FEPS
FOUNDATION FOR EUROPEAN PROGRESSIVE STUDIES

In cooperation with

Friedrich Ebert Stiftung | YES | PES | tasc Think-tank for action on social change | Labour | SDLP | PES Group European Committee of the Regions | S&D

Call to Europe

Building a digital Europe of equal opportunities

Feminist agenda for quality jobs, affordable housing and democratic empowerment

Call to Europe - Ireland

Dublin, Ireland 17th October 2026

@ Communications Workers' Union

William Norton House, 575-577 North Circular Road , Dublin 1, D01 TR53

With its Irish edition of "Call to Europe", the Foundation for European Progressive Studies (FEPS) will put forward a **bold vision for a Europe where gender equality is the driving force behind competitiveness, security, and social justice**.

While the Irish Presidency of the Council of the European Union, our "Call to Europe" will reveal how gender equality is the key to unlocking progress across society's most critical challenges, such as the digital transformation, the housing crisis and the democratic backlash.

The **digital transformation** cannot succeed without addressing the gender gaps in STEM, AI, and leadership. The digital world should be a force for inclusion, not exclusion. From STEM hubs to digital policy, we will explore **how to break down the barriers that keep women and underrepresented groups** from shaping the future of tech. By addressing gaps in education, workplace culture, and leadership, we can build digital ecosystems that reflect the diversity of our societies and ensure that AI, data, and **connectivity serve everyone, not just a few**.

This same spirit of transformation is needed for **safe and affordable housing**. Women, LGBTQI+ individuals, and marginalised groups face systemic discrimination including sexual harassment, that **turn a fundamental right into a fight**. But change is possible: by strengthening protections and challenging structural barriers, we can ensure **housing is a right for all, not a privilege for some**.

And in a world where conflict and division too often dominate, we will champion a **feminist leadership,** one that prioritises prevention, inclusivity, and care. This is true for all spheres of life including tech companies, digital policy making and defence. **True security is not built on militarisation it is built on justice, equality,** and the recognition that fairness and **lasting peace requires all voices at the table**.

Together we will discuss specific aspects of gender equality for a blueprint for a **fairer, more inclusive society in the EU** and beyond, where housing is a right, technology is a tool for all, and peace is built on the foundation of justice.
This is more than a discussion; it is a **Call to Europe**. Together, we will discuss the Irish Presidency's priorities and how they can feed into a European Union where gender equality is not just a goal, but the foundation of a stronger, more inclusive future.

DRAFT AGENDA

Saturday, 17 October 2026 - PUBLIC SESSION
@ Communications Workers' Union
William Norton House
575-577 North Circular Road
Dublin 1, D01 TR53
View on Google Maps

8:30-9:00	***Registration***
9:00-9:30	**OPENING ADDRESSES** **Ivana Bacik**, President of Irish Labour Party **László Andor,** Secretary General, Foundation for European Progressive Studies (FEPS) **Moderated by:** **Ania Skrzypek**, Director for Research and Training, FEPS
9:30-9:45	**KEYNOTE VIDEO MESSAGE by IRATXE GARCÍA PÉREZ, President of the Socialists and Democrats Group in the European Parliament on Building a digital Europe of equal opportunities**
9:45-10:45	**PANEL 1** **Sustainable careers in STEM fields** Women remain underrepresented across the AI ecosystem of Ireland and the EU as founders, investors, innovators, and decision-makers. Despite high levels of educational attainment, women continue to experience lower levels of employment and earnings in STEM fields. These inequalities are also reflected in career progression, with women often taking extended career breaks due to a limited access to affordable childcare. When returning to their STEM careers after maternity leave, women can face further barriers to re-entering and progressing in the labour market, including gender bias in recruitment.

This event is financially supported by the European Parliament. It does not represent the views of the European Parliament.

Ensuring that the AI transition delivers fair and inclusive outcomes therefore requires a focus not only on technological progress, but also on gender equality, quality employment, and strong social infrastructure. The long-term success of Ireland as well the EU will depend on ensuring that women have equal opportunities to enter, remain in, shape, and benefit from the AI economy.
This panel will explore how Ireland and the EU can ensure that the transition to an AI-driven economy delivers fair and inclusive outcomes across society. Without deliberate action, the digital transition risks reinforcing existing social and economic inequalities, including persistent gender inequalities in the labour market.

Speakers:

Mariam Asghari, Secretary General of Young European Socialists
Marian Cowley, Professor of Business, Maynooth University
Aarthi Kumar, Founder, Yookthi Labs
Alison Gilliland, Former Lord Mayor of Dublin, European Climate Pact Ambassador

Open discussion

Moderator: **Inga Sabanova**, Policy Officer, FES Competence Center on Future of Work

10.45 - 11.05 **SNACK BREAK**

11:05 – 12.05 **PANEL 2**

ADVANCING GENDER EQUALITY THROUGH AFFORDABLE AND QUALITY HOUSING

Ireland, like the rest of the European Union, is facing a severe housing crisis, with a lack of supply, increased homelessness and demands for social housing. Vulnerable groups, especially women, are the first to suffer from this situation. Housing insecurity, exacerbated by the gender pay gap, is a major concern for women, especially for single mothers. It increases the risk of poverty, social exclusion, mental health issues, and gender-based violence. This is also a central issue for the LGBTQI+ community, which disproportionately faces harassment, rental scams and structural poverty.

This event is financially supported by the European Parliament. It does not represent the views of the European Parliament.

With this panel, we explore how progressive policies for affordable housing can advance gender equality, reduce discrimination and contribute to the eradication of poverty in the EU.

Keynote: Aodhán O' Ríordáin, Member of the European Parliament, S&D Group, Ireland

Speakers:
Irene Tinagli, Member of the European Parliament, Chair of the HOUS Committee, S&D Group, Italy
Viola Bianchetti, Programmes Manager, IGLYO
Michaela Kauer, Director of Brussels Office of the City of Vienna
Mar Jiménez Carete, Commissioner for European Affairs at Barcelona City Council

Open discussion

Moderator: **François Balate**, Policy Analyst on Social and Academic Coordinator, FEPS

12:05-12:25 **SNACK BREAK**

12:25-13:25 **PANEL 3**

Daring more democracy in the new era – how to forge the new wave of women's emancipation?

This panel explores the growing threat to women's political participation and rights posed by the rise of 'manospheres' and digital violence. Using Ireland's 2024 constitutional referendum to modernise the language about women's roles as a case study, we examine how these trends reflect broader European challenges. Even without far-right parties in mainstream politics, such narratives shape public opinion, undermining democracy and gender equality.

The discussion will focus on how the Irish Presidency can strengthen European democracy by advancing women's rights, particularly through online political participation.

A key emphasis will be on policies to foster gender equality online as a foundation for democracy and free speech, while protecting women - especially young women - from digital aggression and empowering them to thrive in the digital space. We will address:

This event is financially supported by the European Parliament. It does not represent the views of the European Parliament.

- Democratic innovations to rebuild trust, and dismantle structural barriers to empower women,
- The role of traditional parties in appealing to diverse voters,
- Lessons learned from Ireland's referendum and
- Ways in which women and the LGBTQI+ community can be protected from the aggression and violence online.

Speakers:
Evin Incir, Member of the European Parliament, S&D Group, Sweden
Michelle Hall, Councillor, Louth, Drogheda Rural
Hannah Phillips, Jo Cox Foundation, Respectful Politics Policy Manager
Salome Mbugua, AKIDWA - Network of Migrant Women
Joanna Scheuring-Wielgus, Member of the European Parliament, S&D Group, Poland

Open discussion

Moderator: **Ania Skrzypek**, Director for Research and Training, FEPS

13:25–13:45 **INSIGHTS FROM THE DISCUSSION AND CLOSING**
Zita Gurmai, PES Women President
Lhamo Fitzsimons, National Secretary of Labour Youth (TBC)
Mariam Asghari, Secretary General of Young European Socialists (TBC)

13:45 **Lunch reception**

This event is financially supported by the European Parliament. It does not represent the views of the European Parliament.