



*Source: ChatGPT-4o (generated on 25.06.2025)*

# Beyond neutral futures

## Embedding gender-responsive foresight in labour market policy

Joanna Hofman, 26/06/2025

# Why foresight matters for labour and welfare policy?

- The future of work and welfare in Europe is shaped by megatrends like demographic shifts, green and digital transitions, labour migration<sup>1, 2</sup>
- Foresight helps us anticipate transformations – but who's included in the futures we imagine? <sup>3, 4</sup>
- EU policy is increasingly using foresight (e.g. in the Better Regulation Agenda), but this is still developing – and often gender-blind and exclusionary<sup>5</sup>



Gender Mainstreaming

**Fostering a gender and  
intersectional perspective  
in EU foresight**

# What's missing? Insights from gender and intersectional analysis



*Source: ChatGPT-4o (generated on 24.06.2025)*

- A review of 33 EU evaluations and impact assessments (2020–2022) across a range of policy areas found:
  - Foresight use is limited, especially in evaluations
  - Where used, foresight relied on megatrends, but failed to consider how these affect different groups differently
  - No gender or intersectional analysis was included in scenario planning<sup>5</sup>
- Policies risk embedding one-size-fits-all assumptions about workers and welfare recipients

# Relevance to labour markets and welfare futures

- Gender matters in Active Labour Market Policies (ALMP):
  - Hiring: Women face bias when applying for roles traditionally dominated by men<sup>6</sup>
  - Salary: Men are more likely than women to negotiate pay<sup>7</sup>
  - Career progression: Men are more likely to use career guidance services than women (c. 50% vs 40% for women)<sup>8</sup>
  - Heterogeneity in outcomes: larger impacts of ALMP for women<sup>9</sup>
- Welfare systems often overlook unpaid work and informal employment, which disproportionately affect women:
  - Despite living longer after retirement, women typically retire with less pension wealth than men; the EU gender pension gap was 26% in 2024<sup>10</sup>
  - Few OECD countries still plan gender differences in state pension age (SPA): SPA rose by 0.6 years for men and 1.4 years for women in the EU (2010-2016)<sup>11</sup>
  - Women are more likely than men to combine pension receipt with employment<sup>12, 13</sup>

Without inclusive foresight, we risk designing policies that reinforce inequalities – or miss opportunities for transformative change

# Recommendations for gender-responsive and inclusive foresight: use foresight to imagine transformative futures



Integrate EIGE's gender mainstreaming tools into foresight exercises



Build diverse foresight teams and involve lived experience (e.g. through participatory foresight methods)



Make megatrend analysis intersectional – two examples below<sup>5</sup>

## Climate change and environmental degradation

Environmental attitudes and actions are gendered: women tend to be more climate-conscious and more likely than men to reduce waste and disposable consumption<sup>14</sup>

## Accelerating technological change and hyperconnectivity

Gender stereotypes and unequal access to resources mean older women are less likely than men to use the internet or access mobile internet<sup>15</sup>

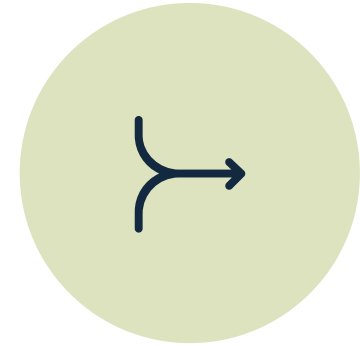
# Closing remarks: rethinking whose futures we plan for



Labour and welfare futures  
must be designed with  
inclusion at their core



Strategic foresight is not a tool  
for prediction — but it can  
(and should be) a lever for  
justice and transformation



Foresight can help shape a  
future of work (and welfare)  
that works for all

# References

1. Matti, C., Jensen, K., Bontoux, L., Goran, P., Pistocchi, A. and Salvi, M. (2023). Towards a fair and sustainable Europe 2050: Social and economic choices in sustainability transitions, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2023, p. 38.
2. European Commission (2024). Employment and Social Developments in Europe 2024. Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion. Publications Office of the European Union, p. 86.
3. Polchar, J. (2020). 'Whose futures matter? How foresight can make the future more inclusive', LinkedIn post, 24 November 2020.
4. Bergman, H., Engwall, K., Gunnarsson-Östling, U. and Johannesson, L. (2014). 'What about the future? The troubled relationship between futures and feminism', *NORA – Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research*, Vol. 22, No. 1, pp. 63–69.
5. Hofman, J., Hoorens, S. & Strabel, T. (2024). Fostering a gender and intersectional perspective in EU foresight. European Institute for Gender Equality, p.14.
6. Isaac, C., Lee, B., & Carnes, M. (2009). Interventions that affect gender bias in hiring: A systematic review. *Academic medicine: Journal of the Association of American Medical Colleges*, Vol. 84, No. 10, p. 1440.
7. Leibbrandt, A., & List, J. A. (2014). Do women avoid salary negotiations? Evidence from a large-scale natural field experiment. *Management Science*, Vol. 61, No. 9, pp. 2016-2024.
8. OECD (2021). Career guidance for adults in a changing world of work, Getting Skills Right, OECD Publishing, p. 17.
9. Card, D., Kluve, J., & Weber, A. (2018). What works? A meta analysis of recent active labor market program evaluations. *Journal of the European Economic Association*, Vol. 16, No. 3, pp. 894-931.
10. EIGE (2024). Gender Equality Index 2024 – Sustaining momentum on a fragile path, Publications Office of the European Union, p. 23.
11. Picken, N., Groom, M., Cardoso, F., Nightingale, M., Hofman, J. & Blake, D. (2023). Understanding decision-making around changing the state pension age: A review of international evidence. DWP.
12. Edge, C. E., Cooper, A. M., & Coffey, M. (2017). Barriers and facilitators to extended working lives in Europe: a gender focus. *Public health reviews*, Vol. 38, No. 1, pp. 1-27.
13. EIGE (2024). Financial Independence and Gender Equality – Joining the dots between income, wealth, and power, Publications Office of the European Union, p. 35.
14. European Commission (2017), Special Eurobarometer 459 – Climate Change.
15. EIGE (2020), *Gender Equality Index 2020 – Digitalisation and the future of work*, Publications Office of the European Union.



# Thank you!

Joanna Hofman

Deputy Director of the Education, Employment and Skills Research Group

RAND Europe

[jhofman@randeurope.org](mailto:jhofman@randeurope.org)

[Joanna Barbara Hofman | LinkedIn](#)