

Empowerment of Women and Girls

Why is it important to focus on empowering women and girls?

Because women and girls are often an unused resource in society. Society needs them and they must be given the opportunity to offer their abilities, knowledge and experience in various fields.

First of all, it should be noted that it is not only the empowerment of women and girls that helps, but it is also important that they make their own decisions in various areas of society's life. Women must be given a visible role in all areas of life. Empowering women helps fight discrimination against all women because of their gender.

Women's empowerment unites women in the fight against inequality. The common struggle of all women to achieve greater participation in various fields in order to eliminate discrimination in high positions, wage inequality and many other unfavourable situations for women is the idea of sisterhood.

The biggest obstacle obtaining real gender equality especially in Europe is the myth that we have already achieved that goal – women can vote, can work on their chosen profession, are responsible for their own finances etc. In reality there is still lot of work to do.

EIGE (The European Institution for Gender Equality) measures gender quality in Europe since 2010 (first published at 2013). The Gender Equality Index is a measurement tool that shows how far (or close) the EU and its Member States are from achieving a gender-equal society. The Index measures gender equality in eight areas, called 'domains', relevant to the EU policy framework. There are six main domains:

- work (participating in work life and the quality and segregation of it)
- money (available financial resources and overall economic situation of men and women)
- knowledge (level of education, life-long learning and segregation in educational fields)
- time (time spent on caregiving in comparison to time spent on social activities)
- power (in politics, economy, society)
- health -(health status, healthy/unhealthy behaviour and access to health services)

The index shows for an example that while women generally have higher education, they get paid less than men and have much smaller representation in company councils and politics

Recommendations for the empowerment of women and girls

Empowerment in childhood

Women's empowerment starts from childhood, then with the education received in kindergarten and school in addition to the teachings received at home. The role of families in women's empowerment is essential. How a girl is brought up in the domestic sphere lays the foundation for her future. This is supplemented by education from the school and support from the community and non-governmental organizations.

Culture is the basis of development. Quality education without discrimination, access to culture and science results in prepared girls who grow up knowing their opportunities and rights.

The education girls receive shapes their future. There are various ways to improve the position of girls in the world through financial support or the activities of non-profit organizations. Women's empowerment is successful when girls have opportunities to receive education based on equality (including in communication, social skills, negotiation and leadership).

Girls must learn that their independence is their freedom, that girls are just as capable as boys, that every woman deserves the same respect, social and economic recognition in her future as every man.

Girls need to know that with their work and efforts, they can become representatives of any profession.

How to empower/enforce girls at home, school and community?

To do this, it is necessary to find opportunities for girls to take on tasks at home, at school, and in extracurricular activities, which they can take the initiative to solve.

It is important to deal with parents so that they get the appropriate knowledge and apply it.

To encourage girls to be independent, to value themselves. To give them opportunities to present and implement their ideas. This also by preparing and carrying out various smaller and larger projects.

Encourage them to explore different career options.

To teach girls to accept challenges that involve risks and how to mitigate these risks during activities.

To give the girl the courage not to seek perfection, because it means that the fear of failure limits her possibilities.

To teach girls negotiation skills, expressiveness and to find opportunities for them to perform in public.

To teach girls to listen to others and to cooperate in order to successfully reach their goals. Cooperation between different generations contributes to mutual understanding and mutual empowerment.

To encourage girls to act in the digital world.

The school and the community (including NGOs) have a great role and responsibility in the implementation of the above.

We educate the girls of today so they can be the leaders of tomorrow!

How can we support gender equality in our project?

Not all projects should focus on gender equality directly but there are different levels where this aspect could be considered:

1. Project's activities could include activities to raise awareness of rights and equality
2. Project contributes to breaking down barriers that prevent equal participation, benefit from activities, decision making etc for men and women
3. The purpose of the activity is to reduce gender inequality

The project can tackle one or multiple goals of gender equality policy:

- Women's economic independence e.g encouraging entrepreneurship
- Gender balance in decision-making and management e.g more knowledge and encouraging to participate in politics
- Reconciliation of work and family life e.g knowledge how to share responsibilities at home and at work
- Eliminating gender stereotypes e.g encouraging and providing opportunities for boys and girls to engage in different activities
- Reducing gender-based violence e.g providing help for victims or raising awareness about the issue

Gender equality project in phases - planning

- Spotting gender inequality
- Setting gender equality goals
- Engagement, inclusion
- The answer to the question "How does action promote equality?"
- Goals are measurable

Gender equality project in phases -implementation

- Gender balance of participants
- Analysis of barriers
- Communication avoids stereotypes
- Considering the needs of the target group
- Different capabilities/needs of F&M

Appendix 1

Examples of international organizations' support for the empowerment of women and girls.

Different countries have different approaches to empowering women and girls. For example, the countries of the European Union (including the countries of the Baltic Sea) have adopted their own legislative documents and developed corresponding programs so that the process by which women gain power and control over their own lives and acquire the ability to make strategic choices works.

Women's empowerment has five components: women's sense of self-worth; their right to have and to determine choices; their right to have access to opportunities and resources; their right to have

power to control their own lives, both within and outside the home; and their ability to influence the direction of social change to create a more just social and economic order, nationally and internationally.

In this context, education, training, awareness raising, building self-confidence, expansion of choices, increased access to and control over resources, and actions to transform the structures and institutions that reinforce and perpetuate gender discrimination and inequality are important tools for empowering women and girls to claim their rights.

<https://eige.europa.eu/thesaurus/terms/1102>

Highlights of the international documents

International Labour Conventions (ILO) of particular relevance to gender equality (since 1951);

EU Gender Equality Legislation (since 1957);

UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979);

Beijing declaration and platform of action (1995);

Council of Europe (CoE) documents of gender equality (for e. The Istanbul Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence).

The **European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE)** is an autonomous body of the European Union, established to contribute to and strengthen the promotion of gender equality, including gender mainstreaming in all EU policies and the resulting national policies, and the fight against discrimination based on sex, as well as to raise EU citizens' awareness of gender equality.

The empowerment of women and girls is also closely linked to a number of youth empowerment policies

Appendix 2

EU Youth Strategy

The EU Youth Strategy is the framework for EU youth policy cooperation for 2019-2027, based on the Council Resolution of 26 November 2018. EU youth cooperation shall make the most of youth policy's potential. It fosters youth participation in democratic life; it also supports social and civic engagement and aims to ensure that all young people have the necessary resources to take part in society.

The EU Youth Strategy should contribute to realising this vision of young people by mobilising EU level policy instruments as well as actions at national, regional and local level by all stakeholders.

<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/factsheets/en/sheet/141/youth>

https://youth.europa.eu/strategy_en

[Baltic Sea Youth Declaration 2022](#) (developed in august 2022)

This Document emphasizes the importance of youth participation in all areas especially in political processes.

<https://cbss.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/baltic-sea-youth-declaration-2022.pdf>