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Answer given by Ms Lahbib
on behalf of the European Commission
(2.10.2026)

As acknowledged by the Honourable Members, the Roadmap for Women's Rights[1] and the Gender Equality Strategy 2026-2030[2] recognise that tackling menstrual poverty and improving access to affordable menstrual products are important for gender equality.

The Strategy also notes that, on top of the 2022 revision of the VAT Directive, other measures, such as providing menstrual products free of charge or organising free distribution for specific groups, may in some cases offer a more targeted way of supporting those most in need. In this context, Member States may use European Social Fund Plus (ESF+)[3] to support basic material assistance, including hygiene products, where this supports social inclusion and addresses material deprivation.

As announced in the Strategy, the Commission will also 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, including menopause.

Furthermore, the EU Anti-Poverty Strategy aims to tackle the causes of poverty while improving access to affordable, high-quality social and essential services. The Commission will track progress towards the reduction of poverty, strengthen monitoring, and propose new affordability indicators.

The existing regulatory framework, including the ESF+, already provides possibilities for supporting measures aimed at reducing poverty and social exclusion, where such measures fall within the scope of the relevant specific objectives and national or regional programmes. The Commission will continue to provide clarification and support to Member States, where needed, in the context of programme implementation and exchanges of good practices.

[1] Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions 'A Roadmap for Women's Rights', COM(2025)97 final.
[2] Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic tnd Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions 'Gender Equality Strategy 2026-2030', COM(2026)113 final**.**
[3] https://european-social-fund-plus.ec.europa.eu/en.