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Subject: Council Conclusions on Mainstreaming a gender equality perspective in policies, programmes, and budgets

Delegations will find attached the Council Conclusions on the above subject approved by the EPSCO Council at its meeting held on 12 June 2023.

Mainstreaming a gender equality perspective in policies, programmes, and budgets

Council Conclusions¹

ACKNOWLEDGING THAT

1. Gender equality and human rights are at the core of European values, and equality between women and men is a fundamental principle of the European Union, enshrined in the Treaties and in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union.
2. Article 8 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) requires the Union, in all its activities, to aim to eliminate inequalities between women and men and to promote equality.
3. Gender equality policies are vital to economic growth, prosperity, and competitiveness. The equal, full, and effective participation of both women and men in all areas, including in employment, is a prerequisite for attaining and sustaining a prosperous Union. Forward-looking policy responses, such as the Barcelona targets for 2030, are essential for economic growth and the advancement of women's economic empowerment.

¹ Conclusions drawn up within the context of the review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, with particular reference to Critical Area of Concern H (Institutional Mechanisms for the Advancement of Women).

4. According to Principle 2 of the European Pillar of Social Rights ("Gender equality"), "Equality of treatment and opportunities between women and men must be ensured and fostered in all areas, including regarding participation in the labour market, terms and conditions of employment and career progression. Women and men have the right to equal pay for work of equal value."² The European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan presented by the Commission set the ambition to at least halve the gender employment gap in 2030 compared to 2019, in order to achieve the overall goal of having at least 78% of the population aged 20 to 64 in employment by 2030.
5. Increasing women's participation in paid and quality work is essential to economic growth and competitiveness and measures should therefore be taken to achieve equality between women and men with regard to labour market opportunities and treatment at work, notably by facilitating the reconciliation of work, family and private life.
6. Employment Guideline 8 emphasises the importance of supporting social investment, fighting poverty and social exclusion and addressing inequalities, including through the design of Member States' tax and benefit systems and by assessing the distributional impact of their policies on gender equality. Government tax and spending decisions have powerful social and economic implications, shaping people's choices regarding work and economic participation, and thus impacting the financial autonomy of women and men.

² European Pillar of Social Rights proclaimed by the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission on 17 November 2017.

7. The Beijing Platform for Action adopted by the Fourth World conference on Women in 1995, identifies “Institutional Mechanisms for the Advancement of Women)” (area H) as one of twelve critical areas of concern and a prerequisite for gender mainstreaming.
8. According to paragraph 202 of the Beijing Platform for Action, “Governments and other actors should promote an active and visible policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective in all policies and programmes so that, before decisions are taken, an analysis is made of the effects on women and men, respectively.”³
9. It is of great importance to pursue a dual approach to gender equality, combining gender mainstreaming, i.e. the systematic integration of a gender equality perspective into all policies, programmes and budgets, with specific gender equality policies and targeted measures.

RECALLING THAT

10. In 2019, the Council called on the European Commission and the Member States to “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.”⁴

³ United Nations, *Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action, adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women, October 1995.*

⁴ Doc. 14938/19.

11. In 2021, the Council called on the European Commission to “step up efforts to systematically mainstream a gender perspective into future EU strategies and policies, including by developing gender budgeting” and “gender equality tracking methodology” and by “gradually strengthening the gender analysis of relevant EU legislative and policy measures in accordance with the Better Regulation Guidelines, as key tools for gender mainstreaming.”⁵
12. In 2022, the Council called on the Member States to promote gender mainstreaming when supporting people, particularly women and girls, who have been displaced from Ukraine and other parts of the world. It also called on the Member States to promote gender mainstreaming in the design, implementation and evaluation of measures adopted to tackle the economic crisis, across all sectors, and based on existing data. Furthermore, the Council invited the European Commission and the Member States to promote gender mainstreaming in all research, decisions and policies related to the digital and green transitions and in all policies related to energy poverty.⁶
13. The European Commission’s Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025 states that “the inclusion of a gender perspective in all EU policies and processes is essential to reach the goal of gender equality.”⁷

⁵ Doc. 12829/21.

⁶ Doc. 15133/22.

⁷ Doc. 6678/20.

14. The Council of Europe defines gender mainstreaming as: “the (re)organisation, improvement, development and evaluation of policy processes, so that a gender equality perspective is incorporated in all policies at all levels and at all stages, by the actors normally involved in policy-making”⁸.
15. Successful implementation of gender mainstreaming requires overall political commitment, *inter alia*, to *ex-ante* gender impact assessments and evaluation of policies, strong institutional mechanisms, and capacity building. Statistics and indicators disaggregated by sex are indispensable tools for realising gender equality policy objectives.
16. The implementation of gender mainstreaming, *inter alia* by institutionalising gender budgeting, is essential for funding relevant policies to close gender gaps.
17. In the context of crisis responses, applying a gender equality perspective in analyses, assessments and budgeting is particularly important for successfully tackling persistent gender gaps and thus accelerating progress towards gender equality. Crisis response measures, including those addressing the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine, have the potential to gradually close longstanding gender gaps and to help prevent and combat gender-based and domestic violence, as well as to promote women’s economic empowerment leading to inclusive growth and competitiveness.

⁸ Council of Europe. Gender mainstreaming: conceptual framework, methodology and presentation of good practices. Strasbourg, 1998.

18. Recital 28 of the Regulation on the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF) notes that women have been particularly affected by the COVID-19 crisis.⁹
19. Article 18, paragraph 4, point b of the Regulation requires Member States to provide “an explanation of how the recovery and resilience plan contributes to effectively address all or a significant subset of challenges identified in the relevant country-specific recommendations (...) addressed to the Member State concerned, or challenges identified in other relevant documents officially adopted by the Commission in the context of the European Semester.”
20. Article 18, paragraph 4, point o of the Regulation requires Member States to provide an explanation of “how the measures in the recovery and resilience plan are expected to contribute to gender equality and equal opportunities for all and the mainstreaming of those objectives, in line with principles 2 and 3 of the European Pillar of Social Rights, with the UN Sustainable Development Goal 5 and, where relevant, with the national gender equality strategy.”
21. In November 2022, the Advisory Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men adopted an Opinion on “Gender mainstreaming in budgets at national, regional and local levels”¹⁰ containing recommendations addressed to the Member States, the European Commission, and the Council.

⁹ OJ L 57, 18.2.2021, p. 17-75. Regulation (EU) 2021/241 establishing the Recovery and Resilience Facility. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32021R0241>

¹⁰ Advisory Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, *Opinion on gender mainstreaming in budgets at national, regional, and local level in the EU*. https://commission.europa.eu/publications/opinions-advisory-committee-equal-opportunities-women-and-men_en

TAKING NOTE OF

22. The report by the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) entitled “*Evidence to action: gender equality and gender mainstreaming in the COVID-19 recovery*”¹¹ which presents, *inter alia*, an analysis of the provisions regarding gender equality contained in the RRF Regulation and an analysis of gender equality in the national recovery and resilience plans (RRP).
23. EIGE’s finding that a gender equality perspective was lacking in the original Proposal for the RRF Regulation.
24. EIGE’s finding that only a very small part of the actions and reforms included by Member States in their RRFs focuses on gender-responsive measures, in spite of the fact that mitigation of the adverse social and economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on women, among other affected groups, is a general objective of the RRF.
25. EIGE’s finding that a closer involvement of gender equality experts in Member States during the preparation and drafting of the national RRFs could have resulted in more effective measures to foster synergies with the national gender equality policy priorities, to support gender mainstreaming in the plans and to respond to the gender equality challenges emerging from the COVID-19 pandemic.
26. EIGE’s finding that “Sex disaggregated data and gender mainstreaming tools are essential to provide the necessary data, information and means to integrate a gender perspective into the RRFs.”¹²

¹¹ Doc. 9298/1/23 REV 1.

¹² EIGE, *Evidence to action: gender equality and gender mainstreaming in the COVID-19 recovery*, p. 36.

27. The European Commission’s analysis of the RRF as regards its impact on equality, which shows that Member States addressed challenges in the area of gender equality in various ways throughout their RRFs by means of specific reforms with potentially lasting effects, through targeted investments, and through mainstreaming equality in various policy areas, and that in the national RRFs adopted by November 2022 the share of measures with a focus on gender equality ranged from 8 percent to 11 percent for the three top ranking Member States.¹³

CONSIDERING THAT

28. This set of Conclusions builds on previous work and political commitments voiced by the Council, the Commission and the European Parliament and relevant stakeholders in this area, including the documents listed in the Annex.

¹³ European Commission, Recovery and Resilience Scoreboard Thematic analysis on Equality, January 2023.

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:

29. Step up efforts to promote gender equality and gender mainstreaming through institutional mechanisms at all levels, including at regional and local level, by:
- a) ensuring that gender mainstreaming is implemented effectively on a whole-of-government basis and across all government policies in a way that makes full use of the available expertise on gender equality;
 - b) continuing to deliver on previous Council Conclusions on effective institutional mechanisms, and establishing within all ministries coordinating mechanisms that provide sufficient knowledge and technical skills to ensure gender mainstreaming in all policy fields;
 - c) ensuring inter-ministerial coordination on gender mainstreaming in government policy, in order to strengthen implementation and facilitate exchanges of good practice and lessons learned;
 - d) adopting national policy objectives, policy frameworks or gender equality strategies, as well as action plans; and
 - e) monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of gender mainstreaming work, so as to promote gender equality.

30. Ensure the timely and effective implementation of measures for enhancing gender equality in their national RRP as well as in other EU funding instruments and ensure that gender equality is taken into account throughout this process, including through the use of available tools such as gender-responsive procurement.
31. Promote and develop the collection, analysis, publication, and use of statistical data disaggregated by sex as a basis for gender mainstreaming in all policy areas, without creating an excessive administrative burden, by:
 - a) ensuring that the national statistical system and relevant government authorities collect, analyse, and present statistical data disaggregated by sex and make this data available to the public;
 - b) ensuring the provision of sufficient resources to the national statistical authorities coordinating the collection and processing of statistical data, so as to adequately respond to the need for data disaggregated by sex;
 - c) tasking government authorities to include statistical data relating to individuals or groups of individuals, to be disaggregated by sex and combined, where appropriate, with other relevant characteristics, in reporting to the government, in all policy areas;
 - d) providing access to methodological support, guidance, and training to civil servants so as to raise awareness of the importance of sex disaggregated data collection, enable them to work effectively with statistics disaggregated by sex and improve their understanding of the relevance of such statistics; and
 - e) taking concrete measures to ensure that the collection of statistics disaggregated by sex is mainstreamed and becomes a requirement in the public sector.

32. Ensure sufficient and targeted funding for measures to reduce gender inequalities, including measures to reduce the economic, employment, pay, care and pension gaps, and for measures to help to prevent and combat gender-based violence, as well as for measures to follow up the recent Council Recommendations supporting access to affordable and high-quality early childhood education and care and long-term care.
33. Systematically promote the integration of a gender equality perspective into all stages of policymaking and legislation including planning, decision-making, implementation and evaluation, and continue strengthening the political commitment to and accountability for gender mainstreaming.
34. Collaborate with gender equality experts, including through meaningful consultations with civil society organisations and academia, so as to ensure that a gender equality perspective is included in all stages of planning, implementation, and evaluation of all major initiatives.

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

35. Implement gender mainstreaming in all policymaking, programmes and budgets, by
 - a) collecting, disseminating, analysing and using data disaggregated by sex;
 - b) formulating concrete policy objectives and specific targets to close existing gender gaps;
 - c) making use of available tools and methodologies to strengthen gender mainstreaming in all decision-making processes; and
 - d) adopting steering policy documents to ensure the systematic long-term implementation of gender mainstreaming, including in the budget process, in accordance with national law.
36. Ensure that gender equality aspects of financial, economic and labour-market reforms are fully addressed within the framework of the European Semester, in line with the Employment Guidelines, and that the Semester is used to its full potential for promoting gender equality in the Union.
37. Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of gender mainstreaming already undertaken, including in the context of the budget process, for example by commissioning external and independent evaluations.
38. Evaluate and assess the distributional impact for women and men of policies and of the allocation of funding and other resources, so as to enable effective targeted measures to be taken in the future.
39. Ensure systematic capacity building and use of methodological tools, and meaningful consultation of gender equality experts, as well as promote cross-sectoral cooperation, so as to facilitate and enhance gender mainstreaming across all policy areas.

CALLS ON THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION TO:

40. Ensure that a gender equality perspective is systematically mainstreamed in policy initiatives, as emphasised in its Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025, as well as to deliver on its commitment to create a Union of Equality.
41. Promote a common Union definition of the concept of ‘gender budgeting’, which is defined by the Council of Europe as a “gender-based assessment of budgets incorporating a gender perspective at all levels of the budgetary process and restructuring revenues and expenditures in order to promote gender equality.”¹⁴
42. Ensure that gender equality considerations are integrated in the implementation of the EU budget, in order to close persisting gender gaps, including in particular by financing measures to advance gender equality and women’s economic empowerment in accordance with the respective spending programmes within the MFF, as well as by fully implementing the European Commission's methodology for tracking gender equality expenditure in the EU budget.
43. Ensure the presentation of statistics disaggregated by sex throughout the Commission’s reports and the consistent use of such statistics in policy documents, *inter alia* in the drafting of the annual Joint Employment Report, so as to uncover and to gradually close remaining gender gaps.
44. Strengthen the efforts of the integration of a gender equality perspective in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the RRF.

¹⁴ Council of Europe (2005), Final report of the Group of Specialists on Gender Budgeting (EG-S-GB), EG-S-GB (2004) RAP FIN; Equality Division, Directorate-General of Human Rights, Council of Europe, Strasbourg, p. 10. Available: [Gender budgeting \(coe.int\)](https://www.coe.int/t/e/equality/EG-S-GB%20(2004)%20RAP%20FIN.pdf)

45. Ensure the integration of a gender equality perspective in the drafting of potential future crisis response packages and other initiatives, by:
- a) mainstreaming a gender equality perspective in future legislative acts relating to crisis response packages;
 - b) carrying out a systematic mainstreaming of gender equality perspectives in the crisis response context and in crisis management;
 - c) including a pertinent analysis of how gender mainstreaming has been implemented in mid-term reports and review reports in the crisis response context; and
 - d) promoting available tools that support mainstreaming of gender equality considerations in the crisis response context at national level.
46. Ensure necessary structures and capacity for the effective steering, coordination, monitoring and assessment of gender mainstreaming in Commission processes, including in regard to the EU budget, funds and respective spending programmes within the MFF.
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2. EU legislation

Regulation (EU) 2021/241 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 12 February 2021 establishing the Recovery and Resilience Facility (OJ L 57, 18.2.2021, p. 17-75)

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32021R0241>

3. Council

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

- Council Conclusions on the effectiveness of Institutional Mechanisms for the Advancement of Women and Gender Equality (17605/13)

https://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/lisa/139978.pdf

- Council Conclusions on Equality between women and men in the field of decision-making (14327/15)

[pdf \(europa.eu\)](#)

- Council Conclusions on Gender-Equal Economies in the EU: The Way Forward: Taking Stock of 25 Years of Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action (14938/19)

<https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-14938-2019-INIT/en/pdf>
- Council Conclusions on Tackling the Gender Pay Gap: Valuation and Distribution of Paid Work and Un-paid Care Work (13584/20)

[pdf \(europa.eu\)](#)
- Council Conclusions on the Socio-Economic Impact of COVID-19 on Gender Equality (8884/21)
- Council Conclusions on the European Court of Auditors Special Report 10/2021 on Gender Mainstreaming in the EU Budget (12829/21)

<https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-12829-2021-INIT/en/pdf>
- Council Conclusions on Gender equality in disrupted economies: focus on the young generation (15133/22)

[pdf \(europa.eu\)](#)
- Council Decision (EU) 2022/2296 of 21 November 2022 on guidelines for the employment policies of the Member States. (OJ L 304, 24.11.2022, p. 67–77)

[EUR-Lex - 32022D2296 - EN - EUR-Lex \(europa.eu\)](#).

4. Trio Presidency

Trio Presidency Declaration on Gender Equality signed by France, the Czech Republic and Sweden (January 2022)

https://www.vlada.cz/assets/ppov/rovne-prilezitosti-zen-a-muzu/dokumenty/trio-presidency-declaration-on-gender-equality-france-the-czech-republic-and-sweden-2022-2023_1.pdf

5. European Commission

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<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52020DC0152>

The European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan (6649/21 + ADD 1 + ADD 2)

[pdf \(europa.eu\)](#)

Recovery and Resilience Scoreboard Thematic analysis on Equality, January 2023.

Opinion on gender mainstreaming in budgets at national, regional, and local level in the EU, by the Advisory Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men

https://commission.europa.eu/publications/opinions-advisory-committee-equal-opportunities-women-and-men_en

6. European Parliament

European Parliament resolution of 23 June 2022 on the implementation of the Recovery and Resilience Facility (2021/2251(INI))

7. European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE)

Evidence to action: gender equality and gender mainstreaming in the COVID-19 recovery (9298/1/23 REV 1)

Gender budgeting. Mainstreaming gender into the EU budget and macroeconomic policy framework, 2018.

<https://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/methods-tools/gender-budgeting>)

Gender Impact Assessment: Gender Mainstreaming Toolkit, 2016.

<https://eige.europa.eu/publications/gender-impact-assessment-gender-mainstreaming-toolkit>

8. Council of Europe

Final report of the Group of Specialists on Gender Budgeting (EG-S-GB), EG-S-GB (2004) RAP FIN; Equality Division, Directorate-General of Human Rights, Council of Europe, Strasbourg, p. 10.

[Gender budgeting \(coe.int\)](https://rm.coe.int/gender-budgeting)

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9. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)

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Draft for discussion - OECD Best Practices for Gender Budgeting (2022)

[OECD Best Practices for Gender Budgeting](#)

Gender budgeting in OECD countries (2017)

<https://www.oecd.org/gender/Gender-Budgeting-in-OECD-countries.pdf>

Towards gender-inclusive recovery (2021)

<https://www.oecd.org/coronavirus/policy-responses/towards-gender-inclusive-recovery-ab597807/>

10. United Nations

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (UN agenda for gender equality and women's empowerment)

<https://www.refworld.org/docid/3dde04324.html>

The UN Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)

[Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women \(un.org\)](#)