



EUROPEAN WOMEN'S  
**LOBBY**  
EUROPEEN DES FEMMES

**LOBBYING KIT FOR THE 2024 EU ELECTIONS**

# EUROPE AT A CROSSROADS

**Equal participation of women at  
all levels: prerequisite for peace,  
prosperity & societal change**

**#FeministEurope #Elections2024**

**Safeguarding & improving women's rights &  
leadership via functioning institutionalised  
mechanisms**

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# FOREWORD

Democracy means the same opportunity for everyone to influence the decisions that affect people in society. **In other words, democracy means equality. It means equal opportunities for participation and equal rights in all spheres of society. A pivotal condition for democracy is equal participation of women and men in politics!**

The EU as a community of like-minded states is based on certain fundamental values such as democracy and rule of law, which the Union aspires to promote. Despite the fact that the EU achieved a lot in equality between women and men during the last decades, **there are still many challenges ahead.**

The **myth of “equality being already there”** in Europe, prevents equality between women and men from becoming a standalone goal for the EU, resulting in weak institutional mechanisms promoting diversity and equality but lacking the specific approach required to tackle gender inequalities and advancing women's rights.

The last ten years saw significant improvements for women's rights, yet progress for equality have been hampered, and sometimes even significantly threatened and revoked because of:

-  **A lack of commitment** from some **EU Member States** to the **EU binding goal of equality between women and men.**
-  **A lack of political will at national level** to properly implement and monitor EU policies, a lack of systematic gender mainstreaming in all areas, and a lack of strong architecture for equality between women and men.
-  **COVID** and its aftermath, the **climate of austerity** reinforces the idea that women's rights are “the icing on the cake”.
-  **Financial cuts** that are threatening the very existence of women's organisations and other anti-discrimination organisations.
-  **Attacks of ultra-conservative, anti-feminist and extreme religious groups**, who systematically call gender equality into question and use religion, tradition or culture to legitimate violations of women's rights.
-  **Recent national elections** which brought to power more populist, sexist and anti-feminist decision-makers, directly threatening policies for women's rights & minorities. We must make sure that this does not happen in the forthcoming **2024 European elections.**
-  **Governments' increased controls on NGOs and citizens**, or ‘re-registering’ NGOs, as an excuse to control, reducing funding or creating competition amongst NGOs. We also witness growing attacks on female human rights defenders / activists.
-  **The neoliberal system and the consumer society which negatively impact women's and girls' empowerment**, by commodifying their body, sexuality and perpetuating gender stereotypes throughout all spheres of society.
-  **Stereotypes**, which are still prevalent in all spheres of society (toys, education, labour market, the media), impact on women's and girls' health, banalise violence and everyday sexism, and convey restrictive messages and norms about women's role in society.

 *Continues*

**The forthcoming EU elections are a chance for everyone to commit to achieving true democracy. It is a moment where you can make your voice heard**, including by being involved in the campaigning and voting in the 2024 EU elections.

It is an opportunity to make our Europe a place where women and girls in all their diversity enjoy equal rights and participation in every area and across all levels of society; where women are free from all forms of oppression and exploitation; it is a Europe that benefits the whole European society, not just women.

That is why the European Women's Lobby calls on you to mobilise during the 2024 EU elections and to vote for feminist leaders. Leaders who share the values of democracy and equality!

Through this lobbying kit and its tools we invite EU citizens to join in on our 2024 EU elections campaign. Using these at your own surroundings, in your own country, you can multiply our efforts and help us ensure that women's rights and gender equality are a critical topic of this campaign and put high on the political agenda of the next European mandate.

We count on you! Together, let's fight sexism and put women's rights at the core of European policies to deliver on the European project of peace, democracy, inclusion, equality and solidarity!

Iliana Balabanova  
EWL President

# **EWL'S 2024 EU ELECTIONS MANIFESTO**

**FIND TRANSLATED VERSIONS OF THE EWL'S  
2024 EU ELECTIONS MANIFESTO [HERE](#)**

# ACTIONS TO JOIN

# SIGN OUR PLEDGE

Whether you are a candidate for the EU elections, a voter or a representative of the media you can support EWL's campaign and commit to strive to advance women's rights by signing our pledge. To do so, go [here](#).

The EWL will communicate on its 2024 EU elections' activities throughout the campaign on its different channels, so make sure to keep an eye out and join in:

- Website: <https://www.womenlobby.org/>
- Twitter: [@EuropeanWomen](#)
- Instagram: [@europeanwomenlobby](#)
- Facebook: [EuropeanWomen](#)

## FOLLOW EWL'S ACTIVITIES THROUGH ITS WEBSITE AND SOCIAL MEDIA

# TAKE OVER THE DIGITAL SPACE AND SHARE EWL'S MANIFESTO AND PLEDGE

The EWL wants a Europe where all women and girls enjoy equal rights and participation in every area and across all levels of society and where they are free from all forms of oppression and exploitation. Such a Europe is crucial for the whole of European society and would be highly beneficial because it would:

- Boost employment rate: equal opportunities in STEM education and in the labour market would trigger a growth of EU employment rate by 2.1 to 3.5 percentage points by 2050;<sup>1</sup>
- Create wealth: improved gender equality would lead to an increase of 6.1 to 9.6 percentage points in EU GDP per capita by 2050, which amounts to €1.95 to €3.15 trillion;
- Increase the legitimacy and representativeness of European institutions;
- Contribute to bridging the democratic gap between the EU and its citizens in particular its women and girls;
- Improve the efficiency and responsiveness of EU policies.<sup>2</sup>

Reaching this goal requires making the highest number of people aware and committed to equality between women and men and to do that **your support and mobilisation is critical!** That's why you can help the EWL spread the word by relaying EWL's manifesto and pledge on social media. To do so, check out EWL's social media posts templates and visuals **pages 14-18 of this lobbying kit**.

Ensuring these 2024 EU elections are a stepping stone toward equality between women and men and improve women's rights requires reaching out to the key players and securing their engagement towards this goal. The EWL has drafted **3 template advocacy letters you can use** to contact:

- **Your Head of State or Heads of Government** concerning the renewal of the European Commission's College of Commissioners;
- **Candidates to the EU elections** in your country regarding the inclusion of women's rights and equality in their political programme and priorities;
- **Representatives of the media** on the equal representation of female candidates when reporting on the 2024 EU elections.

You will find these template advocacy letters on **pages 09-11** of this lobbying kit.

## SEND ADVOCACY LETTERS TO KEY PLAYERS

# MODEL ADVOCACY LETTERS



# NOMINATION FOR THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION (TO HEAD OF STATE OR HEADS OF GOVERNMENTS)

*To be sent to Heads of State or Heads of governments of EU Member States (President, Prime Minister, leaders of parties in governmental coalition etc) in view of the nomination of European Commissioners in 2024*



Recipient's Name, Function  
Recipient's address

Address of person/organisation sending the letter

Name

Date

Subject: Equal representation of women and men among the college of European Commissioners

Dear (Title Name/fonction),

I am writing to you in support of the European Women's Lobby (EWL) 2024 EU elections campaign to ensure equal representation and participation of women at all levels. You can find out more on how to do so, in EWL's 2024 EU elections Manifesto, which is attached to my email. Women represent over half of the population; their diverse, meaningful and equal representation in the political, social and economic spheres is essential for European democracy and legitimacy. Moreover, the EU has a legal obligation to deliver on equality between women and men. This should start with the **equal representation of women in the EU executive body**. That is why, **I call on you to nominate both a woman and a man as nominee Commissioners in 2024**, thus enabling the designated European Commission's President to choose their team ensuring an **equal representation of women and men in the final College**.

I am conscious that the final number of women in the new Commission will be the result of many negotiations at different levels, yet I believe that each government individually and the EU Member States collectively, have the responsibility to advance women's and girls' rights in the EU and to their equal representation in policy making.

Under the leadership of its female President, the European Commission saw for the first time, a team of Commissioners that almost reached 50/50 gender parity and was instrumental in championing legislation and initiatives advancing women's rights. By respecting gender equality in the Commissioners nomination, we count on you to make this sustainable.

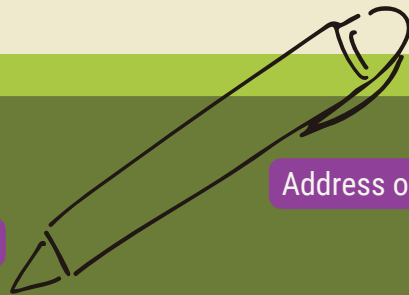
I remain available to exchange and support you through our expertise.

Sincerely,

(Signature)

# INCLUSION OF WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND EQUALITY IN POLITICAL PROGRAMME AND FUTURE POLICY MAKING (TO EU CANDIDATES AT NATIONAL LEVEL)

*To be sent to national candidates to EU elections*



Name

Address of person/organisation sending the letter

Recipient's Name, Function

Recipient's address

Date

Subject: Equal representation of women and men in EU policy- and decision-making

Dear (Title Name/fonction),

I am writing to you in support of the European Women's Lobby (EWL) 2024 EU elections campaign to ensure women's rights and equal representation is placed high on the political agenda of the next European Parliament's term.

Despite the EU's legal obligation to deliver on equality between women and men and gender mainstreaming, women's fundamental rights are yet to materialise in practice and the recent challenges have shown again that crises impact women, girls and women's rights organisations disproportionately. **Putting women's and girls' rights at the core of European policies is mandatory to deliver on the European project of peace, democracy, inclusion, equality and solidarity.**

As a candidate to the EU elections and future EU decision-maker I **call on you to address all women's and girls' real life concerns in your campaign and keep women's rights high on the political agenda once elected!** To support you in doing so the European Women's Lobby has put together some key recommendations in its 2024 EU elections Manifesto, that is attached to my email. I would be happy to exchange further on how to capitalise on the 2024 EU elections and the upcoming legislative term to firmly establish women's rights and equality at the core of the EU.

I would also like to invite you to sign EWL's online pledge to show your commitment to making women's rights advancement a priority once elected.

Including women's concerns and expertise is paramount to operate a socially, economically and environmentally fair EU transition. I am confident that you will champion this goal and take proactive measures towards its achievement.

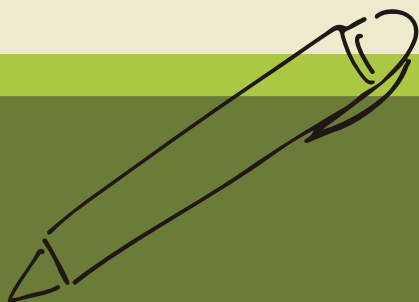
I remain available to exchange and support you through our expertise.

Sincerely,

(Signature)

# ENSURING EQUAL REPRESENTATION OF FEMALE CANDIDATES WHEN REPORTING ON 2024 EU ELECTIONS

*To be sent to EU journalists/media representatives reporting on the EU elections*



Recipient's Name, Function  
Recipient's address

Name  
Address of person/organisation sending the letter

Date

Subject: Equal representation of women and men when reporting on the 2024 EU elections

Dear (Title Name/fonction),

I am writing to you in support of the European Women's Lobby (EWL) 2024 EU elections campaign to ensure women's rights and equal representation is a priority of the 2024 EU elections.

As a member of the European media landscape I believe **you have a crucial role to play in ensuring voters have access to quality information to make an informed choice.**

In our societies, not all candidates have equal access to the democratic fora, nor to platforms like the media to share their political vision and reach the electorate. Not all candidates are portrayed in a fair and accurate manner. Moreover, female politicians and candidates are often targeted by online violence, including hate speech: IPU's 2018 study revealed that 58.6% of female Member of Parliaments respondents had been the target of online sexist attacks.<sup>3</sup> The media do not only relay information or depict society's realities but participate in shaping political, social and cultural norms and beliefs - including reinforcing or (de)constructing gender norms, gender stereotypes and sexism. Hence, it is **critical that the media and journalists portray and convey the voices of women and men in all their diversity.**

That's why I **call on you to provide voters with unbiased, independent, complete information and a comprehensive view of their options, by giving an equal platform to both female and male candidates; to increase coverage of women's rights topics and dismiss once and for all gender stereotypes and the objectification of women!**

I would also like to invite you to sign [EWL's online pledge](#) to show your commitment to making women's rights advancement a priority once elected.

Access to quality information is paramount to truly and freely exercise their freedom of choice and voting right. I am confident that you will champion this goal and take proactive measures towards its achievement.

You can find out more on how to support the EWL 2024 EU elections campaign in the EWL Manifesto, which is attached to my email.

I remain available to exchange and support you through our expertise.

Sincerely,

(Signature)

# **SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGNING**



# HASHTAGS TO USE

**#Elections2024**

**#FeministEurope**

**#WomensRights**

**#GenderMainstreaming**

**#WomenLeadership**

**#EndVAW**

**#EndVAWG**

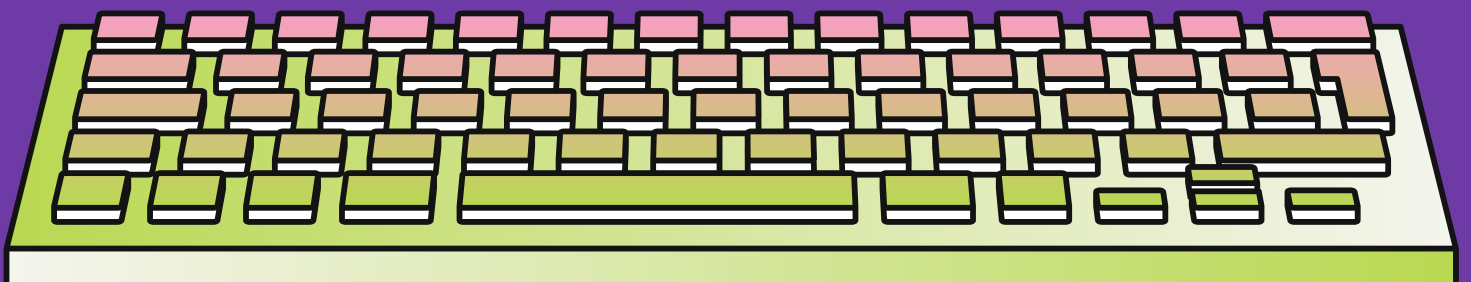
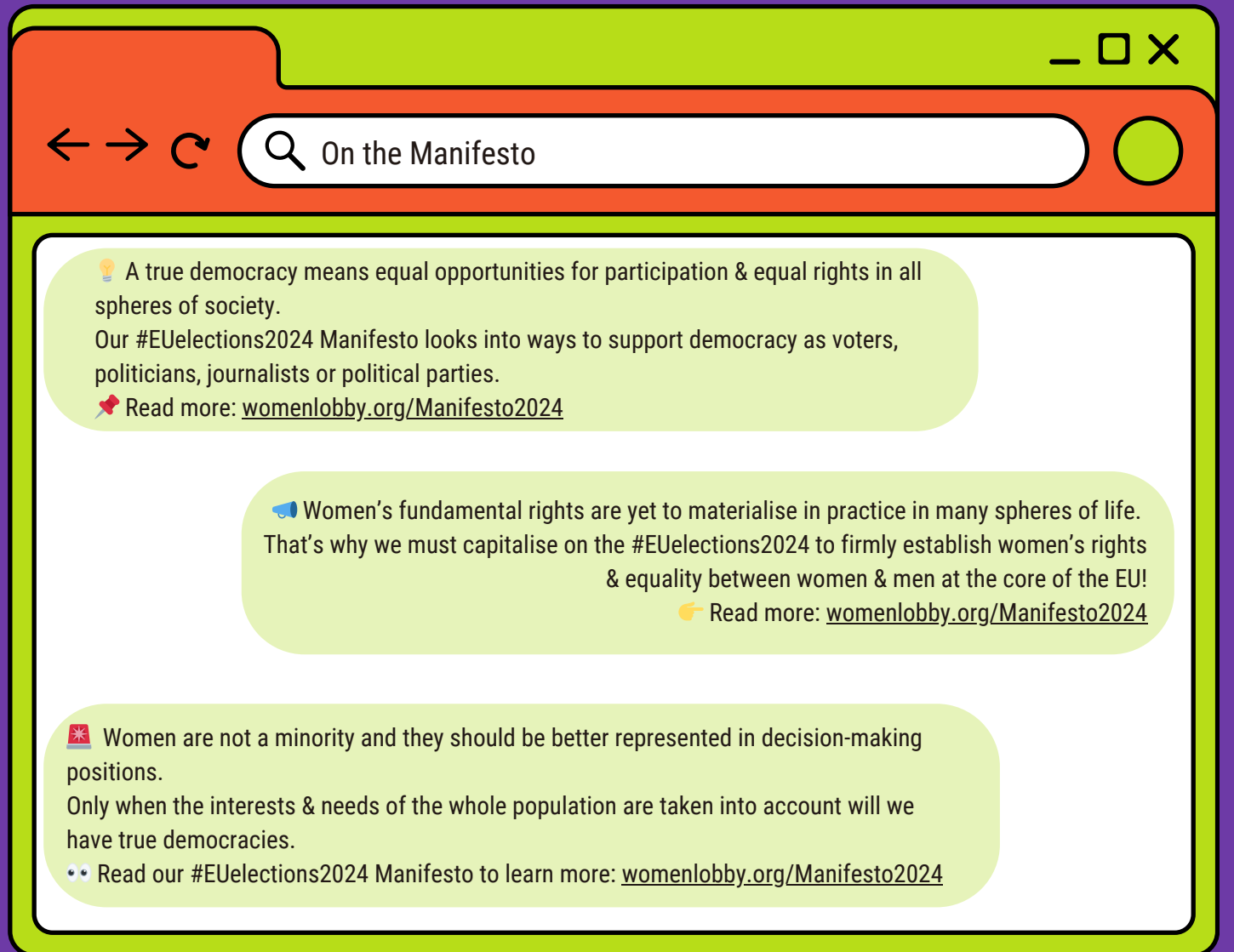
**#EndViolenceAgainstWomen**

**#EndGenderStereotypes**

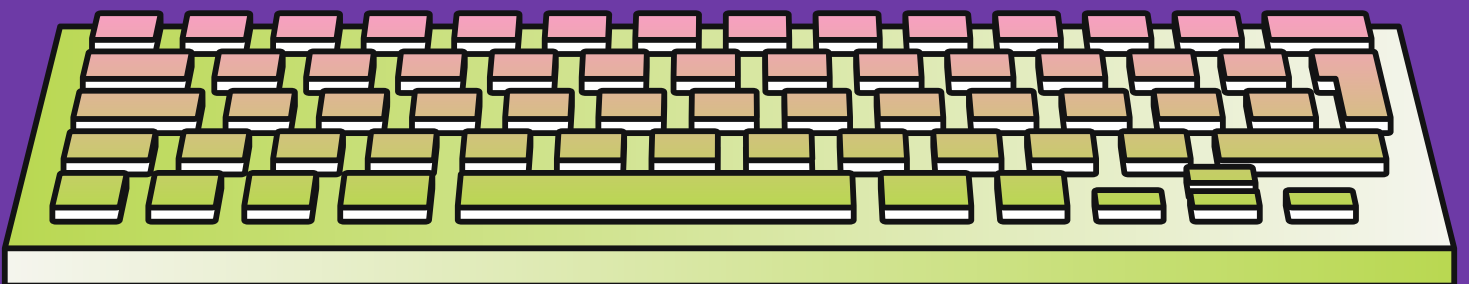
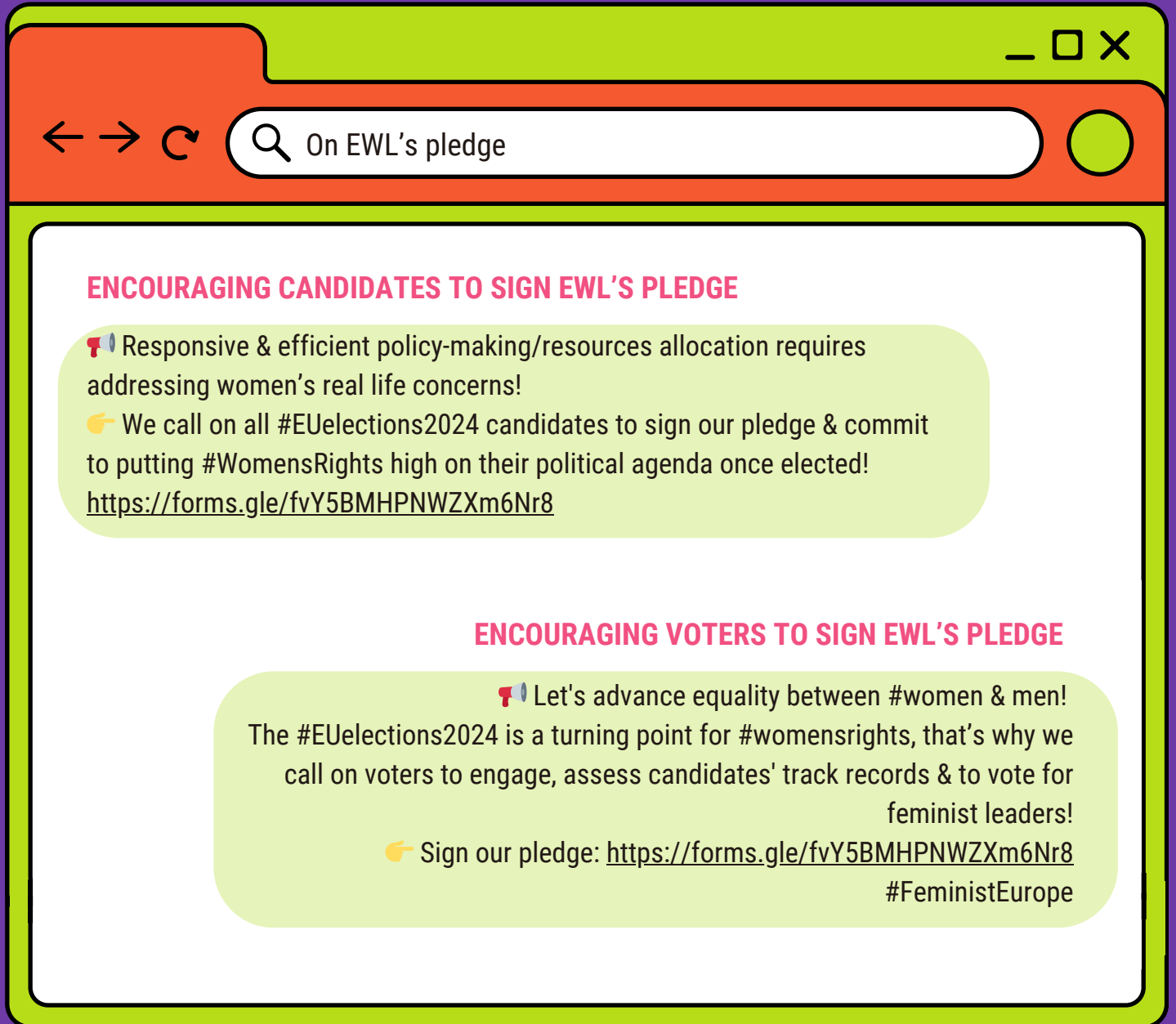
**#Europe5050**

**#EuropeForWomen**

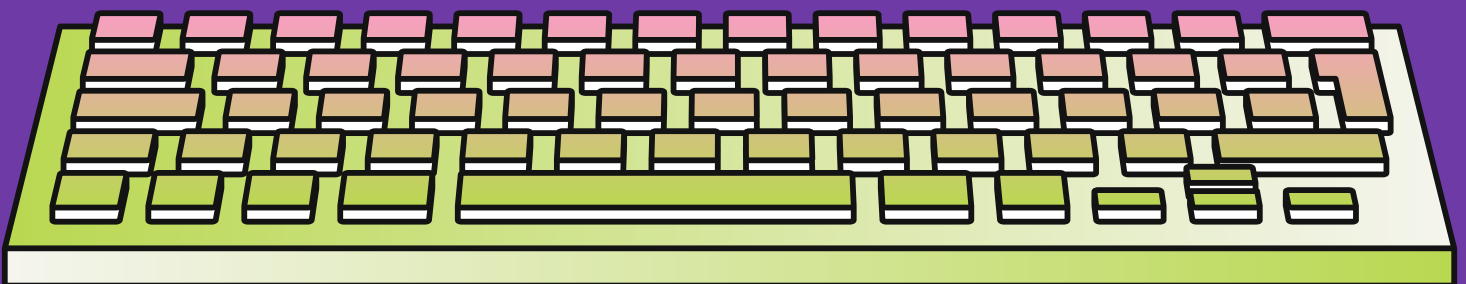
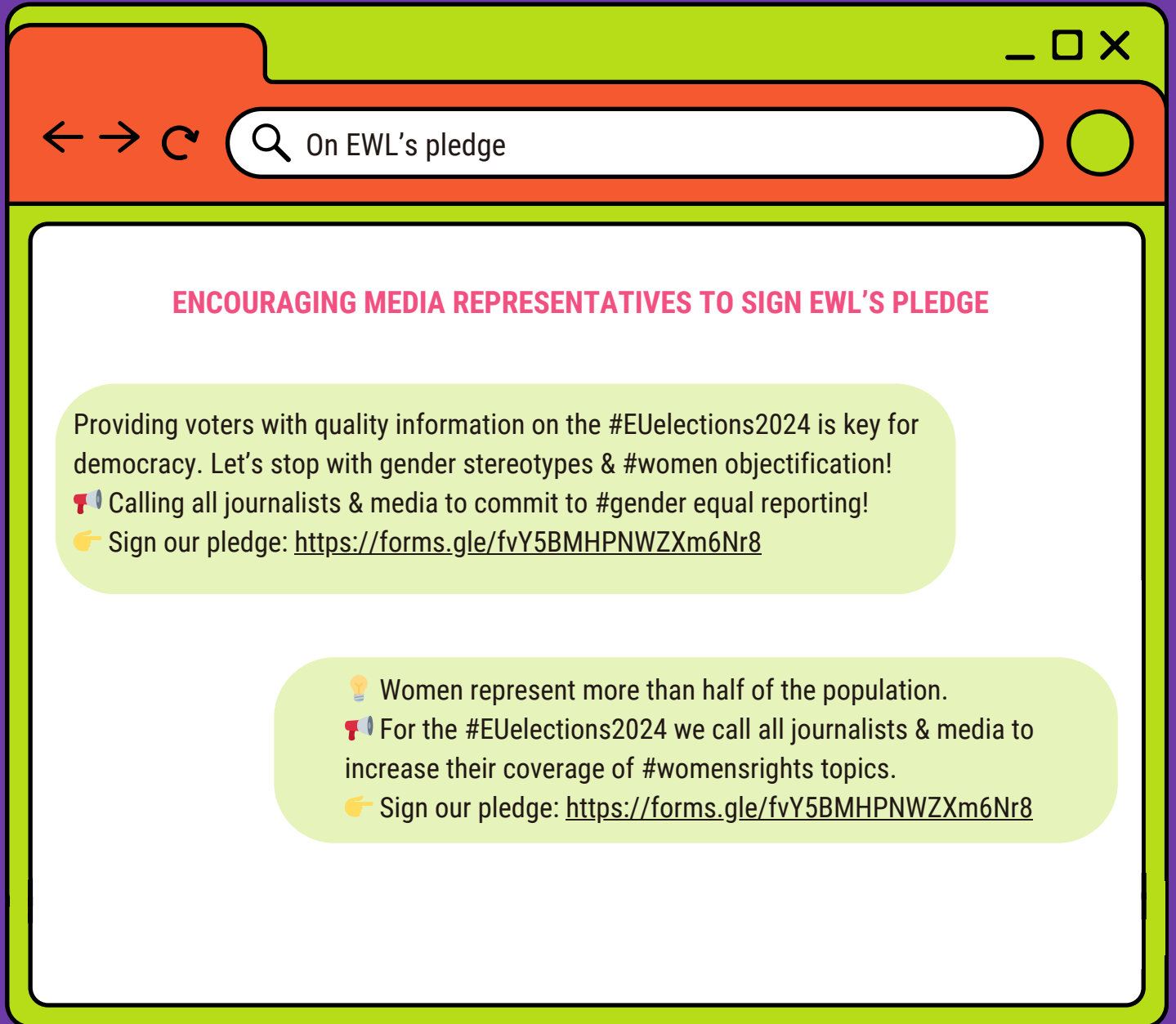
# SUGGESTED SOCIAL MEDIA MESSAGES



# SUGGESTED SOCIAL MEDIA MESSAGES

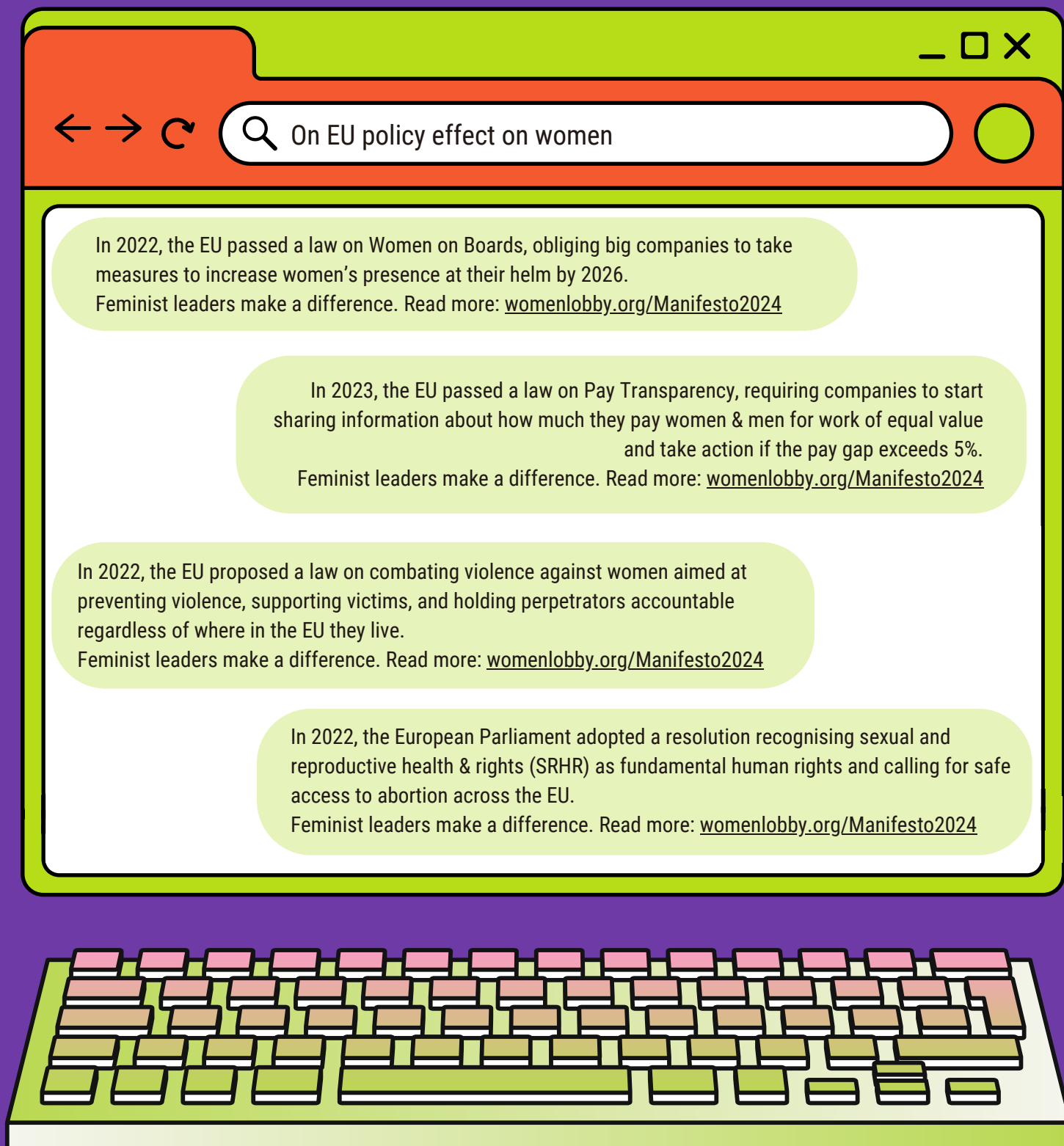


# SUGGESTED SOCIAL MEDIA MESSAGES





# SUGGESTED SOCIAL MEDIA MESSAGES



In 2022, the EU passed a law on Women on Boards, obliging big companies to take measures to increase women's presence at their helm by 2026.

Feminist leaders make a difference. Read more: [womenlobby.org/Manifesto2024](https://womenlobby.org/Manifesto2024)

In 2023, the EU passed a law on Pay Transparency, requiring companies to start sharing information about how much they pay women & men for work of equal value and take action if the pay gap exceeds 5%.

Feminist leaders make a difference. Read more: [womenlobby.org/Manifesto2024](https://womenlobby.org/Manifesto2024)

In 2022, the EU proposed a law on combating violence against women aimed at preventing violence, supporting victims, and holding perpetrators accountable regardless of where in the EU they live.

Feminist leaders make a difference. Read more: [womenlobby.org/Manifesto2024](https://womenlobby.org/Manifesto2024)

In 2022, the European Parliament adopted a resolution recognising sexual and reproductive health & rights (SRHR) as fundamental human rights and calling for safe access to abortion across the EU.

Feminist leaders make a difference. Read more: [womenlobby.org/Manifesto2024](https://womenlobby.org/Manifesto2024)

**VISUALS ARE**



**AVAILABLE HERE**

# USEFUL SOCIAL

## EU Political groups and umbrella political party organisations

- European People's Party (EPP)
  - Twitter: @EPPGroup
  - Instagram: @eppgroup
  - Facebook: EPPGroup
- Renew Europe
  - Twitter: @RenewEurope
  - Instagram: @reneweurope
  - Facebook: RenewEurope
- The Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament (S&D)
  - Twitter: @TheProgressives
  - Instagram: @socialistsanddemocrats
  - Facebook: socialistsanddemocrats
- The Greens/EFA
  - Twitter: @GreensEFA
  - Instagram: @greensefa
  - Facebook: greensefa
- The Left
  - Twitter: @Left\_EU
  - Instagram: @guengl
  - Facebook: theleft
- Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE)
  - Twitter: @ALDEParty
  - Instagram: @aldeparty
  - Facebook: ALDE Party – Liberals and Democrats for Europe
- Party of European Socialists (PES)
  - Twitter: @PES\_PSE
  - Instagram: @pes\_pse
  - Facebook: Party of European Socialists
- The European Left
  - Twitter: @europeanleft
  - Instagram: european.left
  - Facebook: European Left

# MEDIA HANDLES

## EU political groups leadership

### European People's Party (EPP)

- Manfred Weber, EPP Chair
  - Twitter: @ManfredWeber
  - Facebook: manfred.weber
- Arnaud Danjean, EPP Vice Chair
  - Twitter: @ArnaudDanjean
- Frances Fitzgerald, EPP Vice Chair
  - Twitter: @FitzgeraldFrncs
  - Facebook: FitzgeraldFrances
- Esteban Gonzalez Pons, EPP Vice Chair
  - Twitter: @gonzalezpons
  - Facebook: Esteban-González-Pons
- Rasa Jukneviene, EPP Vice Chair
  - Twitter: @RJukneviene
  - Facebook: rasa.jukneviene
- Esther De Lange, EPP Vice Chair
  - Twitter: @Esther\_de\_Lange
  - Facebook: EstherdeLangeCDA
- Vangelis Meimarakis, EPP Vice Chair
  - Twitter: @v\_meimarakis
  - Facebook: vmeimarakis
- Siegfried Muresan, EPP Vice Chair
  - Twitter: @SMuresan
  - Facebook: SiegfriedMEP
- Jan Olbrycht, EPP Vice Chair
  - Twitter: @JanOlbrycht
  - Facebook: J.Olbrycht
- Paulo Rangel, EPP Vice Chair
  - Twitter: @PauloRangel\_pt
  - Facebook: PauloCastroRangel/
- Zeljana Zovko, EPP Vice Chair
  - Twitter: @ZovkoEU
  - Facebook: zeljanazovko.eu

 Continues

## Renew Europe

- Stéphane Séjourné, Renew Europe President
  - Twitter: @steph\_sejourne
  - Facebook: Stéphane Séjourné
- Malik Azmani, Renew Europe First Vice-President
  - Twitter: @MalikAzmani
  - Facebook: Malik Azmani
- Iskra Mihaylova, Renew Europe Vice-President
  - Twitter: @Iskra\_Mihaylova
- Katalin Cseh, Renew Europe Vice-President
  - Twitter: @katka\_cseh
  - Instagram: @katkacseh
  - Facebook: Cseh Katalin
- Frédérique Ries, Renew Europe Vice-President
  - Twitter: @Frederiqueries
  - Instagram: @frederique.ries
  - Facebook: Frédérique Ries
- Dragos Tudorache, Renew Europe Vice-President
  - Twitter: @IoanDragosT
  - Instagram: @ioandragostudorache
  - Facebook: Dragoș Tudorache
- Morten Lokkegaard, Renew Europe Vice-President
  - Twitter: @Loekkegaard\_MEP
  - Instagram: @mortenlokkegaard
  - Facebook: Morten Løkkegaard
- Nicola Danti, Renew Europe Vice-President
  - Twitter: @DantiNicola
  - Instagram: @nioladantieu
  - Facebook: Nicola Danti
- Jordi Canas, Renew Europe Vice-President
  - Twitter: @jordi\_canyas
  - Instagram: @jordinstagram
  - Facebook: Jordi Cañas
- Abir Al-Sahlani, Renew Europe Vice-President
  - Twitter: @AbirAlsahlani
  - Instagram: @abiralsahlani
  - Facebook: Abir Al-Sahlani
- Sylvie Brunet, Renew Europe Vice-President
  - Twitter: @sylv\_brunet

## The Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament (S&D)

- Alex Agius Saliba
  - Facebook: Alexagiussaliba
- Marek Belka
  - Twitter: @profMarekBelka
- Gabriele Bischoff
  - Twitter: @gabischoff
- Mohammed Chahim
  - Twitter: @MChahim
- Helène Fritzon
  - Twitter: @fritzon\_h
- Elisabetta Gualmini
  - Twitter: @gualminielisa
- Pedro Marques
  - Twitter: @PedroMarquesMEP
  - Facebook: PedroMarquesMEP
- Rovana Plumb
  - Twitter: @PlumbRovana
- Biljana Borzan
  - Twitter: @BiljanaBorzan
  - Facebook: Biljana-Borzan

## The Greens/EFA

- Terry Reintke
  - Twitter: @TerryReintke
- Philippe Lamberts
  - Twitter: @ph\_lamberts
  - Facebook: philippelambertseurope

## The Left

- Manon Aubry
  - Twitter: @ManonAubryFr
  - Instagram: @manonaubryfr
  - Facebook: ManonAubryFR
- Martin Schirdewan
  - Twitter: @schirdewan

## Permanent Representations

- Austria at EU - @austriaateu
- Belgium in the EU - @belgiumeu
- Bulgaria in the EU - @bgpermrepeu
- Croatia in the EU - @croatiaineu
- Cyprus in EU - @CyprusinEU
- Czechia in the EU - @CZECHIAinEU
- Denmark in the EU - @dkineu
- Estonia in the EU - @eeineu
- Finland in EU - @FinlandinEU
- Germany in the EU - @germanyintheeu
- Greece in EU - @greeceineu
- Hungary in the EU - @HungaryintheEU
- Ireland In The EU - @IrelandRepBru
- Italy in EU - @ItalyinEU
- La France dans l'UE - @rpfranceue
- Latvia in EU - @LVinEU
- Lithuania MFA - @LithuaniaMFA
- Luxembourg in the EU - @rpue\_lu
- MaltaPermRep - @maltaineu
- Netherlands at the EU - @nlateu
- Poland in the EU - @plpermrepeu
- Portugal na UE - @rpportugalue
- Romania in the EU - @romaniaineu
- Slovakia in the EU - @slovakiaineu
- Slovenia to the EU - @slotoeu
- Spain MFA - @SpainMFA
- Sweden in EU - @swedenineu

## Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs - @ep\_justice

- Evin Incir - @evinincir rapporteur - Directive on VAWG
- Lucia Ďuriš Nicholsonová - @lnicholsonova shadow rapporteur - Directive on VAWG
- Assita Kanko MEP - @assita\_kanko shadow rapporteur - Directive on VAWG shadow rapporteur - Istanbul Convention
- Nathalie Colin-Oesterlé - @ncolin\_oesterle shadow rapporteur - Directive on VAWG
- Łukasz Kohut - @lukaszkohut rapporteur - Istanbul Convention
- Bartosz Arlukowicz - @arlukowicz shadow rapporteur - Istanbul Convention
- Yana Toom - @yanatoom shadow rapporteur - Istanbul Convention

## Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality - @EP\_GenderEqual

- Gwendoline Delbos-Corfield - @gdeldboscorfield
- Frances Fitzgerald - @fitzgeraldfrncs rapporteur - Directive on VAWG
- Isabella Tovaglieri - @isatovaglieri
- Irene Tolleret - @ITolleret
- Jessica Stegrud - @JessicaStegrud
- Elżbieta Łukacijewska - @elukacijewska
- Diana Riba i Giner - @DianaRibaGiner shadow rapporteur - Directive on VAWG
- Marco Zullo - @MarcoZullo
- Samira Rafaela - @samiraraf
- M. Eugenia R. Palop - @MEugeniaRPalop - vice-chair shadow rapporteur - Directive on VAWG
- Robert Biedroń - @RobertBiedron - chair
- Eliza Vozemberg - @vozemberg vice-chair
- Soraya Rodríguez - @sorayarr\_ shadow rapporteur - Directive on VAWG
- Elżbieta Rafalska - @e\_rafalska
- Pina Picierno - @pinapic shadow rapporteur - Directive on VAWG
- Cindy Franssen - @franssencindy
- Arba Kokalari - @ArbaKokalari rapporteur - Istanbul Convention
- Ernest Urtasun - @ernesturtasun
- Evelyn Regner - @evelyn\_regner
- Maria Noichl - @marianoichl
- Sylwia Spurek - @sylviaspurek vice-chair shadow rapporteur - Directive on VAWG
- Terry Reintke - @terryreintke shadow rapporteur - Istanbul Convention
- Predrag Fred Matic - @fred\_matic rapporteur-SRHR
- Radka Maxová - @maxovaradka vice-chair
- Annika Bruna - @bruna\_annika
- Maria Graça Carvalho - @mgracacarvalho
- Lina Gálvez Muñoz - @linagalvezmunoz
- Járóka Livia - @jarokalivia
- Karen Melchior - @karmel80
- Soraya Rodríguez - @sorayarr\_
- Maria Manuel Leitão Marques - @leitaomarquesep rapporteur - Istanbul Convention
- Irène TOLLERET - @itolleret
- Malin Björk - @malinbjork\_eu shadow rapporteur - Directive on VAWG shadow rapporteur - Istanbul Convention

## Other European Parliament's Standing Committees

- Committee on Foreign Affairs - @EP\_ForeignAff
  - [afet-secretariat@ep.europa.eu](mailto:afet-secretariat@ep.europa.eu)
- Committee on Human Rights - @EP\_HumanRights
  - [droi-secretariat@ep.europa.eu](mailto:droi-secretariat@ep.europa.eu)
- Committee on Security and Defence - @EP\_Defence
  - [sede-secretariat@ep.europa.eu](mailto:sede-secretariat@ep.europa.eu)
- Committee on Development - @EP\_Development
  - [deve-secretariat@ep.europa.eu](mailto:deve-secretariat@ep.europa.eu)
- Committee on International Trade - @EP\_Trade
  - [inta-secretariat@ep.europa.eu](mailto:inta-secretariat@ep.europa.eu)
- Committee on Budgets - @EP\_Budgets
  - [budg-secretariat@europarl.europa.eu](mailto:budg-secretariat@europarl.europa.eu)
- Committee on Budgetary Control - @EP\_BudgControl
  - [cont-secretariat@ep.europa.eu](mailto:cont-secretariat@ep.europa.eu)
- Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs - @EP\_Economics
  - [econ-secretariat@ep.europa.eu](mailto:econ-secretariat@ep.europa.eu)
- Committee on Tax Matters - @EP\_Taxation
  - [fisc-secretariat@ep.europa.eu](mailto:fisc-secretariat@ep.europa.eu)
- Committee on Employment and Social Affairs - @EPSocialAffairs
  - [empl-secretariat@ep.europa.eu](mailto:empl-secretariat@ep.europa.eu)
- Committee on Environment, Public Health and Food Safety - @EP\_Environment
  - [envi-secretariat@ep.europa.eu](mailto:envi-secretariat@ep.europa.eu)
- Committee on Public Health - @EP\_PublicHealth
  - [sant-secretariat@ep.europa.eu](mailto:sant-secretariat@ep.europa.eu)
- Committee on Industry, Research and Energy - @EP\_Industry
  - [itre-secretariat@europarl.europa.eu](mailto:itre-secretariat@europarl.europa.eu)
- Committee on Internal Market and Consumer Protection - @EP\_SingleMarket
  - [imco-secretariat@europarl.europa.eu](mailto:imco-secretariat@europarl.europa.eu)
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  - [regi-secretariat@ep.europa.eu](mailto:regi-secretariat@ep.europa.eu)
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# FAQ

# WHAT IS THE STATE OF WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION ACROSS EUROPE?

The 2022 EIGE Gender Equality Index for the sub-domain of power is 57.2 points, the lowest score of all domains. **In the EU, only 33.4% of Ministers and only 33% of Members of Parliament (MPs) are women.** Despite some improvements, for instance in European institutions where 13 out of the 27 European Commissioners and 39% of MEPs are women in the current mandate, progress is slow. **Vertical as well as horizontal segregation is still rampant**, including in the European Parliament, where it is estimated that about **91.4% of the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality members are women**, while respectively in the Committee on Constitutional Affairs and the Committee on Budgets, **85.7 % and 75.6% of members are men.** It is also worrying to see that **EU institutions are still far from diverse**; for instance, **after the 2019 European elections, there were only 17 female MEPs from ethnic minorities.**<sup>4</sup>

These existing inequalities are rooted in unequal power relations and “natural” progress will not adequately solve the issue. Hence, it is crucial to be proactive to materialise equality between women and men.



# WHAT IS PARITY DEMOCRACY?

Parity democracy is a concept aiming at:

- Acknowledging the equal dignity and value of women and men;
- Making our political system more democratic and just;
- Renewing the social organisation in such a way that women and men equally share rights, responsibilities and power.

Parity democracy implies the equal representation of women and men in decision-making positions. Both should be represented whenever decisions are made. **Today, even if women have the same formal political rights as men, and if some individual women hold high political positions, women, representing more than half of the population, are too often excluded from decision-making positions.** It is mostly men who set the political priorities and decide on the spending of public money, and the political culture, including in Europe, continues to be male dominated.

Women's presence in politics is also a standard indicator of the democracy of a society<sup>5</sup>. If more than half of the population is persistently under-represented in decision-making, the legitimacy and the functioning of the democratic system are put into question. Therefore, parity democracy is a step towards a modern democracy. Introducing parity needs to be seen in the broader context of initiatives and measures to promote inclusive and participatory democracy and to increase the democratic legitimacy of political institutions, including at European level. The realisation of parity democracy at EU level will underline the European values and Europe's commitment to equality between women and men.

A 30% representation of women is considered as the minimum *critical mass* needed for women representatives to be able to change the political culture, bring new issues to the agenda, and to act efficiently for women's rights<sup>6</sup>. But even this critical mass is not enough- we have reached a point where women often actively participate in decisions, but do not have enough counterbalance, to challenge the decisions representing a male dominated world. Therefore, we need a balanced decision-making, which represents Europe's reality.

**Parity democracy is not just about numbers, but also about improving the quality of policies.**

Women account for more than half of the talent and potential capacities of humanity, their under-representation in decision-making is a loss for all of society. The under-representation of women in decision-making also means that the legitimate interests, needs and expectations of society as a whole are not fully taken into account and leads to a waste of the public resources affected to these decisions.

Finally, a balanced participation of women and men in decision-making can bring out different ideas, values and behaviors useful for the building of a more just, equal and harmonious world for all, women and men.

# WHY IS PARITY DEMOCRACY DIFFERENT FROM QUOTAS?

The EWL defines equal representation in political decision-making as a 50/50 representation of women and men in any decision-making body.<sup>7</sup> Parity democracy is different from quotas. Quotas are a temporary means to fix a bias, setting a target for women's representation to ensure their better representation in decision-making. Quotas are one of the tools used to reach parity democracy. Parity democracy is the goal to be reached, full and total equality of participation and representation of women and men :

- Parity concerns the equal representation and power-sharing between women and men, for which quotas are one possible means. Parity transforms concepts such as citizenship, equality, universality, making political systems more democratic.
- The concept of parity democracy does not treat women as a minority group within the dominant framework. Women represent more than half of the citizens, so they cannot be considered as a minority any more than men.
- Parity democracy implies removing structural and cultural impediments for women's entry into decision-making, such as adapting the working conditions of elected representatives to the demands of modern life, addressing the patriarchal culture of political parties, eliminating gender stereotypes, and changing electoral systems which are less favorable to women.

## ARGUMENTS FOR PARITY DEMOCRACY:

Parity democracy can be defended on four different grounds: i) arguments based on equality and justice; ii) arguments based on democracy; iii) arguments based on the concrete benefits that women's increased participation would bring; and iv) arguments based on the idea of women's interests. Different arguments work in different political and cultural contexts, depending on how the issue of gender equality has been framed in political discussions in a given country.

### **i. The equal representation of women and men is a question of justice and equality between women and men**

- The right to equal political participation is a fundamental human right for women and men and it needs to be concretely put into practice.
- EU member states have committed themselves to equality between women and men many times at international, European and national level.

### **ii. The equal representation of women and men is an element of modern democracy**

- Women's under-representation in politics is a serious democratic deficit and a threat to the legitimacy of our democratic systems. Parliaments are not fully inclusive of the opinions and perspectives of the population they represent unless women – more than half of the population – are equally represented.
- To develop policies which affect people's lives without their presence and without taking into account their opinion, perspectives and realities is not in line with the modern idea of democracy.

### **iii. Equal representation improves policy making**

- The inclusion of both women and men in policy making leads to more adequate decisions and to an allocation of public resources that better fit the needs of a diverse population heightening in turn public satisfaction with policy delivery.
- Women's equal participation may lead to the introduction of new or neglected issues to the political agenda. For example, because women have been the ones most affected by issues of reconciliation of work and private life, and have not been present enough in decision-making, reconciliation has long been seen as a private issue rather than a problem to be tackled by the society.
- Including women to the field of politics may result in a new political culture, which can lead to better government and better conflict resolution.
- Women's equal participation in decision-making benefits society as a whole since they represent half of its skills, expertise and talents.

### **iv. Better representation of women's interests and perspectives**

- Women have some common needs and interests related i.e. to sexual and reproductive health and rights or violence against women and girls that do not concern men to the same extent or in the same way.
- Women's and men's interests may conflict because of the gendered division of labour and uneven share of power.

Research on the Swedish example has shown that whether a MP is a woman or a man influences their pursuance of women's interests: issues on the agenda in national parliaments changed due to the increasing representation of women and more women were addressing issues of care and social policies as well as equality between women and men.<sup>8</sup> Equal representation makes a difference<sup>9</sup> and this conclusion can not only be found in Sweden, but also in other countries.<sup>10</sup> The positive relationship between a parliament closer to gender-balance and the adoption of legislation to advance women's rights has also been witnessed in France, Portugal and Spain.<sup>11</sup>

# THE BENEFITS OF PARITY DEMOCRACY

## BENEFITS FOR THE EUROPEAN UNION

- **Remedying the democratic deficit:** the under-presentation of women in democratic processes undermines the EU initiatives to bring the Union closer to women and men living in European societies and engage them in decision-making processes. It is also an obstacle to more adequate political decisions and a better allocation of the Union's resources.
- **Gathering the support of European women for European integration:** this requires more women involved at EU level and addressing all issues, including issues that are perceived as gender neutral and for the improvement of society as a whole.
- **Equal representation in decision-making:** the EU institutions have long since championed the use of quotas to ensure the fair representation of the EU Member States across the institutions (EP, European Commission, Council, Committee of the Regions, EESC...). It is well understood that this is needed to ensure that the voices of all countries are able to participate as part of democratic representation: so why not have quotas as a means to reach parity democracy and to ensure that women's voices are equally reflected at the top of the political debate.

## BENEFITS FOR POLITICAL PARTIES

- Parity democracy brings a **renewal of people within political parties widening the perspectives and bringing new competences** in order for them to be more representative of the citizens they are meant to represent.
- **A renewal of the legitimacy of the parties and more specifically, an increase of support from women for their policies and their actions**, as women may give more support to political parties that take their interests into account and that ensure their equal participation and representation.

## BENEFITS FOR EUROPEAN WOMEN

- Ensuring the **visibility of women on the political field** and thus contributing to the eradication of stereotypes and the realisation of women's human rights, also providing role models for other women.
- **Listening to women's voices on issues that concern society as a whole**, such as economics, monetary affairs, foreign affairs, where mostly men's voices are heard in politics, the economic sector and media.
- **Putting women's interests, expertise, needs and situations high on the EU agenda.**

# WHY ARE LEGISLATED CANDIDATE QUOTAS A NECESSARY TOOL TOWARDS PARITY DEMOCRACY?

## THE LIMITATION OF VOLUNTARY QUOTA:

A few European countries deliver gender-balanced parliaments<sup>12</sup> despite the absence of mandatory quotas. In 2022, that was the case for Finland (45.5% female MPs), Sweden (46.4% female MPs), and Iceland (47.6%).<sup>13</sup> This practice appears to be limited to the Nordic countries. It is crucial to acknowledge that the **success of voluntary quotas relies on very specific conditions**. Indeed, these countries have implemented voluntary party quotas while benefiting from a **culture of gender equality embedded in their societies, and have had acceptance by most political parties of gender equality as the norm for many decades**.<sup>14</sup> It is also important to note that grassroots organisations have historically played a significant role in the empowerment of women in these countries. In addition, education policies on gender roles/norms have been put in place and have contributed to improving the representation of women in both the public and the private sector. The percentage of women attaining tertiary education in the Nordics is significantly higher than the EU average rate.<sup>15</sup> Policies are also in place to promote gender equality in preschools in Nordic countries.<sup>16</sup>

**On top of requiring a very conducive environment, voluntary party quotas do not ensure sustainable progress.** Countries like Iceland are often used as an example of gender balanced parliaments with 47.6% of its MPs being women. However, when it comes to voluntary party quotas it is essential to note, as illustrated by the Icelandic case, that the success of voluntary party quotas and the sustainability of **potential progress rests on the political will of the parties**. Currently, four out of eight parties in the Icelandic parliament have internal guidelines to ensure that women have equal representation on their candidate lists and in the top seats of the candidate lists. However, the other half do not. **In the 2017 elections the number of women in parliament dropped from 48% to 38%**, with the main reason being that two of the new parties elected to the parliament had no interest in being gender inclusive and had not taken up voluntary party quotas.<sup>17</sup>

## THE NEED FOR LEGISLATED CANDIDATE QUOTAS:

Studies show that **countries without tools like binding legislated candidate quotas will take more than 60 years to achieve gender parity in their parliament while those with binding quotas are expected to take less than 20 years**.<sup>18</sup>

Several EU Member States have legislated candidate quota laws in place (e.g., Belgium, France, Croatia, Luxembourg, and Portugal).<sup>19</sup> These laws usually require that at least 30% of candidates for national parliamentary elections are women, with a 40% minimum being most common. Legislated candidate quotas have proved to be the most effective tool for “fast tracking” women’s representation in elected bodies of government. **In countries with legislated candidate quotas, women’s share of parliamentary seats has increased from 18% in 2004 to 34% in 2021**.<sup>20</sup>

The 2022 EWL study on women’s representation in politics across Europe,<sup>21</sup> highlighted that among the countries surveyed, 47% have adopted legislated candidate quotas, including Belgium, Croatia, France, Greece, Italy, Poland, Portugal, and Spain.<sup>22</sup> All of these specified targets to be reached and 56% requested the use of alternation methods such as zipped lists (for example Belgium, France, Italy, Portugal and Spain),<sup>23</sup> having women and men represented in such a way on party electoral lists is crucial to ensure women are not tokenised on the lists and are placed at “electable” places.<sup>24</sup> In all of the countries surveyed, the legislated candidate quotas were supported with sanctions.

 Continues

**Sanctions are critical in ensuring compliance with quota legislation.** They must be appropriate if they are to be an effective deterrent to breaches of the legislation. Sanctions can include rejection of the list (78% of countries surveyed including Belgium, France, Greece, Italy, Poland, Portugal, and Spain) and/or financial sanctions (56% of countries surveyed for instance Croatia, France, Ireland, and Italy). The case studies included in EWL's study show that the **rejection of the list is a more compelling sanction to ensure respect of the quota legislation than fines.**

It is essential to understand that **reaching equal women's representation in politics requires a multifaceted approach.** First, positive measures are a valuable asset towards this aim. Binding quotas are a necessary and temporary tool to address the existing bias in society. Second, it is also crucial to put in place policies that advance equality between women and men and women's rights in society at large and enable women to contribute to political life at the highest level of decision-making; for instance:

- **Violence against women and girls is an important barrier** that women politicians, candidates, and activists face. A study from the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (2018) reveals that 85.2% of female Members of Parliaments (MPs) surveyed had suffered psychological violence in the course of their term of office, 46.9% had received death threats or threats of rape or beating, 58.2% had been the target of online sexist attacks on social networks – all used as a tactic to silence women. 33.3% of the women MPs surveyed said that it had affected their freedom of expression. Hence, it is of paramount importance to have legislation that puts an end to all forms of violence against women and girls and make politics a safe environment for women.
- **Domestic and caring responsibilities still disproportionately fall on women** depriving them of the time needed to become more involved in politics. The first wave of the Covid-19 pandemic saw women spend more hours than men on unpaid care. For instance, they spent 18.6 hours a week on cooking and housework compared to 12.1 hours for men. Thus, it is essential to develop affordable, accessible, and high-quality care services in most EU countries to give women the ability to participate in all aspects of social, economic, cultural, and political life. It is also crucial to adopt and implement legislative and educational measures to encourage an equal division of domestic and caring responsibilities between women and men.
- **Female candidates and politicians must also be given a platform to share their voices**, to convey their messages; in this process, women's under-representation in the media is problematic, moreover the way they are portrayed is critical in positioning them as legitimate politicians. The EWL study revealed that women are barely present in the media (Bulgaria), that male politicians are dominant in the media including on panels and political discussions (Greece, Cyprus), that coverage of women in politics focuses on their personal life (Bulgaria, Finland), and that it uses sexist descriptions such as commenting on their appearance and roles as potential mothers, etc. (Ireland, Sweden, France, Cyprus, Spain, and Finland). In Iceland for instance, 31.6% of female MPs experienced the publication of their images or comments with a sexual connotation versus just 16.7% of male MPs.

For more information on the topic read EWL's study "Taking Stock of Women's Representation in Politics across Europe" [here](#).

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# SUGGESTED ANSWERS TO ARGUMENTS AGAINST PARITY DEMOCRACY

## DOES PARITY DEMOCRACY VIOLATE DEMOCRATIC PRINCIPLES? - NO!

Some reject parity in the name of democracy. Measures to reach parity are said to violate the key democratic principles of equality and universality; of each woman and man having equal value and equal rights in front of law and in politics. However, this idea of universality of democracy is based on abstract individualism, and voters and representatives are seen as deprived from all social attributes such as sex, class, ethnic origin, disability, age... This universalistic view of citizenship is also a historically-grounded idea, which emerged in the French revolution and was itself originally based on the exclusion of women. **Universal citizenship is therefore a partial concept that under the guise of neutrality has served the purposes of dominant social groups and the patriarchy in general.**

This neglect of differences, which is still often understood as the basis of democracy and enshrined in different ways in our political systems, means that the voice of women is suppressed by a political world monopolized by men, and women's full access to their political rights is denied. **True equality presupposes acknowledging and accepting differences.** Women and men face different realities and consequently have different problems, needs and interests. To ignore these differences is to favour the current unequal relations of power and thus to perpetuate inequality.

To be universal, **democracy must apply equally to all women and men and to members of discriminated or marginalised groups.** The critique of parity democracy in the name of universalism and equality reveals that these are still partial conceptions. Parity democracy does not abandon the universality of democracy – on the contrary, by exposing its limits, parity extends the frame of the universal and the scope of the democratic principle of equality. As such **parity contributes to more justice and democratic progress.**



## IS PARITY DEMOCRACY CONTRARY TO THE PRINCIPLE OF FREEDOM?

- NO!

In the name of freedom, some people criticize parity legislation and quotas on the pretext that it makes the State intervene unnecessarily in an area where free competition on the “best man (sic) wins” basis or voluntary self-regulation would be preferable. Parity democracy is also accused of curbing the free choice of the electorate.

The problem here is that “natural” progress in the field of gender equality will not be enough to set aside centuries of historical systemic unequal relations of power between women and men and to end the discrimination of women in the political world. Women who aspire to political office face numerous structural and cultural obstacles. In this context, **parity legislation therefore creates the conditions for an equal starting point for women and men.** In the event of injustice, it is the State who is best placed to implement measures in favour of a more just situation. Rather than waiting more centuries for hypothetical equality in the political arena, citizens must take their fate into their own hands and take additional and decisive steps towards true equality between women and men.

As regards the “freedom” of the electorate, it is already circumscribed by other factors that are widely accepted as part of the democratic system, such as electoral systems which allow voters to choose the party but often not the representative, or the definition of electoral district which does not always reflect the number of inhabitants. It cannot be said that in a system where political parties choose and rank the candidates, often based on non-transparent and non-democratic procedures, it is the voter who has the freedom to choose. Therefore, **a fair representation of women as well as other groups on candidate lists enhances rather than undermines the freedom of the electorate to choose candidates who represent them.**

In a democratic society, freedom has to be defended, but it needs to be counterbalanced with promoting justice and equality and looking at whose freedom is actually protected. Freedom and equality sometimes contradict, but this is the very essence of democracy. Only by accepting the confrontation of the two key democratic values can we guarantee that our political system remains democratic.

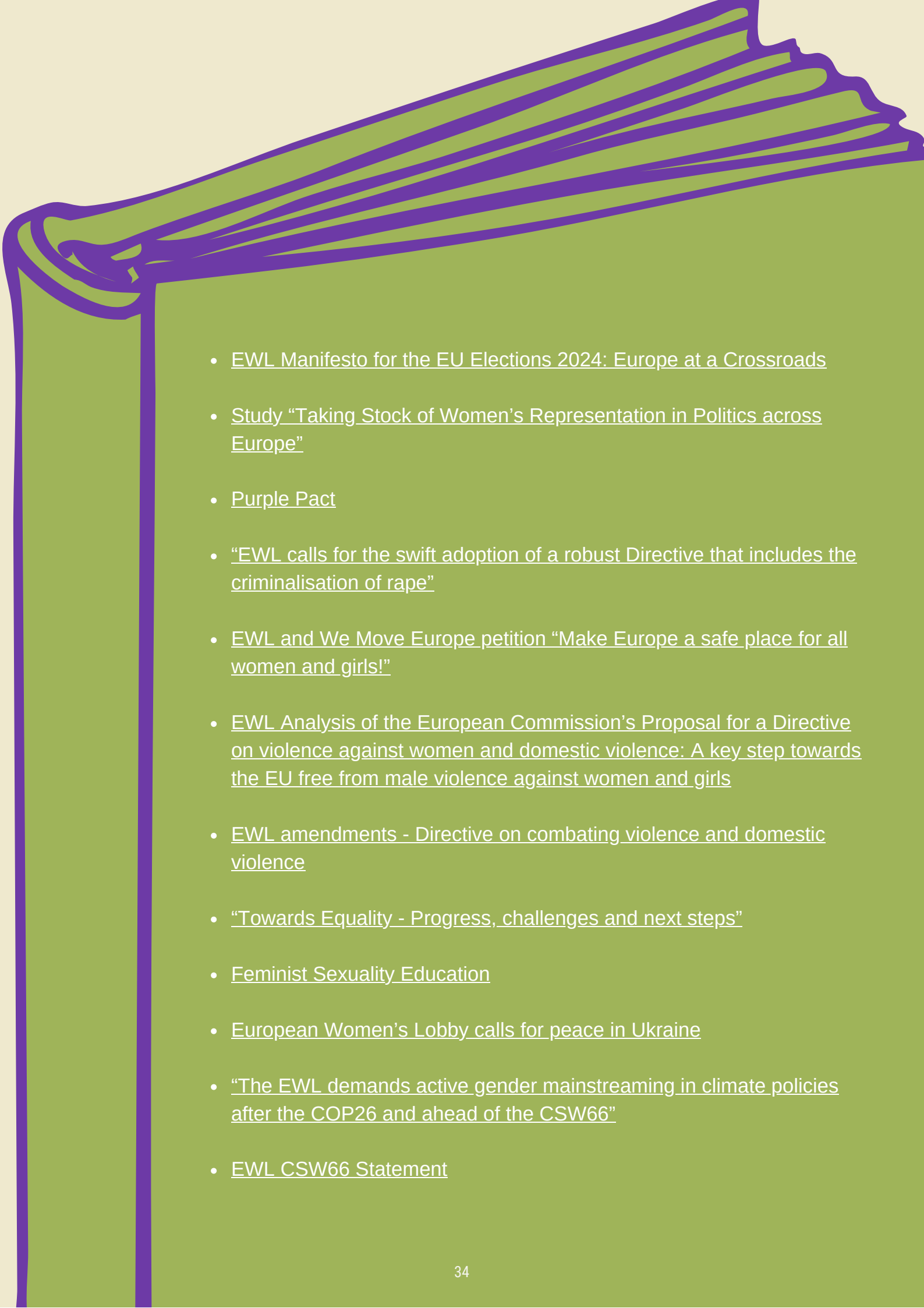
## DOES PARITY DEMOCRACY TAKE INTO ACCOUNT MERIT? - YES!

The argument that politicians should be elected based on their qualifications and not on the basis of being a woman or a man, or that this kind of positive action is shameful for a woman, shows how women's qualifications are downgraded in a male-dominated political world. **Parity legislation serves to ensure that qualified women are in a position to be elected to political (or other) mandates.** Even beyond women's engagement in politics, their engagement within civil society and high level of education, make women ideal candidates for positions of political responsibility. Women often face structural and cultural obstacles such as access to financial and other resources, the traditional division of paid and unpaid labour between men and women, the culture and the prejudices of the political parties and voters, which make women's political participation much more difficult even with equal merit.

Merit, while being an essential criterion in the choice of an elected representative, must not be used in an often-misleading way questioning the competences of women politicians, to avoid the question of representation and legitimacy. The equal political participation of women and men is a question of representation and is as such no more and no less legitimate as having rules for the number of representatives of each EU Member State in the European Parliament for example. In the same way, civil servants within the European Commission and other international institutions are chosen first on the basis of nationality, and after on the basis of their qualifications. Quotas based on nationality have traditionally not been seen as a problem for the voters or a cause of shame for those elected or employed, but as something which guarantees the legitimacy of the European institutions. Accordingly, women politicians elected in the framework of a gender quota system are chosen because they are competent, and they have a lot to contribute to the political world, but also because they represent half of the population.



# USEFUL EWL PUBLICATIONS


- 
- [EWL Manifesto for the EU Elections 2024: Europe at a Crossroads](#)
  - [Study “Taking Stock of Women’s Representation in Politics across Europe”](#)
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  - [“The EWL demands active gender mainstreaming in climate policies after the COP26 and ahead of the CSW66”](#)
  - [EWL CSW66 Statement](#)

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European Women's Lobby, October 2023