



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

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NOTE

from : Working Party on Social Questions
to : Permanent Representatives Committee (Part I) / Council EPSCO

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Subject : **Balanced roles of women and men for jobs, growth and social cohesion
- Draft Council Conclusions**

Delegations will find in the Annex draft Council Conclusions on which general agreement was reached at the level of the Working Party on Social Questions on 16 October 2007.

DRAFT COUNCIL CONCLUSIONS

Balanced roles of women and men for jobs, growth and social cohesion

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

RECALLING:

1. that gender equality is a fundamental principle of the European Union enshrined in the EC Treaty (Article 3(2)) and one of the objectives and tasks of the Community, and that mainstreaming equality between women and men in all its activities represents a specific mission for the Community;
2. Article 137 of the EC Treaty which states that the Community shall support and complement the activities of the Member States in domains such as working conditions and equality between men and women with regard to labour market opportunities and treatment at work;
3. Article 141 of the EC Treaty, which ensures the principle of equal pay for male and female workers for equal work or work of equal value;
4. Council Directive 86/613/EEC of 11 December 1986 on the application of the principle of equal treatment between men and women engaged in an activity, including agriculture, in a self-employed capacity, and on the protection of self-employed women during pregnancy and motherhood¹; Directive 2002/73/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 September 2002 amending Council Directive 76/207/EEC on

¹ OJ L 359, 19.12.1986, p. 56.

the implementation of the principle of equal treatment for men and women as regards access to employment, vocational training and promotion, and working conditions²; Directive 96/34/EC on the framework agreement on parental leave concluded by UNICE, CEEP and ETUC³; and Directive 2006/54/EC, on the implementation of the principle of equal opportunities and equal treatment of men and women in matters of employment and occupation (recast)⁴;

5. the commitment of the Member States to increase the employment rate for women to 60% by 2010 and to redress the gender imbalance in the labour market, in the context of the Lisbon Strategy (2000);
6. the Resolution of the Council and of the Ministers for Employment and Social Policy meeting within the Council on the balanced participation of women and men in family and working life (2000)⁵; the Council Conclusions on men and gender equality (2006)⁶; and the Resolution of the Council and the Representatives of the governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on Opportunities and challenges of demographic change in Europe: the contribution of older people to economic and social development (2007)⁷;
7. the commitments entered into by the Member States at the Barcelona European Council (March 2002) to provide childcare by 2010 to at least 90% of children between 3 years old and the mandatory school age and at least 33% of children under 3 years of age;

² OJ L 269, 5.10.2002, p. 15.

³ OJ L 145, 19.6.1996, p. 4.

⁴ OJ L 204, 26.7.2006, p. 23.

⁵ OJ C 218, 31.7.2000, p. 5.

⁶ Doc. 14845/06.

⁷ Doc. 6216/4/07 REV 4.

8. the recommendations of the European Union Action Plan for Entrepreneurship⁸ which promote the growth of enterprises created by women through a better access to funding and loans and the development of networks;
9. the Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament on “Better regulation for growth and jobs in the European Union”, which recommends that all Member States establish national better regulation strategies and, in particular, impact assessment systems for the integrated assessment of economic, social and environmental impacts⁹;
10. the Framework of Actions on Gender Equality adopted by the Social Partners (2005)¹⁰;
11. that the European Council, when adopting the European Pact for Gender Equality on 23/24 March 2006, encouraged actions at Member State and EU level to combat gender stereotypes, in particular those related to education and the sex-segregated labour market;
12. that the Commission's Roadmap for equality between women and men (2006-2010)¹¹ outlines, among others, the following priority areas: equal economic independence for women and men; the reconciliation of work, family and private life; and equal representation in decision-making;
13. that the Commission's Report on Equality between Women And Men – 2007¹² identifies the need to strengthen efforts to eliminate the pay gap between women and men, the need to strengthen the gender equality perspective on employment policy, as well as the need to pursue efforts to allow men and women to reconcile work, family and private life and to support the social partners in the implementation of these measures;

⁸ COM(2004) 70 final.

⁹ COM(2005) 97 final.

¹⁰ http://ec-europa.eu/employment_social/news/2005/mar/gender_equality_en.pdf

¹¹ COM(2006) 92 final.

¹² COM(2007) 49 final.

14. the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: “Tackling the pay gap between women and men” and the need for active cooperation with the social partners in the different sectors in order to eliminate the gender pay gap¹³;
15. that the European Council of 8 and 9 March 2007 established a European Alliance for Families as a platform for the Member States to exchange opinions and information in the area of family-friendly initiatives;
16. the opinions of the European Economic and Social Committee of 11 July 2007 on the role of the social partners in reconciling working, family and private life¹⁴ and on employability and entrepreneurship – the role of civil society and local and regional bodies from a gender perspective¹⁵.

RECOGNISING that:

1. gender equality and gender mainstreaming in all policies are important instruments for economic growth, prosperity and competitiveness and thus also for the Lisbon Strategy for growth and jobs, and for social cohesion;
2. Germany, Portugal and Slovenia have signed a Trio Presidency Declaration on the promotion of gender equality in the European Union and on supporting the reinforcement of the gender dimension in the Lisbon Strategy for growth and jobs¹⁶;

¹³ COM(2007) 424 final.

¹⁴ SOC/271 – CESE 998/2007.

¹⁵ SOC/273 – CESE 1000/2007.

¹⁶ http://www.eu2007.de/en/News/download_docs/Mai/0515-BSGV/0515Erklaerung.pdf
http://www.eu2007.pt/NR/rdonlyres/4AC1F923-A8A4-4DFD-9FAA-FF44C9677AD8/0/20071008TrioPresidencyDeclarationIgualdade_en.pdf

3. gender impact assessment is carried out to improve the quality and efficiency of policies and to ensure that they have no unintended negative consequences with regard to gender equality;
4. there are several key areas for the promotion of gender equality in the labour market that need improvement such as employability, entrepreneurship, equal pay, access to decision-making positions and the reconciliation of work, family and private life;
5. difficulties in reconciling work, family and private life still prevail and may be compounded, as increased global economic competition requires a more flexible and mobile labour force, which affects the quality of personal and family life;
6. the lack of sufficiently flexible, adaptable and innovative working time arrangements and of access to sufficient, affordable, high-quality social services such as childcare facilities and care services for other dependents may hinder women and men from pursuing a professional career on equal terms, to the detriment of equality between women and men;
7. women are still often forced to choose between having children and a career, in particular because of the persistence of gender stereotypes and an unequal sharing of family and domestic responsibilities between women and men, with women still being chiefly responsible for child rearing and caring for other dependents;
8. in recent years a wide range of practices and measures, including legislation, have been introduced by the Member States to help working parents to reconcile work and family responsibilities, and that it is now appropriate to assess both the range and variety of these measures, in order to examine whether there is a need for further action at a European level on paternity leave;
9. in order to encourage men to take any available leave related to their parenthood, it is necessary to combat gender stereotypes;

10. the Commission's "Manual for gender mainstreaming of employment policies"¹⁷ should be considered, *inter alia*, in the preparation, implementation and monitoring of Member States' National Reform Programmes and its wide dissemination among the concerned stakeholders is desirable;
11. the Commission's "Guide to gender impact assessment"¹⁸ should be considered, *inter alia*, in the preparation, implementation and monitoring of policies and to ensure that they have no unintended negative consequences with regard to gender equality.

CALLS ON THE MEMBER STATES:

1. to reinforce the gender dimension in the Lisbon Strategy in order to achieve women's full participation in the labour market, to promote women's access to well-paid skilled jobs, in particular decision-making positions, as well as to promote women's entrepreneurship;
2. to promote effective policies to reconcile work, family and private life that do not compel women and men to choose between family and work or to prioritise one to the detriment of the other, in order to encourage the fulfilment of the employment goals of the Lisbon Strategy, particularly with regard to access to permanent employment and good working conditions;
3. to promote corporate social responsibility with regard to employment access, training, career advancement, family-friendly workplaces, and the reconciliation of work, family and private life, and to encourage the establishment of Equality Plans or other measures in the corporate sector and the public sector with the aim of achieving equality between women and men;

¹⁷ http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/gender_equality/docs/2007/manual_gend_mainstr_en.pdf

¹⁸ http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/gender_equality/docs/gender/gender_en.pdf

4. to promote the implementation of existing legislation and policy measures to ensure that men and women are paid equally for equal work and for work of equal value, with the aim of effectively eliminating the gender pay-gap;
5. to encourage and support women's entrepreneurship, as a factor of innovation and competitiveness, through, *inter alia*, professional training and re-qualification, financial incentives and loans, as well as the creation of networks, and to follow this up through the promotion of comparable data on women's entrepreneurship in the EU, particularly through the work of the European Network to Promote Women's Entrepreneurship (WES),¹⁹ making effective use of existing instruments and data;
6. to take into consideration the implications for gender equality of policies which encourage workers to spend long periods away from the labour market, as well as of those measures which stimulate an active and balanced reconciliation of work, family and private life, such as the creation of and access to quality childcare-services social services for other dependents, and flexible working time arrangements;
7. while respecting their autonomy, to encourage the social partners and bodies engaged in the social dialogue at all levels to incorporate in a committed and systematic way questions regarding equality between men and women and the reconciliation of work, family and private life into the dynamics of social dialogue and collective bargaining;
8. to promote policy measures to eradicate gender stereotypes in education, professional training, the choice of profession and occupation and in the labour market, as well as in relation to the reconciliation of work, family and private life;
9. to foster national progress towards the Barcelona targets on childcare services, also ensuring their affordability, accessibility and quality, while fully using the potential of the Structural Funds;

¹⁹ <http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/entrepreneurship/craft/craft-women/wes.htm>

10. to consider the desirability of agreeing on European progress objectives on social services and care equipment for elderly people and other dependents, while respecting the diversity of the situations and strategies of each Member State and to promote policies to improve the quality, affordability and accessibility to social services, including transport;
11. to take into account in their national flexicurity measures, as developed in the context of the Lisbon Strategy and the social dialogue, the implications of gender equality, the reconciliation of work, family and private life, and a life-cycle approach.

CALLS ON THE MEMBER STATES AND THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION:

1. to use fully all appropriate funds for the promotion of gender equality and for removing gender-based segregation, in particular through the development of projects that promote women's employability and entrepreneurship, as well as a balance between work, family and private life for both women and men;
2. to improve, in cooperation with national and European statistical offices, and making full use of the work of the European Institute for Gender Equality, the existing indicators for monitoring national progress towards the Barcelona targets and to develop, in the context of their follow-up, in-depth and detailed work regarding comparable data on the quality, affordability and accessibility of childcare services;
3. make effective use of existing instruments, in particular, time use surveys, to develop comparable EU data on such important dimensions of gender equality as time spent on paid work and on family responsibilities by men and women respectively.

CALLS ON THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION:

1. to ensure the effective implementation of the existing Community legal framework on all aspects of the reconciliation of work, family and private life and to evaluate existing measures, especially in regard to their impact on labour market participation, and the possible need for their improvement, WELCOMING the initiative of the Commission to consult the social partners on this matter;
2. to work with the Member States, the social partners and other stakeholders, in order to examine whether there is a need for further action at a European level on paternity leave in the context of the reconciliation of work, family and private life;
3. to consider the need to revise, if necessary, Council Directive 86/613/EEC in order to ensure the rights related to motherhood and fatherhood of self-employed workers and their helping spouses.
