

EN

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Answer given by Ms Lahbib

on behalf of the European Commission

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The Roadmap for Women's Rights¹ highlights the importance of tackling women's poverty for gender equality. The Gender Equality Strategy² points to the lack of access to affordable menstrual products. Directive 2022/542, which introduced reforms as regards rates of value added tax³ expanded Member States' flexibility to apply super-reduced rates, including 0%, to certain goods, such as female hygiene products, where national governments choose to do so.

The EU Anti-Poverty Strategy⁴ promotes people's access to affordable, quality social and essential services, along with addressing the root causes of poverty. Member States can use European Social Fund Plus⁵ to support basic material assistance, including hygiene products, where this contributes to social inclusion and addresses material deprivation.

In order to deliver effectively on the objectives of the Anti-Poverty Strategy, the Commission will continue to monitor progress towards the reduction of poverty and aims to improve monitoring and put forward new indicators to measure the impact of affordability components on poverty, with a view to having them agreed by 2028. The aim is to improve the timeliness and comprehensiveness of poverty-related data, including by assessing different dimensions of poverty and affordability. Furthermore, the Commission will fund a study on the macro- and micro-economic and societal benefits of closing the women's health gap related to certain conditions over the life course, like menopause.

¹ https://commission.europa.eu/news/eu-roadmap-womens-rights-renewed-push-gender-equality-2025-03-07_en.

² <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52026DC0113&qid=1776075756540>.

³ Council Directive (EU) 2022/542.

⁴ https://employment-social-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies-and-activities/social-protection-social-inclusion/addressing-poverty-and-supporting-social-inclusion/eu-anti-poverty-strategy_en.

⁵ European Social Fund Plus <https://european-social-fund-plus.ec.europa.eu/en>.