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THE EUROPEAN UNION**

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Subject : **Review of the implementation by the Member States and the EU institutions  
of the Beijing Platform for Action**  
- **Women and the Economy: Reconciliation of work and family life**  
= **Council Conclusions**

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Delegations will find attached the Council Conclusions as unanimously adopted at the EPSCO Council on 17 December 2008.

**COUNCIL CONCLUSIONS**

**on the progress of the implementation by the Member States and the EU institutions of the  
Beijing Platform for Action**

**WOMEN AND THE ECONOMY:  
RECONCILIATION OF WORK AND FAMILY LIFE**

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

1. RECALLING:

- (a) that gender equality is a fundamental principle of the European Union enshrined in the EC Treaty 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;
- (b) that the European Council, when adopting the European Pact for Gender Equality on 23 and 24 March 2006, advocated the adoption of measures to promote a better balance between work and private life for women and men, to help respond to demographic challenges;
- (c) 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;

- (d) the commitments entered into by the Member States at the Barcelona European Council (March 2002) to strive, taking into account the demand for childcare services and in line with national patterns of childcare provision, 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;
- (e) 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);
- (f) the Council Resolution on the balanced participation of women and men in family and working life (2000); the Council Conclusions on men and gender equality (2006); the Council Resolution on opportunities and challenges of demographic change in Europe: the contribution of older people to economic and social development (2007); the Council Conclusions entitled "Balanced roles of women and men for jobs, growth and social cohesion" (2007); and the Council Conclusions on Women and Poverty (2007);
- (g) 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 motherhood; Directive 2002/73/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 September 2002 amending Council Directive 76/207/EEC on the implementation of the principle of equal treatment for men and women as regards access to employment, vocational training and promotion, and working conditions; Council Directive 92/85/EEC of 19 October 1992 on the introduction of measures to encourage improvements in the safety and health at work of pregnant workers and workers who have recently given birth or are breastfeeding; Directive 96/34/EC on the framework agreement on parental leave concluded by UNICE, CEEP and ETUC; 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);

- (h) the Framework of Actions on Gender Equality adopted by the Social Partners (2005);
- (i) the Opinions<sup>1</sup> of the European Economic and Social Committee of 11 July 2007 on the role of the social partners in reconciling working, family and private life and on employability and entrepreneurship – the role of civil society and local and regional bodies from a gender perspective;
- (j) that, according to the Commission's Report on Equality between Women and Men 2008<sup>2</sup>, support for the reconciliation of professional and private life should be stepped up and should aim to help both men and women.

2. CONSIDERING that:

- (a) following the UN's Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995, the Madrid European Council (15 and 16 December 1995) requested an annual review of the implementation in the Member States of the Beijing Platform for Action;
- (b) on 2 December 1998, the Council agreed that the annual assessment of the implementation of the Platform for Action would include a proposal on a set of quantitative and qualitative indicators and benchmarks;
- (c) on 28 November 2000, the Council adopted a set of quantitative and qualitative indicators<sup>3</sup> on women and the economy: the reconciliation of work and family life, related to one of the areas listed in the Beijing Platform for Action, namely inequality between men and women in sharing family responsibilities;

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<sup>1</sup> Docs. SOC/271 - CESE 998/2007 and SOC/273 - CESE 1000/2007.

<sup>2</sup> Doc. 5710/08.

<sup>3</sup> Doc. 13481/00.

(d) on 2 and 3 June 2005, the Council invited the Member States and the Commission to strengthen institutional mechanisms for promoting gender equality and to create a framework to assess the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, in order to create a more consistent and systematic monitoring of progress, and invited the Commission to include the assessment of relevant indicators, developed for the follow-up of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, in its annual report to the Spring European Council.

3. RECALLING that in December 2007, the Council invited the Member States and the Commission to regularly review progress on issues on which indicators have already been adopted, starting with "Women and decision-making" and "The reconciliation of work, family and private life"<sup>4</sup>. Building on the Council Conclusions adopted on the latter subject in November 2000, during the previous French Presidency of the EU, the French Presidency has drawn up an evaluation report<sup>5</sup> on women and the economy: the reconciliation of work and family life, focusing on the nine indicators previously adopted:

1. *Employed men and women on parental leave (paid and unpaid) within the meaning of Directive 96/34/EC on the framework agreement between the social partners on parental leave, as a proportion of all employed parents.*
2. *Allocation of parental leave between employed women and men as a proportion of all parental leave.*

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<sup>4</sup> Council Conclusions on "Women and Poverty" (doc. 13947/07).

<sup>5</sup> Doc. 12577/00.

3. *Children cared for (other than by the family) as a proportion of all children of the same age group:*
  - *before entry into the non-compulsory pre-school system (during the day);*
  - *in the non-compulsory or equivalent pre-school system (outside pre-school hours);*
  - *in compulsory primary education (outside school hours).*
4. *Comprehensive and integrated policies, particularly employment policies, aimed at promoting a balance between working and family life.*
5. *Dependent elderly men and women (unable to look after themselves on a daily basis) over 75*
  - *living in specialised institutions*
  - *who have help (other than the family) at home*
  - *looked after by the family**as a proportion of men and women over 75.*
6. *Normal opening hours of public services (i.e. local authority offices, post offices, crèches, etc.) during the week and at weekends.*
7. *Normal opening hours of shops during the week and at weekends.*
8. *Total "tied" time per day for each employed parent living with a partner, having one or more children under 12 years old or a dependant:*
  - *paid working time,*
  - *travelling time,*
  - *basic time spent on domestic work,*
  - *other time devoted to the family (upbringing and care of children and care of dependent adults).*

9. *Total "tied" time per day for each employed parent living alone, having one or more children under 12 years old or a dependant (as 8 above).*

4. RECALLING:

(a) the commitment of the Member States to enable men and women to reconcile family and work responsibilities as laid down in the Beijing Platform for Action;

(b) that the reconciliation of private and professional life is a priority area for action set out in the Commission's Roadmap for Equality between Women and Men 2006 – 2010<sup>6</sup>.

5. NOTES the evaluation report on the reconciliation of work and family life presented by the French Presidency of the EU with a view to future follow-up to the Beijing Platform for Action, which highlights data collection efforts which have improved the information on which the indicators are based, while stressing the difficulties remaining for certain indicators which should therefore be simplified.

6. WELCOMES the Commission's activities to promote the balanced participation of women and men in work, family and personal life, particularly the publication of a Communication on the attainment of the Barcelona objectives on childcare provision.

7. WELCOMES the progress made by the Member States, particularly in terms of creating childcare facilities.

8. STRESSES that the equal participation of women and men in work and family life is a prerequisite for real equality between men and women, as well as for meeting the demographic challenge.

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<sup>6</sup> Doc. 7034/06.

9. STRESSES that, despite the progress achieved in terms of promoting the balanced participation of women and men in work and family life, women remain chiefly responsible for child-rearing and caring for dependants.
10. CALLS ON THE MEMBER STATES AND THE COMMISSION:
- (a) to make effective use of existing instruments, in particular time-use surveys, based on comparable EU data on time spent on paid work and on family responsibilities by men and women respectively;
  - (b) to further improve the collection, analysis and distribution of accurate, relevant and comparable European data in areas such as parental leave and dependent elderly people, in cooperation with national and European statistical offices, drawing on existing structures and instruments, and making full use of the work of the European Institute for Gender Equality;
  - (c) to abolish indicators 6 and 7 on the opening hours of public services and shops, given the extreme diversity of such hours within the European Union, and to expand indicator 4, which will read as follows:

*"Indicator 4: comprehensive and integrated policies, particularly employment policies, aimed at promoting a balance between work and family life for both men and women (including, for example, a description of available child care facilities, parental leave and flexible working time arrangements, of services offered by companies for their employees, and of flexible opening hours of public services such as local authority offices, post offices, crèches, and shops)."*

11. CALLS ON the Member States to adopt appropriate measures for the reconciliation of work, family and private life, and to this end:
- (a) to step up the efforts, in line with their national policies and competences, and respecting the need of families for choice and opportunities, to achieve the 2002 Barcelona targets on childcare services, also ensuring their affordability, accessibility and quality, while fully using the potential of the Structural Funds;
  - (b) to step up progress towards meeting the needs of families who have to take on responsibility for dependants;
  - (c) to continue to take the necessary measures to encourage men to share family and domestic responsibilities with women on an equal footing;
  - (d) to promote measures to eradicate gender stereotypes, so as to change the representation of the roles of men and women in work, family and private life;
  - (e) to encourage enterprises to adopt family-friendly measures and to take into account the need to reconcile work and family life in their working time arrangements;
  - (f) to take into consideration gender equality in family leave schemes, as well as the implications of part-time work for men and women respectively, in order to avoid any negative effects that they may have, inter alia, on the employment of women.
12. CALLS ON the Member States to take into account, when implementing the common principles of flexicurity in the context of the Lisbon Strategy, their implications for gender equality, the reconciliation of work, family and private life, and a life-cycle approach.

13. CALLS ON THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION:

- (a) to continue to support the attainment of the Barcelona objectives concerning types of childcare, and the development of care structures for dependent persons including by making use of the Structural Funds;
- (b) to promote exchanges of knowledge between the Member States on innovative practices to facilitate the reconciliation of work, family and private life, for example, through the programme for the exchange of good practices on equal opportunities between women and men launched in 2008, the High-Level Group on Gender Mainstreaming in the Structural Funds, or through the European Alliance for Families;
- (c) to ensure the effective implementation of the existing Community legal framework concerning 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.

14. WELCOMES the commitment of the social partners to adapt the existing provisions on reconciling work, family and private life for women and men, and encourages the social partners and bodies engaged in the social dialogue at all levels to incorporate questions regarding equality between men and women and the reconciliation of work, family and private life into the dynamics of social dialogue.

15. ENCOURAGES the Member States and the Commission, with the participation of the European Institute for Gender Equality, to carry out research and analysis on the effects of the measures taken to facilitate the reconciliation of work, family and private life.

16. SUPPORTS the evaluation process for the other indicators which have already been finalised following on from the Beijing Platform for Action.