

TRIO PRESIDENCY DECLARATION ON EQUALITY BETWEEN WOMEN AND MEN

We, the sixth Trio of Presidencies - Italy, Latvia and Luxembourg - the Member States holding the Presidency of the Council of Ministers during the 18 month period from July 2014 to December 2015, hereby present this joint declaration on actions to promote gender equality between women and men at the EU Presidency Conference “Gender equality in Europe: an unfinished business?” in Rome, during the Italian Presidency.

WHEREAS,

1. Equality between women and men is one of the common and fundamental values on which the European Union is founded, enshrined in Articles 2 and 3(3) of Treaty on European Union and Article 8 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, as well as in Article 23 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union.
2. Mainstreaming the principle of equality between women and men is a major part of all EU activities and represents the general approach to the implementation of all EU policies.
3. Inequalities between women and men violate fundamental rights. Therefore, as underlined by the European Commission’s Strategy for equality between women and men 2010-2015, efforts need to be made to ensure the implementation of the different aspects of gender equality in the European Union, such as: equal economic independence; equal pay for equal work and work of equal value; equality in decision-making; dignity, integrity and an end to gender-based violence; gender equality in external actions; and horizontal issues. In this scenario, the Commission is encouraged to develop and present a new strategy for gender equality covering the period after 2015.
4. As recognized by the Council of the European Union in the European Pact for Gender Equality (2011-2020), gender equality policies are vital to economic growth, prosperity and competitiveness.
5. One of the lessons learned from the early years of the Europe 2020 Strategy is that the current underutilization of women in the labour force represents an erosion of human capital the European Union cannot afford. Therefore, a stronger emphasis on gender equality within the Europe 2020 strategy is fundamental in order to achieve the employment target of 75% employment for women and men by 2020.

6. 2015 will mark the 20th anniversary of the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action as well as the deadline for the implementation of the internationally agreed United Nations Millennium Development Goals. As stated in the preamble of the Beijing Platform for Action: “A transformed partnership based on equality between women and men is a condition for people-centred sustainable development”.
7. Ensuring women’s rights and recognizing their role on productive and care economy is essential, not only to achieve gender equality but also to transform gender relations in order to remove the main constraints to development.

STRESSING THAT

1. The development and implementation of new strategies and policies to create new employment opportunities at all levels of the labour market, the fight against all the structural and cultural barriers preventing women from accessing, staying and re-entering employment, the prevention of vertical and horizontal segregation through measures able to match women’s and men’s skills and competences and work opportunities are central factors to reach the EU’s target of 75% of women and men in employment.
2. The factors hindering the equal participation of women and men in employment are particularly complex. Therefore, the Member States of the European Union need to take action to promote the strengthening of childcare facilities; support equal pay initiatives; encourage women to enter non-traditional professions and innovative sectors, science, technology and research; combat gender stereotypes in employment; improve reconciliation measures and strengthen the role of men in the promotion of women’s employment; and promote the equal participation of women and men in decision making.
3. According to the European Commission’s Report on the Progress on Equality between Women and Men in 2013, women’s employment rate stands at 63% and that of men at 75%. Furthermore, despite their investment in education, women are paid 16% less than men per hour of work. Women still bear the brunt of unpaid work within the household and family and spend an average of 26 hours on care and households activities, compared with 9 hours for men. Segregation is omnipresent in the labour market and women are still less likely to hold senior positions.
4. According to the first EU wide survey on violence against women, carried out by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), one in three women (33%) has experienced physical and/or sexual violence since the age of 15. One in 20 women (5%) has been raped. One in two women (55%) has been confronted with some form of sexual harassment. Slightly more than half of all women in the EU (53%) avoid certain situations or places, at least sometimes, for fear of being physically or sexually assaulted.

5. Gender-based violence is a form of discrimination that seriously violates the enjoyment by women and girls of all human rights. Fighting against this phenomenon means preventing all forms of violence, protecting its victims and prosecuting perpetrators. The elimination of gender-based violence at EU level will allow to pave the way for the creation of a positive environment for women's political and economic empowerment. To this end, also men and boys need to be fully engaged in efforts to both eradicate gender-based violence and promote and achieve gender equality and the empowerment of women.

ACTIVITIES TO BE CARRIED OUT DURING THE PRESIDENCIES OF ITALY, LATVIA AND LUXEMBOURG

1. The sixth Trio of Presidencies will, during the period from July 2014 to December 2015, continue to build on the programme of work developed by its predecessors and will encourage discussion, exchange of good practices and action in the areas specifically identified in this Declaration and Trio Programme.
2. There is a strong economic case for advancing equality between women and men, particularly in the context of the ongoing economic crisis, and for demographic reasons. The Presidencies will seek to ensure that the Council fulfils its commitments as set out in the European Pact for Gender Equality (2011-2020), and will take into account the framework of the Commission's Strategy for equality between women and men (2010-2015).
3. In the context of the Europe 2020 Strategy, the Presidencies will continue to support the labour market activation of women, in keeping with the 75% employment target for women and men. Specific issues that are relevant from an employment perspective include the pension gap, gender stereotypes, women and technology and the role of women in decision-making. Another vital theme that will receive special attention is the need to combat gender based violence.
4. Work will also continue on the Commission's proposal for a Directive to improve the gender balance on company boards and for the promotion of the higher representation of women in decision making in general.
5. The Presidencies will seek to implement the gender perspective into all policy areas ("gender mainstreaming") and in the context of external actions. EU coordination will be ensured at the UN Commission on the Status of Women in 2015 and a 20-year review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action will be undertaken.

ITALY

- In view of the 20th anniversary of the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPfA), the Italian Presidency, in collaboration with the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), has provided a thorough assessment of the implementation of the objectives included in all 12 critical areas of concern defined by the Beijing Platform for Action since 2010 in the context of EU policy priorities and targets.
- The review presents the most recent situation and identifies achievements, gaps and future challenges in each area at both EU and national level. It also proposes recommendations for further actions to promote gender equality in the EU, which will serve as a useful basis for the definition of the global post-2015 development goals.
- In consideration of the alarming spreading of the phenomenon in the European Union, the Italian Presidency has attached particular importance to the review of the area of Violence against Women.
- Italy is collaborating with the European Commission, Member States and the European Parliament on the Commission's proposal for a Directive on improving the gender balance among directors of companies listed on stock exchanges and related measures. The Italian Presidency is committed to progressing the proposal through the Working Party on Social Questions and then to the EPSCO Council, as appropriate.
- Italy is continuing to encourage the balanced representation of women and men in decision-making process by holding a European Conference on "Promoting gender balance in decision making", which took place in July 2014 and opened the Italian Presidency of the Council of the European Union in the field of gender equality.
- Italy has also developed draft Council Conclusions on the review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in the EU – Beijing +20, which will be presented to the December 2014 meeting of the EPSCO Council.
- To continue to support and improve the coordination between the Member States' policies and the European Commission's strategies on gender equality and promote the exchange of good practices and experiences at EU level, the Italian Presidency hosted a meeting of the High Level Group on Gender Mainstreaming on 18 and 19 September 2014.
- A high level Government representative led the Italian delegation to the 58th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women in March.
- In collaboration with the European Commission, Italy has organised this High Level EU Presidency Conference, in which the Ministers for Gender Equality of the 28 EU Member States have been invited to participate and share experiences, ideas and good practices on the main issues related to the review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action (Beijing +20) in the EU.

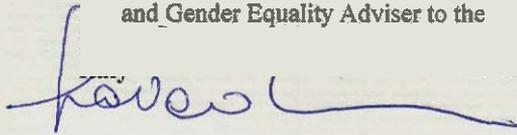
LATVIA

- Taking into account the importance of equal rights and opportunities, Latvia sets inclusive and sustainable labour market participation as one of the priorities during the Latvian Presidency.
- It is necessary to ensure an effective cooperation between Member States and the European Commission in order to continue to strengthen gender equality and gender mainstreaming in the EU. As a tool for further coordination and better understanding of Member States' policies and strategies as well as with regard to identifying the relevant policy areas and topics to be addressed, the High Level Group on gender mainstreaming will be hosted in Riga on 22-23 January 2015.
- Since gender equality in the frame of external actions is among the priorities of the Latvian Presidency, the EU coordination during the fifty-ninth session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women in March 2015 will be ensured. Also, two side events will be organised, one of which will be aiming to address the underrepresentation of women in the STEM fields (academic disciplines of science, technology, engineering and mathematics).
- Latvia will host the World Press Freedom Day in May 2015, where side event on 'women and media' will be organized in cooperation with UNESCO and UN Women. The side event will focus on portrayal of women in digital media: limitations, challenges, opportunities.
- Having regard to the present state of gender pension gap, the Latvian Presidency will prepare draft Council Conclusions on gender gap in pensions, specifically on the main causes of the phenomenon as well as on the suitable policies and measures that Member States may apply in order to reduce the gap; the Conclusions are to be presented during the EPSCO Council meeting in June 2015.
- To ensure the on-going process of monitoring of gender equality in different policies and areas, The European Institute for Gender Equality in collaboration with the Latvian Presidency will prepare the second edition of the Gender Equality Index which shall be presented in June 2015 in Brussels.
- Comprehensive gender mainstreaming forms will be one of the core elements of the Latvian Presidency. Gender equality aspects regarding care for dependant family members, gender differences in the frame of children's overweight and obesity-related health issues and other concerns will be discussed during the Presidency events. Also, an international conference on women's empowerment in the context of the European Year for Development will be organised in Riga on 4 March 2015.

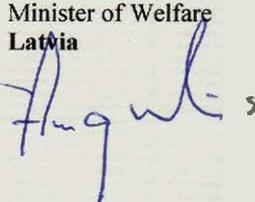
LUXEMBOURG

- The priority of the Luxembourgish equality policy is the balanced representation between men and women in the power sharing and decision making arena, political as well as economic. Furthermore, Luxembourg would like to analyse the balance of power and decision making in civil society organizations as well. The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) is preparing a progress report on the topic.
- Luxembourg strongly supports the Europe 2020 initiative to raise employment by 75% by the year 2020 as women are currently an underutilized workforce that could help the EU meet their targets. The participation of women from all walks of life in the labor force would not only help achieve the employment targets but will help fight social exclusion and poverty.
- Luxembourg will continue to emphasize the importance of changing attitudes and the fight on all levels against stereotypical attitude. We need to focus on the role played by the media in terms of equality between men and women, particularly on the use of stereotypical roles across all media channels including sexist advertising or video games influence on behavior.
- Gender equality should not just be about promoting women's right, but should also support men suffering from unequal treatment or discrimination (e.g. education dropout, child care, health problems, domestic violence ...) We believe that a more extensive approach to gender equality is necessary and a true de facto equality will not be achieved as long as women are only considered victims and the role of men in gender equality policies is limited to defending of women's rights.
- In its Strategy for Equality between Women and Men 2010-2015, which identified five priority areas for action: equal economic independence; equal pay for equal work or work of equal value; equality in decision-making; dignity, integrity and an end to gender-based violence; and gender equality in external actions, the Commission has undertaken to encourage the mainstreaming of gender issues into all EU policies. Luxembourg will strive to ensure continued cooperation between Member States and the European Commission, building on the excellent work done by the Hellenic Presidency.
- Furthermore, Luxembourg wants to address the role that the EU could play in advancing equality and foremost to respect the rights of women around the world in connection with Beijing Platform for Action +20. During its presidency, Luxembourg will focus on "Women and Decision Making".
- The High Level Group Meeting on Gender Mainstreaming is planned for September 2015.

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