

**WE**

**WOMEN'S  
EQUALITY  
PARTY.**



# **A **MANIFESTO** NOT JUST TO REMAIN IN THE EUROPEAN UNION, BUT TO ADVANCE**

**Because equality is better for everyone**

[womensequality.org.uk](http://womensequality.org.uk)

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**WE BACK A PEOPLE'S VOTE  
— NOT JUST TO REMAIN BUT  
TO ADVANCE**

# FOREWORD

The Women's Equality Party is running in the European elections not to build barriers, but to break them.

More equality doesn't mean taking from one section of the population to give to another. More equal societies are happier, healthier and wealthier.

Being part of the European Union does not diminish the countries of the United Kingdom. It enriches us economically, socially and culturally.

Membership of the European Union gives the UK a crucial voice in determining our national future and the ways in which 28 countries serve their populations and interact with each other and the world. To lose this voice is not to take back control, but to throw it away.

And with it, the huge, untapped potential of Europe. The UK and our EU partners have consistently overlooked the opportunity to frame a radical new reality that, in valuing every citizen, creates value for all. That lifts everyone by lifting women. That cares for everyone by investing in care.

**This is our vision.**

**The ambition to Remain was never enough. WE aim to Advance.**

This manifesto sets out the bold, transformative policies needed to achieve that goal, including our New Social Deal for Europe that recognises equality not as an optional add-on for a vibrant economy and a thriving society but as their very essence.

WE aim to establish minimum living standards across the EU that raise women out of poverty.

WE will create a permanent citizens' assembly for the EU to decide on social policies to be applied across member states and will push for that assembly to focus on key issues including truly shared parental leave with the same rights for self-employed parents; universal free childcare; and fair pensions.

WE will value care and put a value on care.

WE will develop a Care Workers' Passport to deliver the best health and social care services across Europe.

WE will make a commitment to reproductive rights a pre-condition to EU accession and advocate for the decriminalisation of abortion across Europe.

WE will work to make Europe the first continent free from human trafficking.

And WE will collaborate closely with feminists across the EU to expand and promote a common platform with the Feminist United Network. Together, WE will form a new voting bloc with representatives of the Feminist Initiative in Sweden and other feminist MEPs to ensure women's equality is always prioritised.

WE will push for the best policies of any member state towards women's equality to be enshrined in European law and enacted by each nation.

WE are standing for a better Europe, and WE also recognise the urgency of fighting for the rights and protections that flow from EU membership.

Because any form of Brexit threatens to curtail the freedom of movement that means women, who are disadvantaged by most immigration systems, are able to deploy their skills across the EU. The UK is a major beneficiary of this. One example: freedom of movement currently enables 62,000 NHS staff and 104,000 adult social care workers, the majority of whom are female, to live and work in the UK.

Any form of Brexit risks hitting hardest those who can least afford it. This is no coincidence. Across Europe and the UK, regressive populism is on the rise, promoting a politics of hatred and division. As ever, it is targeting women and minorities. So-called mainstream parties, instead of pushing back, have tried to woo voters by echoing some of this toxic messaging. The traditional media has amplified it and social media has given it still greater reach. The resulting normalisation of misogyny, racism, anti-semitism, Islamophobia, xenophobia and homophobia is experienced in the daily interactions of those it demonises.

Brexit represents a failure of mainstream politics in an electoral system that by excluding women and other vital perspectives fails everyone. WE stand against all forms of inequality and the multiple discrimination faced by BAME women, disabled women, working class women, Muslim women, Jewish women and LGBT women. WE — and this manifesto — are an essential part of the solution.

If we want a future that works for all of us, then everyone must be involved in building that future.



# EQUAL PAY AND OPPORTUNITY

The EU has brought down so many barriers for women. A humble commitment to “promote equality between women and men” contained in the 1957 Treaty of Amsterdam allowed us to imagine a world in which women were not only free from discrimination, but equal to men.

At the heart of that commitment was equal pay for work of equal value. Of course, it was the sewing machinists at Ford Dagenham who made it possible for women in the UK to earn the same wage as men with the same job. But the subsequent change in UK law didn't extend to equivalent jobs (work rated as equivalent in terms of the demands made on workers). When you live in a country where employment is still divided according to gender roles, where women are still funnelled into low-paid care work, where shop assistants can be paid less than warehouse workers and cleaners less than bin collectors, equivalence matters just as much. The UK government refused to recognise this, so the European Commission took them to court and won, forcing an expansion of our Equal Pay Act.

- **Remain:** WE will ensure future equality and human rights protections under the EU are fully translated into UK law and that existing protections cannot easily be removed.
- **Advance:** WE will work with feminist parties across Europe to push for the radical expansion of women's rights, including for women outside the formal economy.
- **If you vote for the Women's Equality Party:**
  - WE will halve the gender pay gap by 2025 by implementing truly shared parental leave across the EU member states.
  - WE will ensure equal representation of women across politics, business and working life.

WE prize the EU's work on equality but recognise that it has been too focused on employment legislation and levelling the playing field for businesses. The result is that the gender pay gap across Europe — the average

difference in earnings between men and women — has remained stagnant for the past decade. In order to close the gender pay gap, the EU needs to ensure more women are promoted into leadership positions and that women have the support they need to thrive in work and family life.

## **What is the difference between equal pay and the gender pay gap?**

Whilst both equal pay and the gender pay gap deal with the difference in pay that women receive in the workplace, they are two different issues. Equal pay is a requirement in law that men and women in the same employment, performing work of equal value, must receive the same pay. The gender pay gap is a measure of the difference between men's and women's average earnings across an organisation or the labour market.

## **Why does this matter to women and to all of us?**

The gender pay gap is a sign of the structural inequalities that women experience:

- occupational segregation: when young women are funnelled into lower-paid and less-valued jobs despite performing better academically.
- caring responsibilities: the majority of which are still performed by women, resulting in time out of the labour market and/or over-representation in part-time roles.
- discrimination: unconscious stereotyping and direct discrimination mean that women make up 46 percent of the workforce, but hold only 27 percent of senior business roles.

These inequalities affect all of us. The failure to invest in care means that we are missing an opportunity for job creation, GDP growth and additional tax revenues; the lack of shared parenting policies means fathers are missing out on the joys and responsibilities of parenting; and the lack of women in senior roles means that businesses are losing talent.

### What will a Women's Equality Party MEP do?

The Women's Equality Party will bring much-needed leadership on this issue within the EU. The European Commission has tried and failed to implement a Maternity Leave Directive and the subsequent Work-Life Balance Directive is in danger of being watered down even further. We know from the UK experience that without proper remuneration for both parents, nothing will change. WE will:

- Implement a new Shared Care Directive to set the standards, including:
  - nine months parental leave at 90 percent of pay that guarantees each parent (including same-sex couples and adoptive parents) three months away from work with an additional three months the couple can split whichever way they want.
  - the same maternity, paternity and adoption leave pay entitlements for self-employed parents.
  - a right to request flexible working from day one.
  - a carer's allowance to allow flexibility for carers who also work and ten days leave a year for carers.
- Compel companies and public sector bodies with over 50 employees to publish their gender pay gaps, broken down by race/ethnicity and disability. Require companies to produce action plans and introduce fines for companies that fail to make progress.
- Implement a 40 percent quota of women on company boards.
- Through our New Social Deal and citizens' assembly, expand EU law-making on social policy.
- Make gender equality a stand-alone goal for the New Skills Agenda for Europe.
- Introduce new gender balance thresholds for the electoral lists of all political parties in the European Parliament.
- Require member states to ensure gender balance when proposing candidates for EU leadership positions.

In partnership with the Green Party, the Women's Equality Party tabled an amendment to the EU Withdrawal Bill to prevent so-called Henry VIII powers being given to government to roll back our hard-won rights. Our amendment received the most cross-party support and sent a clear message to government that we will not accept any regression in the respect for, protection and fulfilment of women's rights.

### What are Henry VIII powers?

The government added lots of Henry VIII powers into the EU Withdrawal Bill, to enable them to correct anything they consider to be "deficiencies" in existing laws after Brexit without consultation or parliamentary scrutiny. This could have a huge impact on the UK and means the government can sign away important employment and equalities laws without having to go through Parliament. WE will not let this happen.

# FREE MOVEMENT OF SERVICES

The Brexit debate has from the very beginning been framed in terms of the concerns of the men who have dominated it: jobs, business and trade. Little has been said about vital issues such as health, education and social care that matter to everyone — including to the half of the population seldom heard during the debate. The old parties have focused on protecting the free movement of goods produced by manufacturing (a far smaller sector of our economy), rather than people or services.

- **Remain:** WE are committed to staying in the flourishing single market.
- **Advance:** WE will push for greater integration of services within the EU.
- **If you vote for the Women's Equality Party:** WE will create a Care Workers' Passport to deliver the best health and social care services across Europe and a workforce that is valued for this vital work.

## What is the services sector?

The services sector is the first pillar of our economy. It produces services based on knowledge and advice — such as nursing, teaching, culture and finance. The services sector is responsible for the largest proportion of our economy's business activity. It accounts for 80 percent of our national output, an even bigger proportion of jobs, and almost half our exports.

## Why does this matter to women and to all of us?

The service sector employs more women than men and also provides services that enable women to work — any changes to it would affect women's ability to earn a living. Without co-operation between countries on qualifications and regulations, protections for both workers and consumers will decline. Leaving the single market, where 40 percent of Britain's services exports are sold, would reduce the UK — EU services trade by 61 percent in the long term — or more than a quarter of the total UK services trade. The result would be continuing austerity and a reduction in the services and benefits that women disproportionately rely on. We cannot let this happen.

## What will a Women's Equality Party MEP do?

WE are campaigning for the UK to remain a member of the European Union and the single market. We want an integrated market where workers are qualified to the highest standards and are able to work in every European country; and consumers and workers alike are protected by shared rights.

## What will this mean for health and social care?

WE will make health and social care an **investment** rather than an expense to be cut, so that we can all live healthier lives and age with dignity.

Health and social care make up a significant portion of the UK services sector, and demands on these services are increasing in line with Europe's ageing population. However, the spectre of Brexit caused an immediate haemorrhage of EU nationals from these services, and the NHS is in crisis. Across NHS trusts and adult social care there is now a shortage of more than 200,000 staff, or one in 10 posts. The number of nurses and midwives leaving has doubled and the number joining has fallen by a shocking 91 percent. A planned NHS recruitment drive recognises the impossibility of filling the posts from within the UK and is likely to seek to enlist nursing staff from countries outside the EU, including some that can ill afford their loss. Even so, this drive is not expected to come close to resolving the shortfall in the UK. The government has suggested that women will simply have to pick up this work in an unpaid capacity — further driving women into poverty.

WE will not let this happen. Freedom of movement and mutual recognition of professional qualifications are key to tackling these vacancies and ensuring every European citizen, especially the most disadvantaged, can count on high quality health and social services.

WE will build a carers workforce for Europe that is fit for the 21st century:

- Ensuring the settled status scheme is honoured in the event of a no-deal Brexit.

- Implementing a funded strategy to grow the domestic workforce, including: higher starting salaries and opportunities for progression, cost-of-living grants, access to continuous learning, reintroduction of nursing and midwifery bursaries, working towards the abolition of zero hours contracts.
- Doing away with the patchwork of accreditation schemes across Europe and creating EU training and assessment centres in every member state, that offer the highest standards of teaching and accreditation in a wide range of languages.
- Creating a centralised European Register for nurses, midwives and social care workers and abolishing registration fees.
- Working with the Nursing and Midwifery Council to validate training schemes and course providers across Europe, similar to the role RIBA plays in architecture.
- Giving EEA nurses, midwives, and social care workers automatic recognition for their qualifications, including those who trained outside the EEA but are nationals of EEA member states.
- Giving nurses, midwives and social care workers who have worked in any EEA country for a period of three – not five – years the right to permanent residence.
- Removing all public fund restrictions for employed nurses, midwives, social care workers and their families.





# A FEMINIST FOREIGN POLICY

The European Union is founded on the recognition that peace can only be secured by working together with partners to promote international co-operation, democracy, the rule of law and human rights. Soft power — a commitment to negotiation, the exercise of diplomacy and leading by example — has underpinned those aims.

The global political landscape has altered significantly since the EU was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize seven years ago. Partners with whom we shared common values including the preservation of the rule of law, the protection of human rights and the protection of the environment, are now moving in a different direction. They are building walls, not bridges. The EU is striving to build up its collective military power. The UK should not break away from its closest neighbours, but work with other European feminist parties towards the EU adoption of a truly feminist foreign policy agenda, committed to peace and equality for all.

- **Remain:** WE are committed to the peace project which the EU has at its heart. WE believe in a forward- and outward-looking internationalism, tackling global inequalities and working collaboratively to take action on humanitarian crises, conflict resolution and development.
- **Advance:** WE will push for EU foreign policy to move away from militarism and to establish equality along with peace and security as Europe's primary foreign policy goals, because inequality is the root of most conflict and without peace and security there is no prosperity for anyone.
- **If you vote for the Women's Equality Party:** WE will ensure that full consideration is given to the impact of EU foreign policy on women as well as making gender equality a fundamental guiding principle of our external relations.

Defence is an essential part of national and European strategy, and military interventions are sometimes necessary and justified under international law. However, military might is no alternative to the painstaking work of preventing and resolving conflict and the armed forces all too often find themselves tasked with the impossible

job of nation-building where politics and diplomacy have failed. Impulsive macho leadership that invokes nationalism and boasts of military power not as a last resort, but as a stand-alone solution, is rising across the world and within EU member states. It is more urgent than ever that the UK provides a counterpoint. At the heart of this is conflict prevention — the diplomatic conversations between states that resolve issues of disagreement without ever involving the military.

## What will a Women's Equality Party MEP do?

Nationally, the Women's Equality Party is calling for the UK government to create a Department for Peace and Freedom, to promote women's equality internationally and to move towards a system that rejects militarism and rebalances public spending priorities. Conflict prevention requires the involvement of women, and conflict resolution is much more likely to be successful if women have a voice in the negotiations. Current defence spending manages simultaneously to waste money on projects that ignore the changing nature of external threats and to undervalue military personnel, many of whom are also left without adequate support to deal with ongoing health and mental health issues arising from their service. WE will prioritise funding for diplomacy and conflict prevention and, where necessary, conflict resolution.

WE will also work to embed gender-aware approaches to conflict in legislatures and frontline organisations to ensure the highest level of protection for women and girls. This includes addressing gaps in representation and the gender pay gaps in those legislatures and organisations, including in the armed forces. This is essential because violence against women and girls increases during all crises, but particularly during conflicts. Sometimes even the people explicitly tasked with supporting women and girls — including aid workers and peacekeepers — use their power not to protect but to abuse. This is not inevitable but can and must change.





# FAIR AND COMPASSIONATE IMMIGRATION POLICIES

Immigrants are net contributors to the British economy, but across Europe immigration has been weaponised to divert attention from governments' failures to address falling living standards and rising inequalities. All immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers must be treated with respect and compassion, not suspicion. Rules governing economic immigration are almost always based on income and assets thresholds, and judgement about skilled occupations, all of which combine to discriminate against women — across the EU women earn on average 16.2 percent less than men and in some countries the gap is more than 20 percent. Freedom of movement across the EU has removed many of these barriers for women, and European immigrants have contributed enormously to our economy and to our vital social infrastructure.

- **Remain:** WE believe in freedom of movement, value the contributions of EU citizens to the UK, and cherish the rights of women from the UK to travel across borders to work and live in EEA countries.
- **Advance:** WE will ensure that the contributions women make through unpaid care of children and relatives are acknowledged and valued, and WE will push for more compassionate immigration policies for non-EEA countries.
- **If you vote for the Women's Equality Party:** WE will never allow gaps in women's formal employment to undertake unpaid care risk their immigration status as workers. WE will push for harmonised immigration policies that incentivise immigration for health and social care, and WE will end the use of detention centres for asylum seekers and undocumented migrants.

## Why is freedom of movement gendered?

The European Economic Area (EEA) extends the single market to some countries outside the EU. Freedom of movement across the EEA has enabled women to move for work as freely between member countries as men, to the benefit not just of those women but of the UK. EU migrants have contributed enormously to our

economy and to our vital social infrastructure. In England, 16 percent of registered nurses in social care are EEA nationals.

Nowhere in the world is the unpaid care work undertaken by women recognised and accounted for as what it is: a hugely significant contribution to every economy. Freedom of movement allows for EEA citizens to move freely, as long as they meet criteria deemed not to burden their destination country: as workers, students, with dependency on partners, or with proof of self-sufficiency. Women are far more likely than men to migrate for family reunification and are more likely to stop working for periods in order to care for children and relatives. This can impact their status and access to financial support if their relationship ends.

The development of EU-wide immigration policies for workers from non-EEA countries has been piecemeal and focused on attracting “highly skilled” workers using a harmonised income threshold and qualification criteria. Just as in the UK, such a system discriminates against women and ignores the huge demographic challenges facing the countries of the EU. Europe has an ageing population and falling birth rates. Across the EU, around one-fifth of people are aged 65 and older, while the working age population is shrinking, reducing the tax revenues available to fund increasing needs for health and social care.

Global instability has caused unprecedented migration of people to the EU, culminating in the crisis of 2015 that was later seized upon during the Brexit referendum to manipulate people's fears, as living standards in the UK and across the EU were falling. Women make up around half of the global refugee population but only accounted for 37 percent of EU asylum applications in 2018. One in five refugee women are estimated to have experienced sexual violence, and the UN estimates that 60 percent of preventable maternal deaths occur in humanitarian crises.

### **What will a Women's Equality Party MEP do?**

WE will work with the EU to ensure women who have moved within the EEA never lose their status of workers or their access to social security as a result of taking time out of employment to care for children or relatives.

WE value care workers as you can clearly see from our policies for a 21st-century carers workforce. WE will encourage migration between nations of the EU to support the needs of older people, while at the same time ensuring minimum living standards for care workers and professional standards that recognise and develop an EU-wide workforce.

WE will also work with the EU to develop a harmonised policy for workers from non-EEA countries that recognises the need for a larger working-age population including a professionalised workforce that includes nurses, care workers and child care professionals.

WE will push for full implementation of the Istanbul Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence across the EU and introduce measures to enforce it, to protect the rights of all migrant workers and members of their families.

WE will restore the rights of migrant domestic workers in the UK to the pre-2012 system before they were tied to their employer in six month non-renewable visas. Three-quarters of domestic migrant workers in the UK are women, and tying their immigration status to their employer puts them at risk of trafficking and abuse.

WE will reduce the burden of proof on gender discrimination in immigration centres, which many women are too scared to bring up in their first interview with authorities, and will ensure that all women receive support services as part of EU asylum procedures.

WE will end the detention of asylum seekers and undocumented migrants across the EU; it is inhumane, ineffective and expensive. WE will work with EU states to agree alternatives to detention based on existing models.

WE will make sure the UK plays a greater role in the refugee crisis and welcomes more asylum seekers. WE will work with the EU to complete the reform of a Common European Asylum System.

WE will ensure that if Brexit goes ahead, EU citizens currently living in the UK will not lose any of their current rights, including in the case of a no deal Brexit. WE will secure existing rights through primary legislation so they cannot be altered without parliamentary scrutiny.

WE will push for any post-Brexit UK immigration policies to take account of gender and the different positions men and women occupy in the economy and society. WE reject income and skills thresholds which always disadvantage women.



# WOMEN AT THE HEART OF AVOIDING A CLIMATE CATASTROPHE

There is a global climate emergency and neither the UK's nor the EU's current targets are sufficient to keep global warming to the levels needed to avoid irreversible catastrophe. Global warming is not delineated by national borders, but the impacts of global warming are felt very differently between nations and between people within nations. Two-thirds of the world's poorest adults are women. Those living in the 'global south' have contributed the least to greenhouse emissions but are already experiencing the worst effects of the relentless pursuit of economic growth without regard for its impact on the planet or its inhabitants.

- **Remain:** Climate change is a global challenge that requires multilateral solutions and nation states to hold each other to account for setting and meeting emissions targets.
- **Advance:** WE will work with partners to put the people most impacted by climate change at the heart of the EU strategy to stop a climate catastrophe.
- **If you vote for the Women's Equality Party:** WE will work with women on the front line of communities most affected by climate change to advise the EU on targets, funding and actions to stop global warming rising above 1.5°C and to mitigate the worst effects of the damage already done.

## The current situation

The United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has warned that human activities have warmed the surface of the planet by around 1.0°C since pre-industrial levels (estimated range between 0.08°C and 1.2°C).

In 2018 the panel provided a special report as set out by the Paris Agreement on climate change. The panel reported that global warming is likely to reach 1.5°C between 2030 and 2052 if it continues at the current rate. They warned last year that we have around 12 years to keep levels to a maximum of 1.5°C, beyond which the

risks of drought, floods, extreme heat and poverty for hundreds of millions of people will increase significantly.

The Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services recently reported that human activity is killing animal and plant species in greater numbers than ever before, with a million species now threatened with extinction. Urgent changes are needed, at an unprecedented scale and speed.

Women are twice as likely as men to be among the poorest of any population and are as a result most affected by climate-related disasters. Women comprise 80 percent of people displaced by climate disasters and are often the first to face the impacts of climate change. In 25 sub-Saharan countries, 71 percent of the water collectors are women and girls who every day spend an estimated 16 million hours fetching water, compared to six million hours spent by men. The worse the drought, the longer the walk and the greater the vulnerability of those women and girls.

It has been estimated that by 2050 one in seven people in Bangladesh will be displaced by climate change. It's predicted that rising sea levels alone will force up to 18 million people to move. Displacement and disasters also put women at greater risk of male violence and trafficking: after two tropical cyclones hit Tafe Province in Vanuatu in 2011, a women's counselling centre reported an increase in new domestic violence cases of 300 percent. An anti-trafficking charity in India has said the number of women being trafficked from Bangladesh to Mumbai brothels is increasing.

## UK/EU strategy

In response to challenges from Extinction Rebellion and to the brilliant climate activist Greta Thunberg, the UK government has defended its record rather than acknowledge the urgency of the situation. The UK still has the biggest fossil fuel subsidies in the EU: €12bn a year compared to €8.3bn spent on renewable energy.

The EU recently reaffirmed its commitment to the Paris Agreement and resolved to accelerate climate action on all fronts. But member states are required to revise their 2030 targets by 2020 and the head of the UN Environment Programme has said the EU is set to fall short of its 2030 target and needs to be more ambitious to stay within the 1.5°C limit.

#### **What will a Women's Equality Party MEP do?**

Irreversible effects of global warming are already causing humanitarian crises and disasters in Europe. In line with our foreign policies, WE will make sure that development funding reaches those communities to mitigate the impacts as far as possible and invests in the women leading affected communities.

WE will urgently work with European Green MEPs and climate change scientists on the actions needed to achieve zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2030.

WE will work with groups like Climate Wise Women to make sure that women who understand, are affected by and lead frontline changes in their communities are at the centre of EU decision-making about climate change targets, funding and actions.

Through these networks, WE will work to create an advisory panel for the EU Parliament and Commission that has a statutory role and reports separately to the Parliament and to the public.



# A NEW SOCIAL DEAL

The European project has lost its way. For decades the EU has argued that economic growth is the cornerstone of the fight against poverty, social exclusion and inequality, when growth that primarily benefits only a small number of individuals and organisations has in fact been a driver of inequality. At the same time, the distance between citizens and the EU's political institutions has widened and populism has filled the space. The result is that in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis the European Union did nothing to stop national governments inflicting an austerity agenda on ordinary people. Women and minorities paid the biggest price.

In the UK, as in other EU countries, this was the inevitable outcome of the systemic exclusion of the perspectives and lived experiences of people in these demographics, and of paying little heed to the deep research and hard analysis showing everyone is worse off as a result. Legislation is being drafted and decisions made without any real understanding of the impact on people's lives. The UK's electoral system, designed for stability, instead preserves a failing status quo. Media in the UK and across Europe too often confirm rather than challenge bias, unconscious and otherwise.

The answer is a New Social Deal that addresses the democratic deficit while devising and promoting solutions to wider challenges.

- **Remain:** WE are committed to preserving existing rights and protections, such as equal pay for work of equal value.
- **Advance:** WE will seek to rebalance the economic and social policies of the European Union, so that both spheres can flourish.
- **If you vote for the Women's Equality Party:** WE will create a citizens' assembly for the EU to decide on social policies to be applied across member states, including how to ensure all citizens enjoy the fruits of economic activity, how to harmonise citizen's rights and which quality services to expand.

It is no wonder that many European citizens feel that they have been left behind when the EU can pass laws that are binding on commercial policy, competition rules and monetary policy, but has no such responsibility for

ensuring our welfare. Matters of social security, healthcare, and social care are left to member states — and member states have left them at the bottom of the to-do list. It is time for a New Social Deal.

WE want to radically restructure the European Union to put social policy on a par with economic, monetary and industrial policy. WE want to create an EU in which the market serves our society rather than the other way around. We want to create inclusive growth so that all EU citizens can benefit, and especially the most marginalised.

## What does the EU currently have responsibility for?

The EU has something called “exclusive competence” over a number of areas, which means that member states cannot make their own laws in these areas. This covers competition rules, the customs union, common commercial policy, monetary policy for the Euro countries and a common fishing policy. But when it comes to social policy, the EU merely has to provide arrangements for member states to “co-ordinate” their policies. The result is that living standards can vary hugely from one country to the next and there is no incentive for governments to provide a proper safety net for citizens.

## Why does this matter to women and to everyone?

Just like national governments, the EU is organised along gendered lines. Social policy is of secondary importance and the protections that do exist — though vital — are largely directed at those inside the formal economy to create a level playing field between member states. This gender-blind approach to policy-making ignores the unpaid caring work that women do and the fact that women are therefore more likely to be poorer and to rely on benefits and services, and to retire into poverty. Women have a higher risk of poverty and social exclusion in Europe and almost half of all single parents (the vast majority of whom are women) are at risk, which is double the risk of any other type of household.

With increasing conditions and sanctions on benefits being imposed as well as growing insecurity around paid work, discussions about an unconditional basic income have gained traction. Advocates view it as a universal right to basic subsistence that values and rewards unpaid care, while ensuring that paid work always pays. Others suggest



that it will undermine rather than enhance the bargaining power of low-paid workers, and reinforce inequalities experienced by carers. What is clear is that it is a useful framework for thinking about policy solutions to some of the biggest challenges we face, such as the automation of jobs and how to make our social security systems more effective at preventing and tackling poverty.

Provision of high-quality formal childcare is vital for child development and well-being and an essential step towards women's equality at work and in the home. At the Barcelona Summit in 2002, the European Council set targets for childcare provision in EU member states. These targets have still not been met and provision remains expensive, piecemeal and inadequate in most countries. The impact this has is that women are dropping out of the workplace and men are dropping out of their families. Approximately 3.3 million Europeans aged between 15 and 34 have had to give up full-time work due to the lack of care facilities for children and older relatives. Across the EU more than 40 percent of women, compared to just 2 percent of men, have stopped working to look after their children for at least one month. In some countries, including the UK, the majority of mothers now work part-time. Universal free childcare would create millions of jobs, increase tax revenues and enable parents to make genuine choices about how to balance work and family life.

If Europe is to stand a chance of tackling our common crises, it must forge a new union between reproductive and productive labour. Between society and economy. Between family and work.

### **What will a Women's Equality Party MEP do?**

The Women's Equality Party will campaign for a permanent EU citizens' assembly as part of the EU framework that is directly able to influence social policy. A representative group of randomly selected citizens will be brought together to learn about and deliberate on social issues and then make policy recommendations for adoption by EU member states.

The issues to be deliberated by the citizens' assembly will be agreed by the European Parliament, and Women's Equality MEPs will lobby for the following issues to be considered:

- Unconditional Basic Income
- Truly shared parental leave
- Universal free childcare
- Comprehensive social care
- Fair pensions.

# ENDING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN ACROSS THE EU

Regressive populism across the UK and EU promotes a politics of hatred and division targeting women and minorities. Reproductive rights have already been curtailed in Poland, in Italy and in Austria, while hard right leaders such as Hungary's Viktor Orbán stoke hostility towards minority communities. The majority of people trafficked across Europe are women trafficked for sexual exploitation. WE stand with women across the EU and globally to defend and advance women's rights and to be free from all forms of violence.

- **Remain:** WE recognise that trafficking is a transnational crime that requires close co-operation and a multilateral response. WE stand with women across the EU fighting the rollback of our reproductive rights, and WE believe in the strength of unity of women across the EU.
- **Advance:** WE will assert and enshrine women's right to be free from violence across the EU; define and implement obligatory standards for any countries seeking EU accession; and work with the EU parliament to tackle the violation of women trafficked for sexual exploitation.
- **If you vote for the Women's Equality Party:** WE will ratify the Istanbul Convention, decriminalise abortion and implement a EU-wide sex buyer's law to end demand for trafficking of women and girls for sexual exploitation.

**WE will ratify the Council of Europe's convention on preventing and combating violence against women (the Istanbul Convention) in the UK and in the EU Parliament.**

Across EU countries only around one-third of women who are physically or sexually abused contact the authorities. When they do, it is not systematically recorded and therefore not easily comparable across and between countries. Eurostat is working towards an EU survey on gender-based violence, to be carried out by national statistical institutes.

Based on survey data, across EU countries:

- Nearly one-third of women have experienced one or more acts of physical violence since the age of 15.
- An estimated 45 to 55 percent of women have experienced sexual harassment since the age of 15.
- It is estimated that one in 20 women has been raped since the age of 15.
- 12 percent of women have experienced some form of sexual violence by an adult before the age of 15.
- 43 percent of women have experienced some form of psychological violence by an intimate partner.
- 22 percent of women have experienced physical and/or sexual violence by a partner since the age of 15.
- One in 10 women in the EU has experienced cyber harassment since the age of 15.
- At least 500,000 women living in the EU have been subjected to FGM.

The Istanbul Convention sets minimum standards for governments to meet when tackling violence against women. When a government ratifies the Convention, they are legally bound to follow it, taking necessary steps set out to prevent violence, protect women and prosecute perpetrators and ensure that there is sufficient monitoring of violence against women. Ratification of the Istanbul Convention will mean that women and girls are guaranteed the right to live free from violence and the fear of violence.

The Istanbul Convention also contains specific measures for migrant and asylum-seeking women, preventing discrimination against migrant women and recognising their particular vulnerability to gender-based violence. The UK has signed the convention but has not yet ratified it. There have also been challenges to its full implementation by the EU Parliament.

The EU has provided crucial funding for specialist services to support and advocate for survivors of gender-based violence in a period where austerity has gutted many

services, particularly specialist services. Funding for organisations and projects with equality-focused aims from the two main EU sources amounted to £4.15 billion in England, and £1.4 billion in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland between 2014 and 2020.

In the event of Brexit, the UK government must replace EU funding and put specialist women's services on a sustainable footing, providing long-term grant funding to meet need.

**WE will decriminalise abortion in the EU and make reproductive rights a condition of accession to the EU.**

With women's reproductive rights under threat across Europe, and women in Northern Ireland still without access to legal terminations under almost any circumstances, women's human rights are compromised daily. WE will decriminalise abortion in all circumstances other than where coerced or forced, and ensure women can access safe and free terminations.

**WE will ensure a unified standard of relationships and sex education is taught to children and young people with no opt outs.**

Wherever children grow up, they are likely to be bombarded from birth by gender stereotypes, cultural messages that normalise the sexualisation and objectification of women, homophobia and transphobia. Negotiating healthy and respectful relationships while navigating a world riven with inequality is fraught with difficulty. WE will make sure that all children are taught relationships and sex education that is LGBT-inclusive and that dismantles gendered expectations.

**Sex buyers law across the EU states**

Human trafficking is rising across the globe and it is a gendered and racialised phenomenon. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime reported earlier this year that it has been on a steady increase since 2010. Almost three-quarters of people trafficked globally are female, and it is mostly for purposes of sexual exploitation. Women also make up around one-third of people trafficked for forced labour.

In 2015 – 16, 44 percent of trafficking victims registered in EU countries were EU citizens trafficked within or across EU borders, and 56 percent were non-EU citizens. Outside the EU in the same period, Nigeria was the most common country victims were trafficked from and three-quarters were trafficked for the purposes of sexual exploitation. Twenty-five percent of all victims from Nigeria were registered in the UK. Ninety-five percent of people trafficked for sexual exploitation were female, and 23 percent were children. Seventy percent of traffickers were men and, in the UK, 90 percent of sex buyers are men.

WE will continue to work with the EU to identify and prosecute traffickers and organised crime networks and retain membership of Europol and Eurojust if the UK leaves the EU.

WE will ensure victims of trafficking are granted asylum and offered support, enshrining their rights in UK law.

WE will work with the EU to introduce an EU sex buyer's law, to criminalise the buying of sex but decriminalise the selling of sex across EU nations. This will tackle demand for sexual exploitation and make it easier for law enforcement agencies to work together across the bloc.

WE will ensure that national legislation on trafficking is in line with the internationally agreed definition, and work with experts to develop a UK-wide anti-trafficking strategy.



# USING DATA AND DATA-DRIVEN TECHNOLOGIES TO ADVANCE EQUALITY

The interplay between analogue laws and evolving digital technologies poses a clear threat to European democracies. The UK's National Crime Agency is investigating whether crimes were committed during the June 2016 referendum. There are also concerns around the extensive microtargeting of voters during the run-up to the vote that meant individuals were shown political messages tailored to their inferred political leanings and psychological profiles. New and evolving technologies are affecting many other areas of life too. Some of them, such as machine learning and artificial intelligence or AI, also risk reflecting, and therefore reinforcing, inequalities. Economic models are being turned on their heads as national governments struggle to comprehend profound changes that respect no borders.

WE believe these challenges can only be resolved through multilateral co-operation. WE also recognise the potential of such technologies for illuminating the scale and nature of the inequalities experienced by women and minorities — and delineating those inequalities is a first step to transforming our world for the better. WE will work to unlock the enormous positive potential of data-driven technologies.

- **Remain:** WE are better able to address the challenges and realise the opportunities of data-driven technology as a member of the EU, working with other member countries and the multiple stakeholders concerned.
- **Advance:** WE will harness responsible technology to speed progress to equality.

- **If you vote for the Women's Equality Party:** WE will work to boost data literacy across the EU, invest in initiatives that use data and AI for good, establish an EU-wide gender statistics audit, examine the gendered impacts of automation and promote a STEAM approach to education — understanding that technologists benefit from a grounding in humanities and humanity as well as science — that gives all children an equal chance to realise their potential and build our future.

## The importance of diversity and the promise of technology

Many of the pioneers of the digital future saw an opportunity not only to do the same things better and more efficiently but to transform the world. It is an ambition WE share, while noting that the optimism that, for example, assumed the World Wide Web would be a route to female emancipation failed to take into account either the capacity of technology to be put to uses other than those its creators had in mind or the pervasive misogyny and sexism that quickly turned corners of the internet into no-go areas for women.

In retrospect this was inevitable, not least because the technology industry has been dominated by too narrow a demographic who failed to foresee that their inventions could reinforce prejudice and discrimination. The idea that machines are more impartial than humans holds only when those machines are fed unbiased data that is interpreted by unbiased algorithms.

A similarly narrow worldview overlooked the impact of social media and data-driven technology on the democratic process. Social media connects us globally but also enables us to build filter bubbles that strengthen rather than interrogating our beliefs. Microtargeting is legal provided its funding is legitimate according to electoral law, but its impact is clearly polarising because voters make decisions based on entirely different sets of

information — and misinformation. The capacity to collect and analyse data is also expensive, further disadvantaging smaller parties in a system designed to exclude them.

This matters for many reasons, not least because the lack of diversity in technology is echoed in the legislatures and bodies that draft and enforce the laws that regulate it. This means those legislatures and bodies are more likely to miss or dismiss as unimportant the ways in which technologies are affecting different segments of the population differently — yet these differences are profound. Automation has already seen human workforces dwindle and a recent report from the UK's Office of National Statistics estimates that 1.5 million British jobs are at high risk. More than 70 percent of the jobs identified as endangered are held by women.

One response to the shortage of women in technology has been a push to encourage girls to study STEM subjects — science, technology, engineering and mathematics. The changing demands of the workforce are putting a priority on these subjects for boys too. While these subjects are vital and the unconscious bias that channels girls into “softer” academic disciplines and boys away from them damages all children, the potential for data-driven technology for good can only be realised through a STEAM approach (the A stands for “art”) that also recognises the need for technology to be designed with reference to and understanding of its wider-world impacts — and people. Social scientists, ethicists and anthropologists are just as necessary to the tech future as engineers. It is also hugely important to address and resolve the lack of diversity in tech. Every under-represented group, including the BAME workforce and people with disabilities, signals perspectives that are desperately lacking.

WE are determined to change this because data-driven technologies also hold the keys to speeding up and enabling progress. Without social media platforms, movements and parties — from Black Lives Matter to the Women's Equality Party — would not exist. The advent of gender pay gap reporting in the UK has at least moved the argument from whether the gap exists to how to solve it. #MeToo has shed light on the prevalence of sexual violence, abuse, harassment and everyday sexism that disfigures the lives of women and girls.

### **What will a Women's Equality Party MEP do?**

WE will work to unlock the enormous positive potential of data-driven technologies by creating and advancing the following EU-wide initiatives:

- A statistics-for-women audit that redresses the omission from GDP calculations of unpaid labour, largely done by women, and thereby establishes the real value of care.
- An EU-wide research project to look into the gendered impacts of automation.
- A gender AI watchdog to arbitrate if any AI or algorithm is designed in a way that discriminates against women.
- A start-up fund to pump-prime AI and data-for-good projects around core areas such as gender equality and climate change.
- A scheme to strengthen data literacy in non-profits in every EU country by partnering data scientists and statisticians with those organisations.
- A programme that not only tackles the damaging gender-streaming in schools that deters girls from studying STEM subjects, but promotes a vital STEAM approach and teaches data literacy to enable all children to safely navigate the online world and to build a better future. If we want a future that works for everyone, girls must be fully involved in building that future.

# WE ARE STANDING FOR EU

Ahead of the June 2016 Referendum, the Women's Equality Party articulated the significant dangers to women and minorities posed by Brexit through the inevitable economic turbulence that would follow. WE also warned of the risk that equality laws instituted by Europe might be watered down in a post-Brexit UK. These include a clause in the Treaty of Rome asserting the right to equal pay that has come to be interpreted as a wider right to equality; the Equal Pay Directive, which expanded the UK's own equal pay laws; and the EU-wide right to maternity leave.

We were also clear that Europe needed to do much better. These key pieces of legislation were driven not by a commitment to equality or an understanding of the economic and social benefits of equality but by a concern to level differences between labour markets in the EU. There is no such determination to ensure all women in the EU enjoy full human rights.

Our leadership vigorously and vocally campaigned to remain in the EU to do the transformative work that is our reason for existence — to Advance. Still only months old, the party had not yet held its first party conference to agree an institutional position and did not seek to impose a voting line on members. WE also highlighted the glaring absence of women and diverse voices in the official Remain and Leave campaigns and in media coverage. This exclusion, mirrored in parliament and continuing in the media, together with evidence of misinformation and manipulation in the process, has confirmed our party's formal backing for a People's Vote, not as a "second referendum" but as the first that would include the whole population and be based not on half-baked fictions and outright lies, but on facts.

Those facts about the damage any form of Brexit would wreak are clear, though rarely communicated clearly in the media or by the two largest UK parties, which both focused on internal politics at the expense of the national interest. It was left to the Women's Equality Party, working together with the Greens, to raise the alarm about the government's intention to use so-called Henry VIII powers to "repatriate" equality laws from Europe in UK law without democratic oversight from parliament, meaning that the laws could be weakened in the process. It is the

smaller parties that are making the unequivocal argument for halting the crazy rush to national disaster.

The Women's Equality Party recognises the damage to public faith in democracy that a reversal of the Brexit decision is likely to entail. However, that faith is already damaged, and with reason, by a number of factors that must urgently be addressed. These include a first-past-the-post electoral system that is acknowledged to exclude women and minorities as the price of supposed stability and no longer even delivers stability; and the vulnerability of that system as analogue laws fail to keep pace with digital innovation. The way to restore faith in democracy is to make democracy work.

The Women's Equality Party has not only advocated for a fundamental change in how politics is done, but is modelling that change. WE open our membership to members of other parties and are exploring joint candidacies. WE joined the Progressive Alliance and are working closely with progressive and feminist parties in Europe and beyond, understanding that the great opportunities and profound challenges of this time require collective and collaborative approaches.

WE are running in the European elections to put forward our unique and valuable perspectives and transformative policy platform. WE are running in the London region alone in order to make space for other small pro-EU parties. Our voices are needed in the European Parliament, now more than ever. Your votes, not just to Remain but to Advance, are needed more than ever.





**VOTE WE TO BREAK BARRIERS, NOT BUILD THEM.**  
**VOTE WE TO LIFT WOMEN, SO THAT ALL ARE LIFTED.**  
**VOTE WE, BECAUSE EQUALITY IS BETTER FOR EVERYONE.**



# MEET THE CANDIDATES



**CATHERINE MAYER**



**BEA GARE**



**HANNAH BARHAM-BROWN**



**ALISON MARSHALL**





**NANCI HOGAN**



**ALIYAH DUNBAR-HUSSAIN**



**OLIVIA VINCENTI**



**LEYLA MOHAN**

