education sector, structural barriers persist, reinforcing gender differences in employment and in terms of their progression prospects ⁽⁵⁾.

Given:

- the upcoming EU Gender Equality Strategy,
- EIGE's forecast that it will take at least 50 years to fully achieve gender equality in the EU,
- the uneven progress seen across Member States,

can the Commission answer the following:

1. What measures does it intend to take, in the context of the new gender equality strategy, to address stagnation and regression in the areas where this is most evident, particularly in the employment, health and education sectors?
2. Does it intend to incorporate binding targets, specific timelines and monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to reduce gender inequalities in employment, health and education?

Submitted: 5.3.2026

Answer given by Ms Lahbib on behalf of the European Commission
(28 May 2026)

The new Gender Equality Strategy 2026-2030 ⁽¹⁾, adopted on 5 March 2026, includes measures to advance gender equality in the employment, health and education sectors, in line with the Roadmap for Women's Rights' ⁽²⁾ principles.

Measures related to employment are detailed, *inter alia*, in principles 3, 4 and 5 (equal pay, economic empowerment and financial independence; work-life balance and gender equality in care; equal employment opportunities and adequate working conditions).

These range from the full implementation of the Pay Transparency Directive ⁽³⁾ to the adoption of an Action Plan for Women in Research, Innovation and Start-Ups.

Measures related to health are outlined in principle 2 (the highest standards of physical and mental health), and include a new initiative with the World Health Organisation on women's health.

Measures related to education are outlined in principle 6 (high-quality inclusive education and training) and encompass a new 'Boys in HEAL' (Health, Education, Administration, Literacy) approach, as well as the publication of a handbook on reducing gender-based disparities in study choices and educational outcomes.

¹ <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index/2025/EL>.

² Despite a modest annual increase of 0.4 points since 2015, it is estimated that it will take at least another 70 years before equality is fully achieved in employment and working life.

³ In education, the equality index for the EU improved by a meagre 0.4 points, with 14 Member States backtracking.

⁴ The equality index for the EU health sector has made no progress over five years, with 15 Member States recording negative trends.

⁵ Despite the fact that more women complete higher education than men, stereotypes sustain occupational gender segregation and push many women into jobs that do not provide many opportunities for professional advancement and pay progression.

⁽¹⁾ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:52026DC0113>.

⁽²⁾ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52025DC0097>.

⁽³⁾ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/2023/970/oj/eng>.

The measures included in the Gender Equality Strategy 2026-2030 will also help meet relevant, existing targets, such as the target to halve the gender employment gap by 2030 set by the action plan on the European Pillar of Social Rights ⁽⁴⁾, and the target of attracting one million girls to Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics sectors by 2028 put forward by the Union of Skills strategy ⁽⁵⁾.

⁽⁴⁾ https://employment-social-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies-and-activities/european-pillar-social-rights-building-fairer-and-more-inclusive-european-union/european-pillar-social-rights-action-plan_en.

⁽⁵⁾ https://commission.europa.eu/topics/competitiveness/union-skills_en.