



**The Alliance for Gender Equality in Europe brings together for the first time diverse funders to support progress in the areas of gender equality and women's rights in Europe.**

## Background

In 2019 the Fondation CHANEL engaged in a broad stakeholder consultation to assess and analyse the lack of funding for gender equality issues across Europe.<sup>1</sup> The aim was to explore how to successfully build up philanthropy to support women and girls within the region.

While gender inequality is often viewed as a larger problem outside of Europe than within, the situation is nevertheless disconcerting. Some troubling statistics include: women on the average earn **16%** less than their male counterparts; the gap between pensions for men and women is nearly **40%**; only **6%** of large European companies are headed by women; and **one in three** women has experienced physical or sexual violence.<sup>2</sup>

Underfunding of the sector is due to a variety of factors, including the limited allocation of resources from national governments impacted by austerity; a focus on allocating EU funds for gender equality to the global south; the relatively weak philanthropic culture in the field; and a lack of individual donor engagement.

This notable paucity of funding contrasts sharply with the ever-growing influence and effectiveness of grassroots women's movements driving momentum on issues of gender equality across the globe. Indeed, networks of women's rights organisations and stakeholders are more likely to bring about transformative change due, in part, to their capacity to collaborate and act collectively.

While societies seem increasingly aware of the pressing need to support women's issues, no collective philanthropic effort to fund across Europe itself has successfully emerged up to now. Responding to this opportunity, the Alliance for Gender Equality in Europe (the Alliance) has been created as the first pan-European multi-stakeholder funding initiative to focus on gender equality and women's rights across the European Union.

Given the challenges ahead, no single organisation can achieve enough progress on its own. A collective engagement such as the Alliance enables donors to combine forces, leverage funding, raise awareness, build support, and help sustain the sector and the organisations working on gender in the region.

## Context

The COVID-19 pandemic is disproportionately impacting women and girls worldwide.<sup>3</sup> Over the past 2 years substantial media attention has focused on the fact that women are losing traction in their quest for equality. Heightened poverty and a dramatic rise in Violence Against Women (VAW)—with some countries reporting as much as a 30% increase—are two examples of this downward trend. Women and girls living in vulnerable situations and/or at risk of multiple discrimination depending on their social or ethnic/national origin, such as women with disabilities, women in prostitution, elderly women, migrant and asylum-seeking women, are particularly at risk. Moreover, access to sexual and reproductive health services, legal aid, hotlines and other protections may become even more limited as resources for women's organisations become stretched to the breaking point. Strengthening the sector as a whole, including boosting capacity and sustainability, is critical.

This is a unique moment for women's issues globally. 2020 marked the 25th anniversary of the UN's Beijing Platform for Action<sup>4</sup>, a key resolution which committed to taking steps towards achieving gender equality worldwide. To mark the occasion and assess progress and implementation, UN Women convened the Generation Equality Forum in 2021 and brought together governments, corporations, civil society organisations and others to secure a new set of concrete, ambitious, and transformative commitments. The Forum was "a rallying point to finally achieve the human rights of all women and girls."<sup>5</sup>

The launch of the Alliance is intended to be part and parcel of this broader movement. It aims to address long-term structural challenges for women's equality as well as offering a unique opportunity to engage with partners on shorter-term immediate needs.

<sup>1</sup> A feasibility study was undertaken in conjunction with the European Women's Lobby (EWL).

<sup>2</sup> See: [International Women's Day Report, European Commission, 2019](#).

<sup>3</sup> See: [Understanding Covid-19's impact on women, European Parliament, 2021](#).

<sup>4</sup> See: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2015/01/beijing-declaration>.



## Vision

The Alliance for Gender Equality in Europe brings together private donors to fund and support progress in the areas of gender equality and women's rights in Europe. It aims to attract mainly donors that are not currently giving in this historically under-funded field in Europe.

## Unique positioning

The Alliance is the only pooled fund of its kind in Europe, creating and sharing knowledge, building capacity and bolstering a culture of strategic philanthropy for gender equality issues in the European Union. It emerged from consultations with the women's sector as a whole, women's funds and civil society organisations, as well as corporate and private donors.

A joint funding and learning initiative, it enables foundations and others to collaborate at the European level through a streamlined and transparent process. Its goal is to increase resources for those organisations most in need while also generating learning which will boost stakeholder engagement through the following activities:

- **A flexible dynamic pooled funding mechanism to provide grants for social purpose organisations with an annual grant-making activity.**

The first call for proposals, "2021 COVID fund for solidarity", was launched in September 2021. Through this, the Alliance currently supports 13 organisations (mainly small and frontline) affected by COVID-19 and working with women and girls in the most vulnerable situations across 10 countries in the European Union<sup>6</sup>.

- **A set of learning activities to engage a diversity of stakeholders (grantee partners, donors all over Europe and women's rights advocates).**

Those activities include:

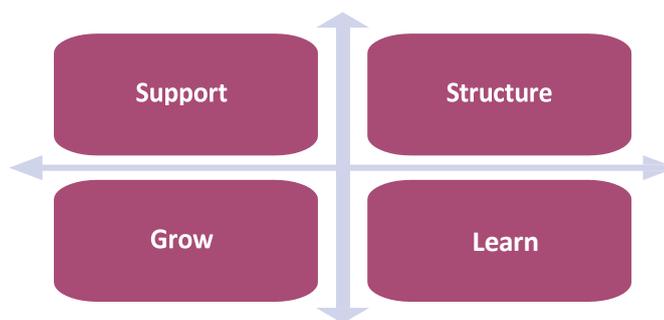
- creating learnings about the grant-making activities of the Alliance and its impact
- providing peer-learning, capacity-building and networking opportunities for grantees
- implementing awareness-raising and communication activities to engage more donors on gender equality in Europe.

## Organisation and Governance

The Alliance currently includes Fondation CHANEL, King Baudouin Foundation and L'Oréal Fund for Women. The Alliance is established under the auspices of the Brussels-based Network of European Foundations (NEF), an umbrella organisation dedicated to mutualising philanthropic support in Europe.

A Steering Committee comprised of donors to the pooled fund gives the strategic orientation and make the final granting decisions. An Advisory Committee made up of representatives from women's organisations, networks, women's funds, the business world and others will ensure robust stakeholder participation.

## The Alliance's activities in 2022



After launching its grant-making activities in 2021, the Alliance will focus on the following activities in 2022:

- Following-up the current grantees work, defining and implementing a Funding+ strategy (opportunities for peer-learning, capacity-building and networking) as well as launching a new grant-making activity in the fall.
- Reinforcing the existing structures by developing an advisory committee made of gender equality experts to support the steering committee strategic choices and detailing the gender approach of the Alliance.
- Implementing a growth strategy to welcome new members and leverage more funding for gender equality initiatives.
- Developing a Learning, Monitoring & Evaluation strategy using Evaluation for system change methodologies.

<sup>6</sup> Example of current grantees partners activities include support services for women victims of domestic violence in Hungary, self-led advocacy from refugee women in Germany, grants to feminist social

entrepreneurs in Spain and empowerment of Roma activists in Latvia.