

Carolina Arias Burgos*

The Gender Power Gap and the Law in the European Union

Gender equality is enshrined in EU law, but how close is the Union to fulfilling its promise? Drawing on the Gender Equality Index and the Women, Business and the Law report, this article examines the current state of gender equality across EU member states, identifying where progress has been achieved and where significant gaps remain. The findings reveal persistent disparities, particularly in decision-making, economic opportunities and the effective implementation of legal provisions. The analysis highlights the importance of reliable data, transparency and targeted measures in bridging the gap between formal rights and women's lived experiences across the Union.

Gender equality is a fundamental right enshrined in the European Union (EU) treaties and explicitly included in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (2000) under Article 20 (Equality before the law) and Article 23 (Equality between women and men). The European Commission is committed to building a union of equality, promoting equal economic independence for women and men, closing the gender pay gap, advancing gender balance in decision-making, ending gender-based violence and promoting gender equality globally.

At the heart of the EU's strategy lies gender mainstreaming, an approach that seeks to identify, address and rectify gender inequalities through informed policymaking. Data is instrumental in this effort, enabling institutions to monitor trends, assess policy effectiveness and drive future initiatives.

This article examines key gender indicators published by renowned institutions to assess the current state and trends in equal opportunities and rights for women and men. Additionally, it explores the measures implemented

© The Author(s) 2026. Open Access: This article is distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

Open Access funding provided by ZBW – Leibniz Information Centre for Economics.

* This article is written in the author's personal capacity. Any views or opinions expressed are solely those of the author and are not intended to represent, and should not be interpreted as representing, the position of the European Union Intellectual Property Office.

Carolina Arias Burgos, European Union Intellectual Property Office, Alicante, Spain.

by EU countries to address and mitigate gender inequalities, providing a comprehensive overview of the ongoing efforts and challenges in achieving gender parity.

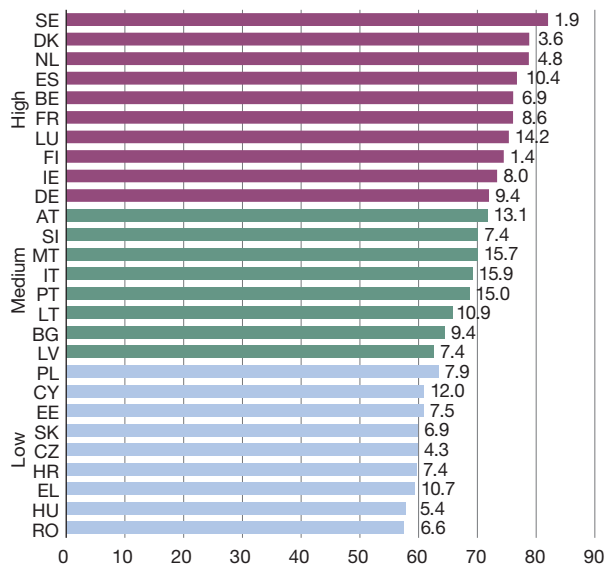
Gender Equality Index

The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) is the EU's specialised agency dedicated to promoting gender equality. EIGE's work combines research, data and tools to assist policymakers in designing inclusive and transformative measures that advance gender equality across all aspects of life. One of its key contributions is the Gender Equality Index (GEI), a comprehensive tool to track progress in gender equality across various fields within the EU.

This article analyses the results of the 2024 edition of the GEI, based on 2022 data. After the completion of this article, EIGE published the 2025 edition, a major methodological update, including data from 2023 and 2024, revised indicators, new data sources and a stronger emphasis on individual-level data in the money and time domains. The two editions are therefore not directly comparable. However, the new edition confirms and further reinforces the conclusions presented here. Footnotes referencing the updated GEI results are included only where the conclusions differ.

The GEI evaluates EU countries across six core domains: work, money, knowledge, time, power and health. Using 31 indicators grouped into 14 sub-domains, it assigns scores from 1 to 100, with 100 representing full equality between women and men. Each domain and sub-domain score is calculated as the average of relevant indicators, culminating in a single figure that summarises a country's overall performance in gender equality.

Figure 1
Gender Equality Index in EU countries (2022) and
change in score 2010-2022



Source: Author's calculations based on EIGE (2024).

Overall, the GEI stands at 71 points for the EU, marking an increase of 7.9 points since 2010. The range, defined as the difference between the highest score (Sweden with 82 points) and the lowest score (Romania with 57.5 points), was 24.5 points in 2022. This represents a reduction of seven points from 2010, when the range was 31.5 points. This range highlights the varying levels of gender equality across the EU. Over those 12 years, there has been a modest but significant improvement in gender equality in EU countries. Not only is gender equality advancing, but the countries' scores are also becoming more aligned, driven by progress in lower-scoring countries (Greece, the lowest in 2010 with 48.6 points), whose improvement was more than quadruple that of the top-scoring country (Sweden with 80.1 points in 2010).¹

It is also worth noting that Sweden has consistently scored at the top in all editions of the GEI, while Greece was the lowest-scoring country from 2010 to 2022. However, after a remarkable 4.5-point increase in 2021, Greece surpassed Hungary and Romania; the latter has

¹ The 2025 edition of the GEI indicates a different trend: over a 15-year period, growth has been weaker among low-scoring countries, while medium- and high-scoring countries have recorded stronger improvements. Consequently, convergence remains limited, with the gap between the highest-scoring (Sweden) and the lowest-scoring (Cyprus) countries narrowing only marginally, by 1.5 points.

occupied the bottom position for the last two years. Only Sweden reached 80 points throughout the entire time-frame. In 2010, 16 countries scored below 60 points, including two that scored below 50. By 2022, there were still six countries scoring less than 60 points.

Figure 1 displays the GEI score for each EU country in 2022 as well as the change in their score during the period 2010-2022. The largest gains over the whole period are observed in Italy, Malta and Portugal, each improving by more than 15 points.

No country has seen a decline in its overall performance, with a beta-convergence process occurring in which countries with initially higher scores in 2010, such as Sweden, Denmark and Finland, show smaller increases in their GEI scores. However, some countries that scored low in 2010, including Romania, Hungary and Czechia, have made only limited progress and continue to lag behind in gender equality.

To better summarise the positions of the 27 EU member states across the six domains, countries with similar scores in 2022 are grouped into three clusters: low, medium and high. Figure 1 uses different colours to represent these three clusters.

The classification of countries into clusters is based on their performance across the six domains, using multivariate cluster analysis. The clustering reflects the nuanced performance across the six domains rather than the overall GEI score alone, leading to some notable observations. Poland, despite having a higher overall GEI score than Latvia, is included in the low cluster due to its very low score in the power domain (below 40 points). Latvia, on the other hand, is in the medium cluster. Also, Austria's GEI score is very close to that of Germany, but its low score in the power domain (57.1 points) justifies its classification in the medium cluster. As explained below, the power domain is a key factor in determining the different situations of women in EU countries, as it reflects their participation in decision-making processes.

Table 1 shows the average Gender Equality Index for countries in different clusters: the low cluster average is 60, the medium cluster average is 68, and the high cluster average is 76. For the six domains, the average values increase from low to medium to high clusters, with the largest differences in the power domain.

The low cluster stands out for its low average score in the power domain (34), which measures gender balance in decision-making and leadership positions. This domain is composed of three sub-domains: political, economic

Table 1
Gender Equality Index and its domains: Average scores by cluster, 2022

Average scores 2022	Low	Medium	High
Gender Equality Index	60	68	76
Work	73	75	79
Money	76	77	87
Knowledge	60	61	68
Time	62	65	68
Power	34	57	76
Health	84	85	91

Source: Author's calculations based on EIGE (2024).

and social, assessing women's participation in these three spheres. Many countries show particularly low shares of women in areas such as the boards of the largest quoted companies, central banks and Olympic sports organisations. The minimum value in the power domain corresponds to Hungary (27.1), which also records the lowest score in the political sub-domain (24.9). Estonia represents the lowest value of the economic sub-domain (16.9), while Greece represents the lowest value in the social sub-domain (26). The economic sub-domain shows the weakest performance overall, with two countries, Romania and Estonia, scoring below 20.

The medium cluster shows the highest difference compared with the high cluster in the power domain (19-point difference). In the money domain, it also shows significantly lower values than in the high cluster (10-point difference), with a score similar to the low cluster. The money domain reflects access to money and levels of economic and financial resources from earnings, pensions or benefits. It is composed of two sub-domains: financial resources and economic situation. Each one is measured by two indicators covering average earnings and income for the financial resources sub-domain, and poverty and inequality for the economic situation sub-domain. The three lowest-scoring countries belong to the medium cluster: Bulgaria, Latvia and Lithuania.

The health domain reaches an average of 91 points in the countries within the high cluster, which also displays more balanced scores across all domains. However, the domains of knowledge and time still exhibit lower average scores due to issues such as segregation in tertiary education and the unequal distribution of unpaid care and household work. The health domain consists of three sub-domains: status, behaviour and access, which are measured by indicators such as (healthy) life expectancy; smoking and drinking habits, physical activity levels, and

fruit and vegetable consumption; as well as unmet needs for medical and dental care. The access sub-domain consistently exceeds a score of 90 in all EU countries, while the behaviour sub-domain shows the most significant differences.

When compared to the clusters generated using 2010 data, recent data shows some notable shifts: three countries (Germany, Ireland and Luxembourg) moved from the medium to the high cluster, and four countries (Bulgaria, Lithuania, Latvia and Portugal) moved from the low to the medium cluster. The domain that contributed most significantly to the shift to the high cluster was power while the time domain explains Bulgaria's shift to the medium cluster.

No country dropped from the high to the medium cluster, indicating that countries with the highest levels of gender equality are unlikely to reverse progress on women's rights. However, four countries (Cyprus, Czechia, Estonia and Hungary) moved down from the medium to the low cluster, now ranking among the lowest scorers in the power domain. Among these countries, Estonia highlights the decline in the gender distribution of time, reflected in a reduction of almost ten points in this domain.

The domain that saw the greatest improvements in the GEI was power, but only in the medium cluster (29 points) and the high cluster (17 points). By contrast, the low cluster saw only a two-point increase, with some countries still lagging behind in this area.

The importance of this domain in the overall trend is underscored by the fact that countries that are top improvers (Italy, Malta, Portugal and Luxembourg) also saw substantial improvements in the power domain's score, while countries lagging in the power domain (Slovakia, Romania, Hungary and Czechia) have lower overall GEI scores. The power domain has the widest range of scores among EU countries, with almost 60 points separating the highest and the lowest values, and a slight decrease since 2010. This indicates that there is still considerable room for improvement, particularly in low-scoring countries, with ten countries scoring below 50 in 2022.

The analysis of EU countries' trends makes clear that the power domain plays a crucial role in achieving gender equality. This is also supported by a strong correlation (over 90%) between countries' scores in this domain and their overall GEI, with steadily increasing values from 2010 to 2022 highlighting the importance of women's participation in decision-making processes for advancing gender equality and closing the gender gap.

On the other hand, the time domain saw significant progress among the low cluster countries from 2010 to 2022,² with an average score increase of 15 points. This domain assesses the involvement of women and men in care and social activities. The top improving countries are Greece and Portugal, each with an increase of 30 points. In this domain, the range between the highest and lowest scores has nearly halved since 2010, indicating a convergence in performance among EU countries that helped to reduce the overall GEI divergence.

The GEI helps to identify the domains and countries that need the most attention, either due to poor performance or trends that diverge from the EU average. It is crucial to consider the varying starting points of countries in terms of gender equality and recognise that progress takes time. By grouping countries into homogeneous clusters, more meaningful comparisons can be made between peer countries.

Although European countries have made progress in gender equality, full equality has not yet been achieved, and the journey towards it is complex. Some progress could be attributed to public policies, such as the introduction of women's quotas or gender balance agreements, which have probably helped accelerate equal representation in parliaments, governments, management boards, research-funding organisations or sports federations, thereby reducing the gender gap in the power domain and breaking the glass ceiling. Additionally, greater male participation in caregiving tasks reflects a shift in societal attitudes, often paving the way for legal changes.

“Women, Business and the Law” report

Achieving gender equality demands the parallel advancement of both public policies and social attitudes. The World Bank's (2024) “Women, Business and the Law, 2024” (WBL) report evaluates the legal environment and the effectiveness of its implementation in 190 economies, including those in the EU. This evaluation highlights how the effectiveness of laws, not just their existence, directly shapes women's opportunities and rights compared with men. The report underscores a persistent challenge: when laws are enacted without robust enforcement, they fail to translate into real progress. This gap between legislation and implementation reveals that legal reform alone is insufficient; only through consistent enforcement can policies drive meaningful change and close the gender equality gap. WBL measures complement the previous analysis of gender equality trends among EU member states based on the GEI.

² In contrast, the 2025 edition of the GEI shows only modest improvements in the time domain over a 15-year period.

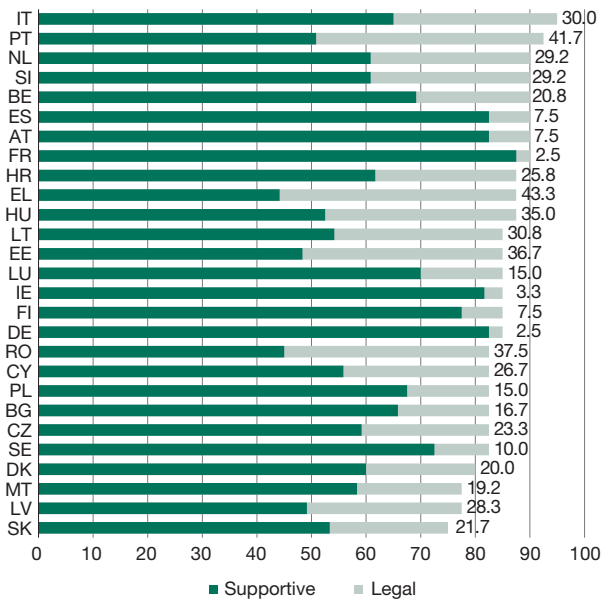
Since 1971, the WBL report has assessed laws affecting women's economic opportunities across eight key indicators: mobility, workplace, pay, marriage, parenthood, entrepreneurship, assets and pension. The 2024 edition introduces two datasets, WBL 1.0 and WBL 2.0. The latter revises some indicators, adds two new topics (safety and childcare) and introduces new measures to track the implementation gap.

WBL 2.0 introduces the first-ever assessment of women's status in both the laws on the books (*de jure*) and the frameworks supporting their implementation (*de facto*). This assessment is based on insights from over 2,400 experts. The WBL 2.0 indicators are summarised in two index scores (legal and supportive), with 100 representing the highest possible score for gender-equal laws. The legal framework score is derived from 40 questions across ten indicators, while the supportive framework encompasses 30 questions. Additionally, a third index incorporates expert opinions; however, the coverage in terms of submissions per country is uneven, and the results lack coherence. While WBL 2.0 offers a more complete assessment, WBL 1.0 provides historical data starting from 1971, enabling trend analysis by country, although it is limited to legal measures.

After this article was finalised, the World Bank released the 2026 edition of the WBL report, incorporating updated data collected between October 2023 and October 2025 and introducing methodological innovations to improve precision, comparability and policy relevance. The revised edition presents comparable legal indices for the years 2024, 2025 and 2026, revealing that no EU member state experienced a decline in its overall score or a substantial shift in its ranking. Notably, the 2026 edition also refines the measurement of enforcement mechanisms, although data for two EU countries remain unavailable. While future research may benefit from extending the analysis to the enforcement index, utilising the most recent data and improved metrics for both the GEI and WBL, it is important to acknowledge that substantial institutional changes rarely occur within short timeframes. Crucially, the WBL data for the period 2023-2025 are not directly comparable with the GEI data referenced to 2022 due to differences in temporal scope. Consequently, this article uses data from comparable periods, specifically 2022 for the GEI and 2023 for the WBL.

Italy ranks first in WBL 2.0, with a legal indicator of 95. Among the ten top countries globally, Canada is the only non-European nation. Focusing on EU member states, the average WBL 2.0 legal indicator is 85.4, compared with a global score of 64.2. This varies across countries, ranging from 75 in Slovakia to 95 in Italy, with all EU member

Figure 2
Women, Business and the Law 2.0 legal and supportive frameworks: Scores and gaps, 2024



Source: Author's calculations based on the World Bank (2024).

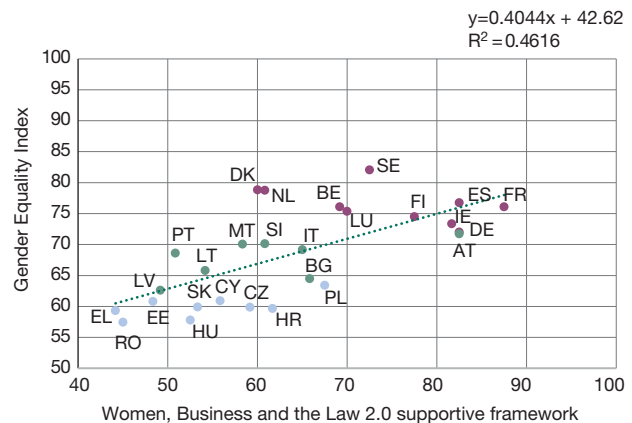
states scoring well above the global average but showing significant differences across the ten fields evaluated.

Laws are the necessary first step towards women's economic empowerment. But inadequate implementation and weak enforcement could be critical barriers to the realisation of women's rights and opportunities. Although laws are passed to ensure equality, they are of little use if they are not implemented and supported. The WBL 2.0 supportive framework evaluates the measures that support the implementation of gender equality laws across the ten indicators.

The supportive framework records a global score of 39.5, revealing an implementation gap of 24.7 points, representing the difference between the legal and supportive average scores. All economies have substantial room for improvement, with EU countries reaching an average score of 63.6, resulting in an implementation gap of 21.7 points.³ Despite the supportive framework in EU member states scoring 24 points higher than the global average, the implementation gap is only three points narrower,

³ The findings of the 2026 edition of the WBL report reveal a broader implementation gap in EU countries, averaging almost 29 points, while the global average implementation gap stands at 20 points.

Figure 3
Women, Business and the Law 2.0 supportive framework (2024) vs Gender Equality Index (2022)



Source: Author's calculations based on EIGE (2024) and the World Bank (2024).

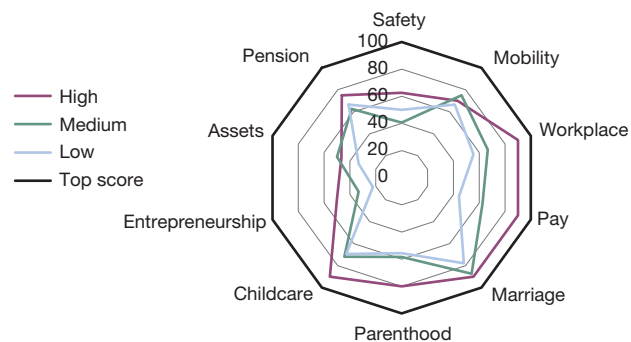
highlighting the need to strengthen the enforcement of laws in some low-scoring countries.

The ranking of EU countries based on supportive measures diverges from that of legal indicators, reflecting the gap between de jure and de facto situations. France leads with the highest supportive score of 87.5 and a gap of only 2.5 points, while Greece has the lowest at 44.2, also exhibiting the largest implementation gap of 43.3. A detailed analysis reveals that only six EU countries have a gap of less than ten points between their legal and supportive scores: France, Germany, Ireland, Austria, Finland and Spain, as illustrated in Figure 2. Those same six EU member states are also the top-scorers in the supportive framework, with five to seven domains scoring a perfect 100.

The average score of the supportive framework aligns more closely with the actual situation of women, as indicated by the GEI. As illustrated in Figure 3, higher scores for supportive measures correlate with higher GEI values, with different colours representing the three clusters previously defined by GEI indicators. This contrasts with the comparison between the legal framework score and the GEI, demonstrating that passing laws alone is insufficient to guarantee gender equality.

France ranks as the top country when evaluated by both GEI and supportive measures, while Romania and Greece are among the lowest-scoring countries in both areas. A clear example of the mismatch between legal indicators and the actual situation of women is Greece: despite achieving a high legal WBL indicator value of 87.5, it re-

Figure 4
Women, Business and the Law 2.0 supportive framework: Average domain scores by cluster, 2024



Source: Author's calculations based on EIGE (2024) and the World Bank (2024).

mains the lowest-scoring EU country in terms of implementation measures and the third-lowest in the GEI.

In spite of the general alignment of GEI and supportive measures, a few countries display a mismatch between both scores. For instance, the Netherlands and Denmark achieve relatively high GEI scores despite offering limited supportive measures. This can be attributed to specific low scores in supportive measures: the Netherlands scores zero in safety, while Denmark scores zero in entrepreneurship. Conversely, Poland implements more supportive measures than the EU average, but this is not reflected in its GEI score, which remains below the EU average, and it is classified in the low cluster due to poor performance in the power domain, as previously discussed.

The positive relationship between supportive measures and GEI is also evident at the aggregated level when comparing the average scores of countries within each GEI cluster. Countries in the low cluster have an average score of the supportive framework of 54.2; those in the medium cluster average 60.8; and countries in the high cluster score 74.4 points.

As illustrated in Figure 4, countries in the low cluster have the lowest score in entrepreneurship (22.2), assets (33.3) and pay (44.4). The most significant disparities are seen in pay, with nearly a 20-point difference between the low and the medium clusters and almost a 30-point difference between the medium and high clusters. This domain has the most top-scoring countries, with a total of 13, of which two belong to the low cluster, three belong to the medium and eight out of ten countries in the high cluster score 100 in the pay domain.

In contrast, the domains of mobility, marriage and pension have more similar average scores across the three clusters. The high cluster excels with average scores of 90 in workplace, pay, marriage and childcare while struggling to reach a score of 50 in entrepreneurship and assets, which are also the two domains with lower average scores for all EU member states, with 35.8 and 43.2 points respectively, with three top-score countries in the former while no country scores 100 in assets.

A detailed examination of the WBL indicators reveals a significant disparity between legal frameworks and their practical implementation across the EU. In nine out of ten indicators within the supportive framework, scores fall below their legal counterparts, with the most pronounced gap observed in the domain of assets: while all EU countries have achieved a perfect legal score of 100 in this area, the average score for supportive measures drops to 43.2, resulting in an alarming implementation gap of 56.8. This gap between law and practice reveals systemic barriers that prevent women from fully accessing their rights, particularly in economic domains.

Interestingly, safety is the only domain where the EU average gap is negative. Here, the legal framework scores a mere 44.4, while supportive measures reach 51.9. This inversion, observed in 11 EU countries, suggests that this is an area that requires comprehensive reform and robust enforcement to ensure the physical and psychological security of all women.⁴

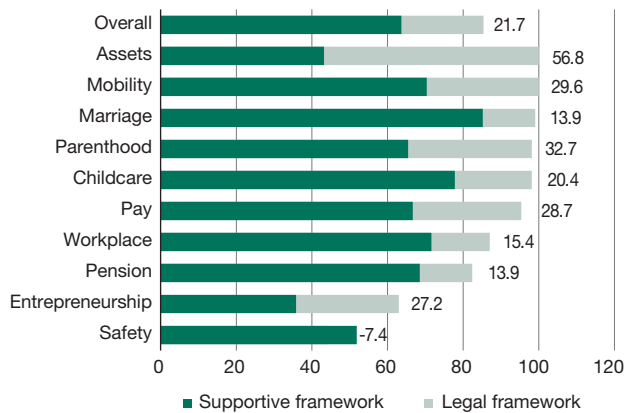
These findings, visualised in Figure 5, demonstrate that while legal frameworks are essential, they must be accompanied by targeted, well-funded supportive measures to bridge the gap between policy and reality.

Across the 27 EU member states, legal indicators for mobility and assets score a perfect 100, ensuring equal rights in travel and residence, inheritance and property ownership.⁵ Nearly all EU countries have achieved top marks in the domain of marriage, with the only exception being Italy, despite it being the highest-scoring country overall; similarly, most countries score high in parenthood, with the exception of Finland and Malta. At the other end, not a single EU country scores 100 in safety, and three countries score zero.

⁴ The results observed in the 2026 edition of the WBL report remain consistent with these findings, underscoring the persistent challenge of achieving substantial changes within a short timeframe.

⁵ WBL scores are calculated for 190 economies to reflect the diverse legal environment of women. However, the fact that some indicators achieve a perfect score of 100 in all EU member states suggests that they are not designed to stress differences within the EU.

Figure 5
Women, Business and the Law 2.0: Scores and gaps
by domain, EU averages, 2024



Source: Author's calculations based on the World Bank (2024).

This reveals that EU countries' laws generally guarantee gender equality in mobility and property, and in most countries, women's rights are equal to men's in terms of marriage and parenthood. However, many countries still fail to adequately enact laws to protect women against violence, an issue that requires urgent policy attention.

The highest scores in supportive measures are observed in marriage, where 18 countries achieve a perfect score of 100 and the average across the 27 EU countries stands at 85.2.

In contrast, the entrepreneurship-supportive indicator shows the lowest scores, aligning with the lower scores observed in the GEI power domain. This indicator has an average score in EU countries of 35.8, with eight member states scoring zero and only three countries scoring 100 (France, Spain and Italy). France and Spain rank second and third in the GEI power domain, with 30-point increases between 2010 and 2022, while Italy ranks eleventh with the second-highest increase of more than 40 points in this domain.

The supportive entrepreneurship domain is evaluated based on three indicators: the publication of sex-disaggregated business data (met by half of the countries); government-led programmes supporting female entrepreneurs (implemented by just a quarter of countries); and national government strategies focused on women's financial services (rarely implemented). This results in women entrepreneurs facing systemic barriers, from a lack of access to finance and training to insufficient data transparency. Without targeted support, legal equality in business remains an empty promise.

Greece exemplifies the consequences of weak enforcement. Although it scores 87.5 on overall legal measures, placing it above most countries classified in the high GEI cluster, its supportive score of 44.2 reveals the EU's widest implementation gap (Figure 2). This disparity is especially evident in entrepreneurship: Greece achieves a perfect score of 100 on legal measures, yet scores zero on supportive actions. For example, a 2020 law mandates gender quotas for corporate boards, but the lack of transparency and sex-disaggregated data make enforcement difficult to verify. As a result, women hold only 22% of board seats in the largest quoted companies, contributing to Greece's low GEI power domain score of 33.2.

Similarly, although Greek law guarantees equal access for women and men to credit and entrepreneurial activities, the absence of targeted support programmes for women entrepreneurs persists as a major barrier. Despite recent progress, Greece continues to rank as the third-lowest EU country in overall GEI (below 60), with particularly weak scores in the power and money domains. These outcomes underscore a critical truth: laws alone do not transform lives. Without effective enforcement, even the most progressive legislation fails to deliver real equality.

In contrast, France demonstrates consistent performance in both GEI and WBL indices, reflecting the positive impact of policies on women's actual lives when properly implemented. France has the highest score in supportive WBL measures, achieving a perfect score of 100 in entrepreneurship and the highest value in assets. At the same time, its current sixth position in the global GEI is supported by a second place in the power domain and the top score in the economic sub-domain, driven by the highest share of women on boards of the largest companies (46%). Notably, France has risen four positions in the power domain since 2010. The adoption of gender quotas for corporate boards, along with the availability of gender data on business activities and government programmes supporting female entrepreneurs, including access to financial services, has significantly improved the situation of women in the country.

Another domain with significant room for improvement in the implementation of laws is assets. No EU country has reached the top score: three countries score zero, and about half of the countries comply with only one out of three indicators in this domain. Policies to encourage women to register immovable property are present in most countries, while awareness measures to improve women's access to information about marital and inheritance rights, as well as sex-disaggregated data on property ownership, are available in only six countries.

Lastly, the safety domain stands out as the EU's most alarming outlier, with a negative implementation gap. This is explained by the lowest score in legal measures, 44.4, with nine countries scoring 0 or 25, and none reaching 100. Among legal measures in this domain, it is worth underscoring that only six countries address femicide in their legal systems, and only nine address child marriage. Although sexual harassment and domestic violence are covered in the legal systems of more than half of EU countries, implementation remains weak. The average implementation score in the safety domain is 51.9, with fewer than half of the EU member states having a government entity responsible for programmes addressing violence against women or an annual budget allocated for such programmes. The low scores in both legal and supportive measures remain dangerously insufficient across EU countries.

Conclusions

The extensive gender data available across EU countries offers valuable insights into the status of women in various fields. It enables meaningful comparisons between legal frameworks, their implementation, and the actual lived experiences of women when multiple indicators are analysed together.

The GEI (EIGE, 2024) highlights substantial progress in women's conditions across EU member states over the last decade, with France and Spain standing out for their strong performance. However, it also underscores that several countries, such as Hungary, Romania and Czechia, continue to lag in ensuring effective representation of women in decision-making roles, limiting progress towards gender equality.

Data from the Women, Business and the Law report (World Bank, 2024) reinforces that legislative reforms alone are insufficient to ensure gender equality. Supportive measures play a vital role in turning legal provisions into tangible improvements. Bridging the implementation gap, particularly in areas like entrepreneurship and assets, requires government programmes tailored to the specific needs of women entrepreneurs and better access to gender business data, as well as information on marital and inheritance rights.

Article 23 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights (European Union, 2012) underpins the enforcement of gender quotas in large companies, which can only be achieved through transparency and the publication of sex-disaggregated business data. Such targeted measures in favour of the under-represented sex could significantly reduce the gender gap in the GEI power domain and

strengthen women's empowerment across EU member states.

Another key recommendation from the WBL analysis is the urgent need to address femicide and domestic violence within all legal systems, ensuring dedicated funding for prevention and support programmes.

The EU must act decisively, not just to pass laws, but to guarantee their implementation, enforcement and support. Only then can the EU truly embody a union where equality before the law is fully realised in women's lives.

References

- European Institute for Gender Equality. (2024). *Gender Equality Index, 2024*.
- European Institute for Gender Equality. (2025). *Gender Equality Index, 2025*.
- European Union. (2000). Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. *Official Journal of the European Communities*, C 364, 1–22.
- European Union. (2012). Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (2012/C 326/02). *Official Journal of the European Union*, C 326, 391–407.
- World Bank. (2024). *Women, Business and the Law 2024*.
- World Bank. (2026). *Women, Business and the Law 2026*.