

Ten ways the EU works to protect the rights of women and girls

1. **Equal pay for women:** The UK Equal Pay Act predates our EU membership. But it did not cover equal pay for work of equal value and it was only EU law which led to many landmark victories - and pay rises - for women workers.
2. **Paid Holidays:** The EU working time directive gave the right to paid holiday for the first time to 2 million workers - many of them part-time women workers - and 6 million workers in total gained new or enhanced rights to paid leave from 1998.
3. **Maternity rights:** EU law gave new rights to pregnant women, including the right to paid time off for antenatal appointments and new protection rights against pregnancy discrimination.
4. **Parental leave:** EU law means that any parent with a child under 5 (now extended to under 18 by UK law) has the right to a minimum of 18 weeks unpaid parental leave and to time off for urgent family reasons.
5. **Returning to work:** A job of the same status and pay must be kept open for a woman on maternity leave. Becoming pregnant no longer means losing your job!
6. **Better rights for atypical workers:** The EU adopted equal treatment laws for part-time, fixed-term and agency workers benefiting around 400,000 employees in the UK, 300,000 of whom were women.
7. **Entitlement to pensions:** Pension poverty is a real problem for older women. Many part-time workers - mainly women - faced discrimination, and were excluded from pension schemes, but EU law now outlaws such discrimination.
8. **Supporting women in developing countries:** Funding for women and girls in developing countries is a priority for the EU - the biggest aid donor in the world. Projects support women farmers, girls' education, maternal health and a range of projects across the globe
9. **FGM:** The EU is working with partners to combat FGM practices and increase awareness among communities to the dangers of FGM.
10. **Women's empowerment:** Projects provide support to help women stand for political office and to get more involved in public life. Some of the countries with the highest number of women MPs are now in Africa - Britain is 40th! MEPs have pushed to have gender perspectives included in all foreign and development policies.