

## Sylvia Walby

### Crisis and the future of Europe

#### Biography

Sylvia Walby OBE is Distinguished Professor of Sociology and UNESCO Chair in Gender Research, Lancaster University, UK.

She was founding President, European Sociological Association, 1995-7. She has been President of Research Committee 02 Economy and Society, International Sociological Association, 2006-10. She is a Fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences, UK. Her research has been funded by the UN, European Parliament, European Commission, European Institute for Gender Equality, and ESRC. Her most recent book is *Crisis* (Polity 2015). Other books include *The Future of Feminism* (Polity 2011), *Globalization and Inequalities: Complexity and Contested Modernities* (Sage 2009) and (with 11 others) *Stopping Rape: Towards a Comprehensive Policy* (Policy Press 2015).

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#### Abstract

How is the 'crisis' restructuring the gender regime and what are its implications for work-life balance? The alternative scenarios for the future of Europe have implications for work-life balance. The complex inequalities on which the financial crisis draws, and which the development of global finance exacerbates, intersect in diverse ways. The paper argues for a gendered conceptualisation of the crisis, not as 'refamilialisation' in which women are pushed out of production back into reproduction, but rather as a critical turning point in the trajectory of the public gender regime from a more social democratic form to a more neoliberal form. It offers analyses of gendered practices of response, resilience and resistance as the crisis has cascaded from its origins in finance to employment to the welfare state to democracy itself. At the height of the crisis that focused on Greece in summer 2015, the five Presidents of the EU proposed a restructuring of the EU financial and economic architecture so as to achieve greater coherence and integration, revising how policies are subject to the principle of subsidiarity, with profound implications for the location of the governance of gendered issues of work-life balance. The conclusion of the paper draws out the implications of alternative futures of the EU for gender relations and work-life balance.