

Athena Brief: on the European Parliament Resolution on the EU Gender Equality Strategy

The Athena Forum notes the adoption on 13 November 2025 of the European Parliament's [Resolution](#) on the forthcoming EU [Gender Equality Strategy](#) 2026–2030. This Resolution sets out the Parliament's position on the new Strategy, a five-year policy framework on women's rights currently being prepared by the European Commission, and outlines the priorities it expects to see reflected in it.

As a legislative body, the Parliament has a responsibility to ensure that the texts it adopts are coherent, legally sound and based on an accurate understanding of the documents they reference. The Resolution highlights important elements, including the scale of violence against women, the systemic nature of sexual exploitation, the harmful nature of surrogacy, persistent gaps in women's healthcare, women's access to abortion and discrimination in employment, among others.

However, despite these important aspects, the Resolution contains significant contradictions, legal inconsistencies, conceptual ambiguities and areas of misalignment with EU law. These weaknesses reveal a failure to apply the level of scrutiny that should be expected of the Parliament.

Areas of concern

- **Omission of sex as a protected characteristic**

The Resolution cites the EU Treaties and the [Charter of Fundamental Rights](#) yet consistently avoids the protected ground of sex, replacing it with gender, even though sex is the legal basis for equality between women and men. This omission undermines the Resolution's grounding in EU primary law and obscures the sex-based nature of discrimination.

- **Reference to the Yogyakarta Principles**

The Resolution invokes the [Yogyakarta Principles](#) and the [Yogyakarta Principles +10](#), which explicitly advocate removing sex as a legal category and endorse practices that conflict with EU obligations and international human rights standards. Their inclusion raises a serious question as to whether the MEPs supporting the Resolution have examined these documents or understood their implications, given the significant conflict between the Principles and established EU and international frameworks for protecting women.

- **Forced merging of women with the "LGBTIQ+" category**

The Resolution treats discrimination against women and discrimination against the broad "LGBTIQ+" category as intrinsically connected, almost as a single issue.

This linkage is false. The "LGBTIQ+" umbrella is an activist-driven construction that collapses distinct and often conflicting groups, including cases where the interests of lesbians diverge sharply from those of males who identify as transgender. Treating these as one category obscures discrimination against women as a sex-based group, undermines protections for lesbians and misrepresents the nature of the harms involved.

- **Contradictions on surrogacy**

The Resolution condemns surrogacy as reproductive exploitation while simultaneously citing the Yogyakarta Principles +10, an activist manifesto that promotes and normalises surrogacy ([Principle 24 \(k\)](#), "Relating to the Right to Found a Family"). It also refers positively to the European Commission's proposed [Regulation on cross-border parenthood](#), which explicitly includes surrogacy within its scope and obliges Member States to recognise parenthood established in another Member State when the child was procured through surrogacy. The Resolution therefore endorses a legislative proposal that normalises the outcomes of surrogacy while at the same time declaring surrogacy to be a harmful practice.

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- **Inaccurate merging of SRHR with gender-identity medical interventions**

The Resolution places women's sexual and reproductive health and rights alongside "gender-affirming care", although these are unrelated domains. Women's SRHR are grounded in the EU Charter's protection of [bodily integrity](#), while gender-identity medical interventions, including sterilisation, irreversible hormonal treatment and surgery, entail violations of that integrity. These procedures carry documented medical risks, lack long-term evidence and disproportionately affect young women, lesbians and gay youth. They also reinforce sex stereotypes, contradicting the Resolution's stated objective of eliminating stereotypes to advance women's equality.

- **Selective application of the "do no harm" principle**

The Resolution applies the "do no harm" principle to EU funding for so-called "anti-gender" projects, but does not extend it to areas where harm is well documented, such as the medicalisation of gender-nonconforming girls, including young lesbians and girls with autism; interventions that violate bodily integrity; or educational and clinical practices that lack scientific evidence. At the same time, feminist, safeguarding-focused and gender-critical professionals receive no recognition or support. This one-sided and selective use of "do no harm" departs from evidence-based policymaking and fails to protect the groups most at risk.

- **Inaccurate definition of femicide**

The Resolution defines femicide as "the killing of a woman or girl because of her gender." In international law, "gender" refers to [socially constructed stereotypes](#). Yet women are killed because they are female, whether they conform to those stereotypes or defy them. Substituting sex with "gender" misdiagnoses femicide, shifts attention away from sex-based power relations and risks distorting the statistical recording and analysis of violence against women.

- **Call to include GBV in the list of Eurocrimes**

The Resolution calls for the inclusion of "gender-based violence" in the list of Eurocrimes under Article 83(1) TFEU. The Parliament has [previously defined GBV](#) to include violence on the grounds of gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics. Under such a definition, the category applies to anyone irrespective of sex and does not capture male violence against women as a sex-based pattern. This approach removes the central role of sex in understanding violence, dilutes sex-segregated data and obscures the analysis of male power and inequality. On this basis, adding GBV as a Eurocrime risks weakening, rather than strengthening, protections for women.

These inconsistencies reveal a serious lack of examination of the legislative acts, international documents and conceptual frameworks cited in the Resolution. Adopting a text with mutually exclusive and conceptually flawed elements embeds positions that risk misdirecting future legislative development, eroding sex-based protections and producing outcomes that harm women and girls.

Effective policymaking requires rigorous scrutiny of referenced materials and consistent alignment with legal reality and with the EU's obligation to guarantee equality between women and men.

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