Does hope or fear prevail among Europe’s LGBTI people?

“Too many LGBTI people continue to live in the shadows, afraid of being ridiculed, discriminated or even attacked. Even though some countries have advanced LGBTI equality, our survey findings show that overall there has been too little real progress, leaving many LGBTI people vulnerable. Their job and healthcare difficulties may worsen due to COVID-19. Policymakers should take note and do more to actively promote full respect for rights of LGBTI people,” says FRA Director Michael O’Flaherty.

European Commissioner for Equality, Helena Dalli added: *“Despite the important steps forward regarding the equality of LGBTI+ people in the EU in the last years, LGBTI+ people still report high levels of discrimination. More worryingly, we have recently witnessed within the EU anti-LGBTI incidents such as attacks on prides, the adoption of ‘LGBTI ideology-free zone’ declarations, fines for LGBTI-friendly advertisements and others. Everybody in the European Union should feel safe and free to be themselves.”*

The ‘A long way to go for LGBTI equality’ report looks at how around 140,000 LGBTI people in the European Union, the United Kingdom, Serbia and North Macedonia experience their human rights. It also underlines changes since

FRA’s first LGBT survey carried out in 2012.

Comparing the two surveys reveals little overall progress over the seven years. The EU averages mask important differences between countries. In some, over 70% LGBTI respondent say society is more tolerant, while in others, up to 68% say it is less.

Key survey findings include:

- **Openness**: 6 in 10 avoid holding hands in public with their partners.
- **Harassment**: 2 in 5 respondents say they were harassed the year before the survey.
- **Attacks**: 1 in 5 trans and intersex people were physically or sexually attacked, double that of other LGBTI groups.
- **Discrimination**: 1 in 5 feel discriminated against at work and over 1 in 3 feel discriminated against when going out to eat, drink or being social.
- **Schooling**: 1 in 2 LGBTI students say someone among their peers or teachers supported LGBTI people.
- **Economic situation**: 1 in 3 LGBTI people say they have difficulties to make ends meet. The situation is worse for intersex and trans people (about 1 in 2).

This evidence will support the European Commission’s LGBTI Equality Strategy due this year. FRA calls on the EU and its Member States to put in place measures protecting the rights of LGBTI people, including:

- **Hate crime** – build a culture of zero tolerance towards violence and harassment of the LGBTI community so that LGBTI people can enjoy their right to move freely and without fear. Invest in training to ensure that police can recognise, record and properly investigate hate crimes against LGBTI people so that victims feel safe to report attacks and are treated equally.
- **Reporting** – make it easier for victims to report crimes and discrimination through online reporting tools, community liaison and police training. Adequately resource equality bodies so they can effectively support victims of discrimination.
- **Discrimination** – adopt the Equal Treatment Directive to extend protection against discrimination beyond employment. Realise comprehensive national actions plans to promote respect for rights of LGBTI people across all areas of life.
- **Schooling** – create safe and supportive environment for young LGBTI people at school. Help schools and teachers to share experiences, counter bullying of LGBTI students and ensure educational materials do not equate being LGBTI with having a disease.
- **Lead by example** – everyone can play their part so that equality becomes a reality.

This survey covers the EU 27 Member States, the UK, Serbia and North Macedonia. For the first time, it includes experiences of intersex people and young LGBTI people aged 15 to 17.

Together with the main survey results, FRA publishes an extensive online [data explorer](), which allows to filter data by country, by survey question and by L, G, B, T or I group.

In our video LGBTI people tell us about their lives – in their own words:

[embedded content]

More information

For more information, please see the [press pack]() or contact [media@fra.europa.eu]() / Tel.: +43 1 580 30 653

Download Press Release also in:

ECB announces new measures to increase share of female staff members

PRESS RELEASE

14 May 2020

- ECB launches new model for gender targets
- New targets to cover both hiring and promotion decisions and overall share of female staff
- ECB missed 2019 gender target for all managers but exceeded target for senior management level

The European Central Bank (ECB) today announced a new programme to further improve the gender balance of its staff at all levels. The strategy defines target percentages focusing on the annual share of women being appointed to new and open positions as well as targets for the overall share of female staff at various salary levels. The strategy covers the period until 2026, so as to fall within the mandate of President Christine Lagarde.

“We want gender balance to be the norm now rather than a revolution to fight later,” said President Lagarde. “Let us not forget that gender is one of the many dimensions of diversity that we must all value. We should mirror the society we serve.”

The new targets extend beyond management positions to include Lead Expert (H band on [the ECB’s salary scale]()), Expert (F/G and G on the salary scale) and Analyst levels (E/F on the salary scale). The objective is to fill at least half of new and open positions with women on all levels. The targets aim to increase the share of women at the different levels to between 40% and 51 % by 2026. The ECB will publish interim assessments in 2022 and 2024. Staff members who do not wish to declare themselves as either female or male will not be included in the statistics. The targets are accompanied by a set of other measures to support gender diversity.

The new programme follows the ECB’s first set of gender targets, which aimed to double the share of women in management positions over the period from 2013 to 2019. The ECB exceeded one of its targets by achieveing a figure of 30% female senior managers at the end of 2019, compared to a target of 28%. The share of women in all management positions rose from 17% to 30%, which was still below the target figure of 35%.

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Speaking engagements

Media contacts

Fabio Panetta: Interview with Der Standard

INTERVIEW

Interview with Fabio Panetta, Member of the Executive Board of the ECB, conducted by Andras Szigetvari on 6 May and published on 14 May 2020

14 May 2020

The European Central Bank has responded to the crisis by launching a new emergency programme, under which it will buy €750 billion of securities, mainly government bonds, by the end of the year. At the same time, European rules have been loosened and the usual limits on government deficits no longer apply. Can governments now take on as much debt as they like?

We are currently going through a severe economic shock. The first and most important thing we have to do is to maintain the euro area's productive capacity. This crisis is affecting weak and strong companies alike, because their revenues disappeared from one day to the next. It would be a very serious mistake to let viable companies go bankrupt and lose the productive capacity we need for the recovery. By improving financing conditions for all sectors of the economy, our monetary policy complements and reinforces the European and national measures taken to provide relief to the economy. And the more we protect our productive capacity today, the easier it will be to manage public debt in the future.

Italy announced a massive €50 billion stimulus programme a few days ago. Interestingly, yields on Italian government debt have fallen. That was never the case in normal times – whenever a southern European country announced an increase in spending, yields rose.

It isn't a law of nature that a country's risk premia rises just because it plans to spend more money. If a government announces that it is increasing spending when there are no grounds to do so, that is in a pro-cyclical way that increases economic risks eventually, yields generally go up. But when governments' action reduces economic risks in a counter-cyclical way and monetary policy is acting in tandem to stabilise the economy, yields typically go down. It would be much worse if fiscal policy was not used in the current situation, even in countries where public debt is relatively high.

What do you fear more at the moment: higher inflation, because the ECB is pumping so much money into the markets, or deflation, meaning falling prices?

Right now we're facing a situation where companies aren't really in a position to offer their goods and services. But that is only part of the story: the prevailing uncertainty and higher unemployment are severely affecting demand. On top of that, there are the effects of cheap oil, weak international demand and weak trade developments. All of that is weighing on prices. It's clearly a disinflationary environment.

So the ECB needs to do even more to avoid deflation?

We will do everything that is necessary to secure price stability in line with our mandate and avoid disinflationary or even deflationary risks. And we remain determined not to tolerate any tightening of financing conditions for as long as the economic damage caused by Covid-19 persists. We have all the necessary tools, we are using them decisively.

But if we see a recovery in 2021 and a rise in oil prices, wouldn't there be a risk of much higher inflation?

I wouldn't expect to see that. We think that inflation will stay very low for the next two or three years, well below our definition of price stability. I can't say what will happen in ten years, but I note that market-based indicators of longer-term inflation expectations have remained at depressed levels.

But then shouldn't the ECB change its inflation objective? Inflation has fallen short of your target of below, but close to, 2% for years, and you're saying that this is set to continue. Why not match the target to reality?

That wouldn't be a good idea. There are sound reasons why we chose our objective of below, but close to, 2%. First, it grants a safety margin to deflationary territory, also taking into account possible cross-country differences in the price level. And it's extremely hard and extremely expensive to find a way out of a deflationary situation. This margin is also important as it implies that nominal interest rates are higher, giving additional policy space for monetary accommodation, and makes it easier for real wages to adjust if needed. Moreover, there is a possibility of distortion when measuring inflation as price pressures can also reflect improvements in product quality, which means that measured inflation is always somewhat higher than actual inflation. A US study puts that distortion at as much as 1%.

Governments are pumping a great deal of money into the economy, with expenditure rising everywhere. The ECB is supporting the process from its side. When will we see a return to the old normality?

To paraphrase Einstein, as soon as possible but no sooner. It would be counterproductive if, having made every effort to keep the economy going, policy support were then to be switched off too early. What would happen then? Growth would immediately disappear again. So on the monetary policy side we will need to ensure that inflation moves towards its aim in a sustained manner. And on the fiscal side, it will be key to have self-sustaining economic growth. One of the big mistakes after the financial crisis was that fiscal policy in the euro area shifted too quickly to a pro-cyclical stance. Spending was cut during the crisis, and that is always fatal. But this time we have seen a substantial response even from countries that were previously very conservative in their spending. So I'm optimistic that the euro area has learned this lesson.

Former ECB President Mario Draghi has said that one of the biggest changes in this crisis is that government debt will be much higher than it was before. Do you agree? And what consequences will this have?

Yes, I would agree. But I would also expect interest rates to stay low for a long time. Three factors determine whether a country’s debt is sustainable: the level of debt compared with economic output; the rate of growth of the economy; and interest rates. So, on the one hand, we will be worse off, because government debt will be higher. But there are also a number of factors keeping interest rates low in the future, which are by no means solely attributable to the ECB.

Which factors?

First and foremost, demographic developments, the ageing of societies in many industrialised countries. As that entails an excess in saving and less potential for innovation, many economists refer to a secular stagnation: economic growth slows down, also lowering inflation and interest rates because there is less demand for capital.

How long can that work for?

The path towards secular stagnation is not inevitable. It all depends on whether we succeed in stimulating growth. Stronger growth makes it easier to service debt. Households that have a good income find it easier to keep up their loan repayments.

The eurozone comprises 19 countries. What would happen if growth returned in the north and inflation increased there, but not in the south, not in Italy? The ECB has to conduct policy for all countries in the euro area. Wouldn’t it be a dilemma if higher interest rates were needed in the north but not at all in the south?

One of the biggest challenges is to prevent the eurozone from emerging from this crisis with even more regional fragmentation than it had on entering it. This risk is real and one reason why we need a symmetrical and forceful response to this crisis. Not out of solidarity towards anyone in particular, that is a moral category, but because of our tight economic interlinkages. If one part of the euro area falls into a deep and prolonged recession, do you really think that the rest could forge ahead as if nothing had happened? No. So it is in every country’s own interest to secure the recovery across the euro area and to collectively provide resources to that end.

How can such joint development be achieved?

What matters now is to stabilise the economy. Next comes a phase in which we need investment, with the environment meriting particular attention. Some countries, as has also emerged, will need to invest in their healthcare infrastructure. And, as always, innovation and human capital – i.e. education – remain central. There are sensible strategies for boosting growth through public investment in these sectors.

Do the additional public debts actually ever need to be repaid?

The lower the costs of servicing debts, the easier they are to bear. Many prominent economists believe that, given structurally low interest rates, advanced economies can tolerate higher debts today without having to rush into premature fiscal consolidation. What matters is whether the debt is financing productive spending that leads to higher future growth.

Japan has debt of more than 200%. The country is barely growing, but appears to have no problem with this mountain of debt.

If a country needs to borrow in order to fire up growth, to generate innovation, then it makes perfect sense to run up higher debts to finance productive spending. But not indefinitely. At a certain point, these investments will need to pay off, allowing debt to be repaid through the growth they generate, otherwise the government faces a problem.

Could the current situation result in a banking crisis? The hotel sector – which is highly dependent on bank loans – has been massively hit by the crisis. If borrowers default en masse, it will be problematic.

Banks are more resilient today than they were a decade ago, but we can’t rule out risks. If there is a longer recession, the financial sector will be hit too. But compared with the time of the financial crisis, governments are now far more aware of the kind of difficulties that could lie ahead for the financial sector. Countries are offering government guarantees to borrowers. They are intended to protect borrowers but offer security for the banks at the same time. Moreover, this time European banking supervision has relaxed some rules, enabling banks to more easily provide loans to businesses and avoiding undesirable pro-cyclical lending policies by banks. A credit freeze in the private sector would only exacerbate the turmoil.

In its decision last week, the German Federal Constitutional Court set its sights on the ECB’s asset purchase programme. Among other things, it criticised the fact that the ECB had never explained that its actions were proportionate. The Court objected that, as interest rates were so low, the ECB had affected savers.

The ECB does not fall under the jurisdiction of the German Federal Constitutional Court, but rather under that of the Court of Justice of the European Union, which ruled in December 2018 that the ECB is acting within its price stability mandate and in compliance with the principle of proportionality. The German Federal Constitutional Court’s ruling is addressed to the German Federal Government and the Bundestag. And the Deutsche Bundesbank is in close contact with them.

Did the Court understand the ECB’s strategy? Its argument was that the ECB also needed to consider other effects of its policy, such as its impact on house prices and on savers.

The ECB has repeatedly discussed these issues in public in the past, including as part of its accountability to the European Parliament. We have spoken extensively about the potential side effects of our public sector purchase programme. There have been ECB publications on the topic as well as frequent interactions with parliamentarians. Proportionality was discussed in detail, also with the Court of Justice of the European Union in the course of its decision about our programme.

Do you see it that way too, have German and Austrian savers been harmed by the ECB's ultra-loose monetary policy?

No, in my view, the ECB's policy was beneficial for both German and Austrian people, who are at the same time savers, employees, mortgage holders. Many of the jobs that were created in the euro area over the past few years were in these countries. Their economies grew particularly strongly after the financial crisis, increasing the income that can be saved, and the ECB had a significant role in that. As regards interest earnings, they ultimately depend on growth – only when the economy grows interest rates can increase – and our policy has underpinned that growth.

Press release – EP wants data protection guaranteed before allowing fingerprint exchange with UK

MEPs rejected the Council draft implementing decision on the exchange of fingerprints with the UK with 329 votes for, 357 against, and 4 abstentions.

MEPs urge the Council not to take any decision on the topic until the UK gives guarantees on full reciprocity and data protection and to wait until the new legal framework for the new partnership cooperation with the UK has been concluded.

The launch of the fingerprint exchange between the United Kingdom and EU member states, bound by the Prüm decision, would allow the responsible national authorities to share fingerprint data to prevent and investigate crimes.

This decision on the fingerprint data exchange would be limited to the transition period ending on 31 December. MEPs say however that, since it is not clear if the UK will meet EU data protection standards after this date, such a decision could pose a serious risk to the protection of fundamental rights and freedoms of EU citizens after the transition period.

Furthermore, MEPs think that the reciprocity of the data exchange should be guaranteed before any decision on the matter is taken. As stated in the Council draft implementing decision, the UK does not intend to make fingerprint data from suspects' profiles available, in contrast with other member states participating in the Prüm system.

Background information

Decisions on automated exchange of fingerprint data in the EU are enabled by the [Prüm framework](). It lays down provisions under which EU member states grant each other access to their automated DNA analysis files, automated fingerprint identification systems and vehicle registration data.

The Parliament has a consultative role in the decision.

Press release – Long-term EU budget: Parliament wants safety net for beneficiaries

On Wednesday, MEPs adopted a legislative resolution by 616 votes in favour, 29 against and 46 abstentions, requesting that the European Commission submit a proposal for an MFF (Multiannual Financial Framework) contingency plan by 15 June 2020.

While current budgetary ceilings would be automatically extended if no new MFF is in place next year, nonetheless many programmes will expire at the end of 2020, like cohesion, Erasmus or research programmes. The aim is to provide a safety net for citizens, regions, cities, farmers, universities or businesses who benefit from EU programmes, and rule out any risk of the current MFF and programmes being discontinued or extended in a disorderly way.

Focus on tackling consequences of COVID-19

MEPs say the plan should refocus the budget temporarily on addressing and mitigating the immediate economic and social consequences of the COVID-19 outbreak and on helping in the recovery by adding flexibility and funding, as was already done under this year’s budget.

On 17 April, the EP called for a massive recovery and reconstruction package that involves increasing the MFF. According to today’s resolution, the contingency plan would provide a better basis than a late or inadequate MFF for the European Union’s recovery and political priorities.

Quotes

Jan Olbrycht (EPP, PL), co-rapporteur: “The current situation needs extraordinary solutions. We are afraid that the new MFF 2021-2027 will not be ready on time due to accumulated, severe delays. Therefore, we urge the European Commission to propose a contingency plan for next year's budget. In times of crises and instability, beneficiaries of the EU budget should have a clear vision of the next year. Members of the European Parliament are searching for all possible solutions to secure the stability of the EU budget."

Margarida Marques (S&D, PT), co-rapporteur: "Citizens, businesses and civil society would not understand why on 1 January 2021, we don't have an EU Budget in place. If it was already difficult to accept this before this pandemic, it is much more difficult now with the severe impact of COVID-19 on families, schools, businesses and economies.

We call on the European Commission to present an ambitious EU budget proposal on time for the next seven years, with an anchored Recovery Fund that meets citizens' expectations. The Commission is already delayed in presenting its new proposal; the European Council must reach an agreement and the European Parliament must give its consent. But we cannot take any further risks. We call once more on the European Commission to present a Contingency Plan. This plan must be effective and provide a safety net for beneficiaries of EU programmes."

Background

As the current long-term EU budget runs out on 31 December 2020, the EU needs a new budgetary planning horizon for the next seven years. The EU Commission thus presented plans for the next MFF for 2021-2027 in May 2018, and announced a new proposal for May 2020 to take account of the health crisis and its consequences. The European Parliament adopted its position in November 2018, and re-confirmed it in October 2019. The Council has not yet been able to agree on a position.

Next steps

The report has been endorsed by a majority of Parliament's component members. As a consequence, the Commission has to either submit a relevant proposal, or else must inform Parliament of the reasons why it will not do so, according to article 225 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU.

Upon her approval as Commission President by Parliament last July, Commission President von der Leyen pledged: "When this House, acting by majority of its Members, adopts Resolutions requesting the Commission to submit legislative proposals, I commit to responding with a legislative act in full respect of the proportionality, subsidiarity, and better law-making principles."