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Subject:	Gender-Equal Economies in the EU: The Way Forward - Council Conclusions

Delegations will find attached the Council Conclusions on the above subject adopted by the EPSCO Council at its meeting held on 10 December 2019.

GENDER-EQUAL ECONOMIES IN THE EU: THE WAY FORWARD

TAKING STOCK OF 25 YEARS OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BEIJING PLATFORM FOR ACTION

Draft conclusions of the Council of the European Union and the representatives of the governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council, on the review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action by the Member States and the EU institutions

1. **ACKNOWLEDGING** that equality between women and men is one of the common and fundamental principles of the European Union, explicitly mentioned in Articles 2 and 3(3) of the Treaty on European Union, Article 8 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union and Article 23 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights.
2. **REAFFIRMING** the importance of ensuring equal opportunities for both women and men and the full promotion and protection of, and respect for, the full enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms, which are universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated and are essential for the empowerment of women and girls and the advancement of peace, security and development, by all women and girls. Full realisation of the United Nations' Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and vigorous implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA) in the EU's internal and external policies are an integral part of this process and approach.
3. **RECALLING THAT** gender equality, including equality of treatment and opportunities and equal pay for work of equal value, and work-life balance are recognised in Principles 2 and 9 of the European Pillar of Social Rights proclaimed by the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission on 17 November 2017.

4. **STRESSING** that gender equality forms an integral part of the economy of wellbeing, which underlines the mutually reinforcing nature of wellbeing and economic growth, and that gender equality and the promotion, protection and fulfilment of women's and girls' rights are preconditions for equitable and inclusive sustainable development, as well as important values and objectives in themselves.
5. **STRESSING** the importance of continuing with a dual approach to gender equality, established as a major global strategy for the promotion of gender equality in the Beijing Platform for Action, combining the systematic integration of a gender perspective into all EU policies and activities (gender mainstreaming) with specific measures.
6. **STRESSING** that economic and fiscal policies may affect women and men differently and that it is important to systematically assess them from the perspective of gender equality and the projected impact on women and on men, on girls and on boys.
7. **CONSIDERING** that 2020 marks an important moment for gender equality and women's rights since the international community will celebrate the 25th anniversary of the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the 20th anniversary of UN Security Council resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. Various strategic frameworks with relevance to gender equality will come to the end of their term, including the European Pact for Gender Equality (2011-2020), the Commission's 'Strategic engagement for gender equality 2016-2019' and the EU Gender Action Plan II, 'Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: Transforming the Lives of Girls and Women through EU External Relations 2016-2020'.

8. **RECALLING** that gender equality is central for the achievement of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and that the EU is committed to the gender-transformative implementation, follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda in both its internal and external action, and **TAKING NOTE** of the Commission’s Reflection Paper ‘Towards a Sustainable Europe by 2030’ and the Council conclusions ‘Towards an ever more sustainable Union by 2030’ on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in the EU. Gender-sensitive environmental and climate policies and the equal participation of women in decision-making promote both gender equality and the effectiveness of tackling the climate change.
9. **TAKING NOTE** of the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE)’s report ‘Beijing +25: The 5th Review of the Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in the EU Member States’ which presents the main trends, current progress, and major challenges in the field of gender equality in the EU.
10. **ACKNOWLEDGING** that progress has been made in certain areas, such as the adoption of the Work-Life Balance Directive, the increased share of women on the boards of large companies, the reduced number of women and men at risk of poverty or social exclusion and improvements in gender mainstreaming in the EU’s external action. This reflects the commitment of the EU and its Member States to the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action.
11. **STRESSING** that while old challenges remain, new ones are emerging. Objectives set for gender equality have not been fully achieved. In order to tackle these challenges, continued efforts are needed at both EU and Member State level to ensure effective gender equality policies and gender mainstreaming and the full realisation of women’s rights.

- (a) Substantial gender gaps in pay and pensions persist in the EU and women thus continue to face less economic independence than men.¹ There is still a large gender gap in the employment rate in the EU.² For those women participating in the labour market, jobs are more likely to be precarious and untenured, and in many cases, they are involuntary part-time. However, part-time work can also be a chosen option for women and men to participate in the labour market, and to increase their wellbeing.
- (b) Women are systematically more likely to be at risk of poverty and social exclusion than men, with negative impacts on their wellbeing, particularly when taking care of children without a partner or when older. Women are also more likely than men to be affected by the impact of climate change and are more vulnerable to energy poverty. Fiscal consolidation and the ongoing reforms of the public sector have disproportionately affected female-dominated economic sectors.
- (c) Many of the economic inequalities between women and men stem from the unequal distribution of care responsibilities and household tasks. Care responsibilities are keeping 7.7 million women out of the labour market in the EU and the majority of family-related leave is still taken up by women. Gaps in the provision, affordability and quality of formal early childhood education and care services and long-term care services severely impede women's ability to fully and equally participate in working life. The contribution to economic growth of unpaid care work, carried out mostly by women, remains largely invisible.

¹ In 2017 there was a 16.0 % gender gap in pay and a 34.8 % gender gap in pensions (pensioners aged 65+).

² The gender employment gap stood at 11.5 percentage points in 2017.

- (d) Gender-based violence continues to be a grim reality for millions of women and girls living in the EU.³ Violence against women and girls is a severe manifestation of gender inequality and a human rights violation with immeasurable human suffering. It also represents a significant cost to the economy and society.
- (e) Women continue to be under-represented in all fields of decision-making observed under the Beijing Platform for Action, including the areas of politics and business. While the proportion of women in decision-making has increased since 2013, especially where legislative action has taken place, the overall progress has been slow.
- (f) New challenges have emerged in recent years. Despite its positive potential in working life, automation and digitalisation may further compromise women's position on the labour market, for example because there is still a relatively low number of women in ICT education and the ICT professions, or because of gender bias consciously or unconsciously embedded in algorithms and artificial intelligence, thus increasing the risk of gender digital divide. In addition, women and girls disproportionately experience cyber violence, including online harassment, cyberbullying and sexist hate speech.
- (g) The mainstreaming of gender equality in different areas of EU policy, including the implementation of the Europe 2020 Strategy and the European Semester, is fragmented and lacks continuity and a systematic approach. Mainstreaming tools, such as gender impact assessments or gender budgeting, are only seldom used in the EU and its Member States and there are shortcomings in the collection, analysis and policy use of sex-disaggregated data.

³ In the EU, one woman in three (33 %) has experienced physical and/or sexual violence since the age of 15. One woman in five (22%) has experienced these forms of violence by her intimate partner. One woman in 20 (5 %) has been raped, either by a partner or someone else. One woman in five (18%) has experienced stalking. One woman in two (45 % to 55 %) has experienced sexual harassment.

12. **STRESSING** the role of civil society organisations, including women’s organisations and women human rights defenders, in promoting women’s rights and gender equality and the importance of continued cooperation with civil society in order to achieve the objectives of the Beijing Platform for Action.
13. **TAKING NOTE** of the outcome of the High Level Conference ‘Europe for Gender Equality? Taking Stock – Taking Action’ held in Helsinki on 30 September and 1 October 2019, where the participants stressed the need for reaffirming the political commitment to gender equality in the EU and for strengthening the effective implementation of gender mainstreaming, including in economic and budgetary policies.
14. **WELCOMING** the four new indicators⁴ proposed by the EIGE in its 2018 report on the review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in the EU Member States, entitled ‘Gender equality and youth: opportunities and risks of digitalisation’⁵, which focused on *digital skills, self-confidence in using digital technologies, the use of the internet for civic or political participation, and cyberbullying*.

⁴ New indicators for monitoring critical area of concern L: ‘The girl child’. A complete list of indicators for monitoring critical area of concern L: ‘The girl child’ appears in Annex I. For further details, see doc. 14348/18 ADD 2.

⁵ Doc. 14348/18 ADD 2. An executive summary appears in doc. 14580/18 ADD 1.

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

CALLS ON THE MEMBER STATES, in accordance with their competences and taking into account national circumstances and respecting the role and autonomy of the social partners, TO:

15. Strengthen the effectiveness of governmental gender equality structures by placing them at the highest possible level in the government, and by providing them with strong, clearly defined mandates and with adequate personnel and financial resources, and ensure the effective implementation of and sufficient funding for national gender equality strategies, including both gender mainstreaming in all policy areas and specific measures. Foster the effective functioning of cross-sectoral coordination for gender mainstreaming in order to enhance networking and cooperation.
16. Strengthen the political commitment to and accountability and capacities for gender mainstreaming, and consider developing gender impact assessment and/or gender budgeting in all relevant policy fields, including in economic, education, employment, regional, social, infrastructure, environmental, climate and innovation policies, in order to more efficiently identify persistent gender gaps, tackle existing challenges and to strengthen knowledge-based policy-making and decision-making.
17. Take measures to prevent and combat sexism and its manifestations in the public and private spheres, and encourage relevant stakeholders to implement appropriate legislation, policies and programmes in all sectors.

18. Intensify efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls by taking a more holistic approach to the prevention and prosecution, including treatment programmes aimed at perpetrators, of all forms of violence and the protection of all victims, and continue working on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence through the implementation of the relevant international instruments in this area, including, where appropriate, UN Convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women, UN Declaration on the elimination of violence against women, Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence and Council of Europe Convention on action against trafficking in human beings.

CALLS ON THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION AND THE MEMBER STATES, in accordance with their respective competences and respecting the role and autonomy of the social partners, TO:

19. Strengthen gender equality, empowerment of women and girls and the full enjoyment of all human rights by women and girls as a political priority at EU and Member State level and within both internal and external policies, including by actively promoting high-level political dialogue on gender equality issues at EU level, and at the highest political level.
20. Strengthen the link between EU gender equality policies and the implementation of the EU's international commitments, especially the Beijing Platform for Action and the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and develop synergies between the EU's follow-up of the Beijing Platform for Action and the 2030 Agenda.
21. Step up gender equality policies, including by strengthening the dual approach to promoting gender equality as well as the necessary structures and processes, at EU and Member State level, with a view to accelerating progress towards reaching the objectives set out in the Beijing Platform for Action.
22. Strengthen the commitment to promoting gender equality and women's empowerment, in particular in the areas identified in the Beijing +25 review.

- (a) Implement concrete and effective measures to close the gender gaps in employment and pay beyond the current EU Action Plan on Tackling the gender pay gap and address and monitor their impact on the gender gap in pensions and ensure equal treatment in access to other benefits.
- (b) Strengthen the efforts to foster women's participation and gender equality in the labour market, including developing fair working conditions, and encourage female entrepreneurship in order to promote women's economic independence and sustainable and inclusive economic growth. Ensure a better balance between work and private life for women and men by effectively implementing the Directive on work-life balance for parents and carers and the Barcelona objectives concerning childcare facilities. Also by promoting the equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men on unpaid care and domestic tasks. Highlight the contribution of unpaid work of women to economic growth and society.
- (c) Analyse the impact of digitalisation on gender equality in working life and take it into account in future policy-making. Step up efforts to facilitate life-long learning and acquisition of skills and competences in order to meet the challenges and seize the opportunities of digitalisation and new forms of work. Continue implementing effective measures to address gender segregation in education and training at all levels, promoting equal access to all educational fields and in particular facilitate women's and girls' access to science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) and information and communications technology (ICT) as well as men's and boys' access to education, health and welfare (EHW) fields.

- (d) Reaffirm the commitment to elimination of gender-based violence, including cyber violence, as a priority of the European Union and the importance of the implementation of effective measures by the Member States as required by EU law. Take necessary measures to eliminate violence and harassment in the world of work. Encourage men and boys to engage fully, as agents and beneficiaries of change, with the aim of eliminating all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls in both the public and private spheres, by addressing the root causes of gender inequality, such as unequal power relations, gender stereotypes and negative social norms. In order to end men's violence against women, men and boys need to be engaged and participate in the process of ending the violence.
- (e) Continue to introduce and implement targeted measures, including, where appropriate, legislative and/or non-legislative targets and timelines to enhance gender balance in political and economic decision-making, including in the EU institutions.
- (f) Ensure the effective and systematic implementation and continuity of gender mainstreaming in all policy areas by strengthening the practical tools of mainstreaming, including through the introduction of gender-specific targets and indicators, gender impact assessment of legislative and policy measures, and gender budgeting, as well as through cross-sectoral cooperation and accountability mechanisms for monitoring gender mainstreaming at both EU and Member State level.
- (g) Pursue a stronger focus on gender equality within different phases of the European Semester process, including by working on already existing gender equality indicators and, where appropriate, developing new ones, by continuing to develop sex-disaggregated data collection and statistical methods and analysis for monitoring progress on gender equality.

23. Reinforce and continue to support the activities of national equality bodies as well as that of the European Network of Equality Bodies (Equinet), taking into account the Commission's Recommendation on standards for equality bodies.
24. Reinforce continuous cooperation and strategic partnerships with European and national social partners, civil society organisations, women's organisations and women human rights defenders and academia to promote gender equality and develop gender equality policies.
25. Regularly follow up on all the Beijing Platform for Action indicators, including the revised indicators set out in Annex I, for systematically monitoring progress, making full use of the expertise and outputs of the EIGE and Eurostat. Strengthen the effective use of the Beijing indicators in EU and national gender equality policies and in all other relevant policy areas, and seek to make all relevant statistics widely available.
26. Support the production and analysis of sound and comparable data disaggregated by sex, including through the work of the EIGE and Eurostat, as well as national statistical institutions, in order to reinforce knowledge-based policy-making.
27. Continue to adopt annually a Commission report to monitor progress in the field of gender equality and gender mainstreaming at EU and Member State level and encourage the future Council Presidencies to forward it to the European Council. Use this report to enhance gender mainstreaming, including gender budgeting, in the context of all relevant post-2020 policy frameworks in the EU, including the European Semester, as well as in the context of the implementation of the UN 2030 Agenda and the Beijing Platform for Action in the EU.

CALLS ON THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION TO:

28. Explicitly set gender equality as a political priority in its current term (2019-2024) and adopt a Communication setting out a stand-alone high-level EU gender equality strategy for the period post-2019, including both specific measures and the integration of a gender perspective into EU policies and activities.
29. Systematically mainstream a gender perspective into all future EU strategies and policies, including by developing gender budgeting and gender impact assessment of EU legislative and policy measures as key tools for gender mainstreaming.
30. Take concrete steps to integrate a gender perspective into the EU's economic policies, in line with the political commitments made in the framework of the European Pillar of Social Rights and the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and especially into the strategies and procedures that will succeed the Europe 2020 Strategy and the European Semester, including by ensuring effective implementation and monitoring of gender mainstreaming.
31. Pursue gender equality, with a high level of ambition, as a policy priority in all EU external relations and focus its efforts toward a new EU Gender Action Plan in 2020.

Compilation of all indicators for critical area of concern L: ‘The girl child’⁶

Indicator 1: Sex and relationship education: parameters of sexuality-related education in schooling (primary and secondary)⁷.

Indicator 2: Body self-image: dissatisfaction of girls and boys with their bodies⁸.

Indicator 3: 15-year-old girls and boys: performance in mathematics & science⁹.

Indicator 4: Proportion of all and top performers girls and boys in science aged 15 expecting to work in science-related occupations at age 30¹⁰.

NEW Indicator 5: Share of young women and men (aged 16-19) with above-basic digital skills.

This indicator consists of four sub-indicators, which measure digital skills in four specific areas:

- (a) information skills;
- (b) communication skills;
- (c) problem-solving skills;
- (d) software skills.

NEW Indicator 6: Share of girls and boys (aged 15-16) who feel confident performing certain tasks with digital technologies.

This indicator consists of three sub-indicators:

- (a) the share of girls and boys who feel comfortable using digital devices that they are less familiar with;
- (b) the share of girls and boys who feel that they can start solving a problem with digital devices on their own;
- (c) the share of girls and boys who feel that they can install new software they need by themselves.

⁶ For further details, see the EIGE’s report in 14348/18 ADD 2.

⁷ Existing indicator. See 9669/08.

⁸ Existing indicator. See 9669/08.

⁹ Existing indicator. See 15468/17.

¹⁰ Existing indicator. See 15468/17.

NEW Indicator 7: Share of young women and men (aged 16-19) who use the internet for civic or political participation.

NEW Indicator 8: Share of girls and boys (aged 15) who have been cyberbullied by messages or by pictures at least once.

This indicator consists of two sub-indicators:

- (a) the share of girls and boys (aged 15) who have experienced cyberbullying by message at least once (i.e. have received mean instant messages, wall posts, emails or text messages);
- (b) the share of girls and boys (aged 15) who have experienced cyberbullying by picture at least once (i.e. posting unflattering or inappropriate pictures online without permission).

References**1. EU interinstitutional**

- European Pillar of Social Rights,
https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/social-summit-european-pillar-social-rights-booklet_en.pdf.

2. Council

All Council conclusions adopted on the review of the Beijing Platform for Action¹¹ and other Council conclusions on gender equality and other subjects, including especially those cited below:

- Council conclusions of 7 March 2011 on the European Pact for Gender Equality (2011-2020) (OJ C 155, 25.5.2011, p. 10);
- Council conclusions of 16 June 2016, ‘Response to the Commission’s Strategic engagement for gender equality’ (doc. 10416/16);
- Council conclusions of 8 December 2016 on Women and Poverty (doc. 15409/16);
- Council conclusions of 3 March 2017 on Enhancing the Skills of Women and Men in the EU Labour Market (doc. 6889/17);
- Council conclusions of 7 December 2017 on Enhanced measures to reduce horizontal gender segregation in education and employment (doc. 15468/17);
- Council conclusions of 13 June 2019 on Closing the Gender Pay Gap: Key Policies and Measures (doc. 10349/19);
- Council conclusions of 9 April 2019, ‘Towards an ever more sustainable Union by 2030’ (doc. 8286/19).

¹¹ http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/tools/statistics-indicators/platform-action/index_en.htm

3. Trio Presidency

- Trio Presidency Declaration on Gender Equality signed by Romania, Finland and Croatia (15 March 2019).
- Joint Declaration on ‘Gender Equality as a Priority of the European Union today and in the future’. Proposed by the Austrian, Estonian and Bulgarian trio Presidency at the informal meeting of EU Gender Equality Ministers, 12 October 2018, Vienna.

4. European Commission

- Commission Staff Working Document, ‘Strategic engagement for gender equality 2016-2019’ (SWD(2015) 278 final).
- 2019 Report on equality between women and men in the European Union, https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/aid_development_cooperation_fundamental_rights/annual_report_ge_2019_en.pdf.
- Reflection Paper: Towards a Sustainable Europe by 2030, https://ec.europa.eu/commission/files/reflection-paper-towards-sustainable-europe_en.
- Recommendation of 22 June 2018 on standards for equality bodies (C(2018) 3850 final).
- EU Action Plan on Tackling the Gender Pay Gap (2017-2019)

5. EIGE

- EIGE report, ‘Beijing +25 – The 5th Review of the Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in the EU Member States’ (12595/19 ADD 2).
- EIGE report, ‘Gender equality and youth: opportunities and risks of digitalisation’ (doc. 14348/18 ADD 2).

6. Other

- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/ProfessionalInterest/cedaw.pdf>
- Council of Europe Convention on action against trafficking in human beings, <https://www.coe.int/fr/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/rms/090000168008371d>
- Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, <https://www.coe.int/fr/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/rms/090000168008482e>
- Council of Europe Recommendation CM/Rec(2019)1 on preventing and combating sexism
- Declaration on the elimination of violence against women, <http://www.un-documents.net/a48r104.htm>
- European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, Violence against women: an EU-wide survey 2014.
- Presidency Conclusions of 6 December 2018 on Gender Equality, Youth and Digitalisation (doc. 15308/18)
- Advisory Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men: Opinion on the future gender equality policy after 2019 – Old and new challenges and priorities
- Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, https://www.un.org/en/events/pastevents/pdfs/Beijing_Declaration_and_Platform_for_Action.pdf
- Declaration of Commitment on Women in Digital (WID)
