



Scientific Analysis and Advice  
on Gender Equality in the EU

**European Semester  
Supporting Negotiation for a Gender Equality Focus**

**ANNUAL SEMINAR**

Thursday, 20 November 2025

The Skyline at Brussimo  
Rue de Trèves 74, 1040

# ABOUT THE EVENT

## Background

The Scientific Analysis and Advice on Gender Equality in the EU (SAAGE) initiative works to contribute to the improvement of European-level policy analysis and policy development, by providing reliable, independent, and rigorous scientific support and advice to the European Commission. This annual seminar of the SAAGE network of experts provides an opportunity to provide input in terms of arguments, evidence and focus to increase the gender dimension in the European Semester and its impact on gender equality issues at Member State level thereby stating the case for realising this potential.

The European Semester is the key policy framework for the coordination of economic, budgetary, employment and social policies in the EU. It involves the European Commission in: preparing country reports for all Member States, which take stock of their budgetary situation and assess progress made in implementing previous years' Country Specific Recommendations; and presenting Country Specific Recommendations that provided tailored guidance on economic, budgetary, employment and structural policies for each Member State, with measures that each country should take to correct imbalances identified.

Country Specific Recommendations can and do directly address a gender equality issue and they can and do incorporate a gender equality dimension where another issue is being addressed.

## Purpose

This annual seminar of the SAAGE network of experts will focus on building and strengthening the evidence base, argument and focus for addressing gender equality within the European Semester, specifically through Country Specific Recommendations.

This annual seminar will enable discussion between European Commission officials and the SAAGE network of experts in a manner designed to support the work of the officials in negotiating a specific gender focus within the Country Specific Recommendations to the various Member States under the European Semester.

## Format

The seminar will be hybrid but an in-person participation is recommended. The seminar will be held in English. A report from the event, with a summary of discussions and key messages will be prepared for the European Commission.

## Participants

The participants at this seminar will be officials of the European Commission and the experts of the SAAGE network.

## Moderator

Niall Crowley, Fondazione Giacomo Brodolini (FGB).

# AGENDA



## Activity

## Speaking

09.30

### *Opening Session*

*European Commission perspective*

***Karen Vandekerckhove,***

*Head of Gender Equality Unit of DG JUST,  
European Commission*

9.45

### ***Plenary: Framing the Debate***

*Overview of the economic potential to be realised through, the economic arguments to be made for, and the evidence available for a European Semester with an adequate and appropriate gender equality focus, rooted in the concern for a fairer labour market and to address social policy issues.*

*Brief deliberation among participants on the key arguments and evidence available to be mobilised in supporting a gender equality focus in the European Semester.*

***Presentation by: Katia Berti***

*Head of the Employment and Social Aspects of the European Semester Unit of DG EMPL,  
European Commission*

10.15

### ***Plenary: Reviewing Potential: Country Specific Recommendations with a Gender Dimension***

*This session covers points of progress made: the basis for the inclusion of the recommendation made with a gender dimension, the quality and impact of this and what makes for an effective recommendation with a gender dimension.*

*Short inputs from SAAGE country experts from Member States where Country Specific Recommendations with a gender dimension were made for 2025 (Austria, Czechia, Germany, Greece, the Netherlands, Romania and Slovakia), on:*

- *review of arguments to be made for this recommendation;*
- *the adequacy of focus and impact being achieved; and*
- *improvements that could be made to the recommendation, as appropriate.*

*Plenary response*

11.30

*Tea/ Coffee-Break*

*(continues)*

**11.45** *Table Presentations & Discussion: Pursuing Potential Country Specific Recommendation*

*EU Commission desk officers will facilitate, and record as they wish for their own use, discussion at separate tables in the plenary room with the experts from the Member States that they cover in their brief.*

*Country experts will each make a brief presentation to address:*

- *the priority gender equality issue appropriate to be addressed through a Country Specific Recommendation;*
- *the key evidence-base for this issue in the Member State;*
- *the argument to be made for including this issue, in particular the economic argument;*
- *the action that needs to be progressed by a Country Specific Recommendation, an action that would be achievable over the coming year.*

*Country experts, for their presentation, will select their priority gender equality issues in relation to fairness in the labour market or social policy. Fairness in the labour market covers themes for potential Country Specific Recommendations, such as quality of work, labour market segregation, pensions, and taxation. Social Policy covers themes for potential Country Specific Recommendations, such as poverty, homelessness, education, and care and care infrastructure. There will then be discussion at the tables, facilitated by the Desk Officer, to inquire further into the proposals being made and to explore cross-country parallels.*

**13.00** *Lunch***14.00** *Table Presentations & Discussion: Pursuing Potential Country Specific Recommendations*

*Continued from the morning*

**15.15** *Closing Remarks***15.30** *Close*