

Council conclusions on the 20-year review of the implementation by the Member States and the EU institutions of the Beijing Platform for Action

Employment, Social policy, Health and Consumer affairs Council meeting
Brussels, 11 December 2014

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

- "1. **ACKNOWLEDGING** that equality between women and men is one of the common and fundamental principles enshrined 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 of the European Union.
2. **REAFFIRMING** the importance of ensuring equal opportunities for both women and men and the full promotion and protection of, and respect for, the human rights and fundamental freedoms of women and girls, 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.
3. **REAFFIRMING** that gender equality policies are vital for economic growth, prosperity and competitiveness and that gender equality, human rights and the empowerment of women and girls are essential preconditions for equitable and inclusive sustainable development, as well as important values and objectives in themselves.
4. **CONSIDERING** that 2015 marks a particularly important year for gender equality and women's rights: the international community will celebrate the 20th anniversary of the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action as well as the 15th anniversary of the adoption of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, and the UN post-2015 agenda will be adopted. At the EU level, the mid-term review of the Europe 2020 Strategy will be conducted, and the Strategy for equality between women and men (2010-2015) will be renewed.
5. **RECALLING** the proposal of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals and **WELCOMING** its proposal for a stand-alone goal to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.

6. **CONSIDERING** that each Trio of Presidencies prepares a joint 18-month programme, which gives continuity to the work of the Council, including through the expression of long-term commitments; and that cooperation in the context of the Trio offers a valuable opportunity to coordinate work in the field of gender equality.
7. **RECALLING** and **REAFFIRMING** the specific mechanism that has been established at the EU level to follow up the EU implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action:
 - (a) Following the United Nations' Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995, the Madrid European Council requested an annual review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in the Member States.
 - (b) In 1998, the Council agreed that the annual assessment of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action would include a proposal on a set of quantitative and qualitative indicators.
 - (c) Since 1999, quantitative and qualitative indicators have been developed by successive Presidencies of the EU Council in 11 out of the 12 critical areas of concern identified in the Beijing Platform for Action for the purpose of monitoring progress towards achieving the Platform's objectives, and each year the Council has adopted Conclusions on these indicators.
 - (d) In 2006, the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) was established with the task of, *inter alia*, developing methods to improve the comparability and reliability of data related to gender equality. Since 2010, EIGE has been providing technical support to the Council of the EU and to its Presidencies in the follow-up of the Beijing Platform for Action by reviewing the area of concern chosen by each Presidency of the Council of the EU.
8. **ACKNOWLEDGING** that significant progress has been made in certain areas following the establishment of the Beijing Platform for Action in 1995; this reflects the active commitment of the EU Member States and the Commission and other EU institutions to its implementation and review at both national and EU level.
9. **STRESSING** that there is a need to strengthen this commitment, in particular in the areas where progress has been slower.
10. **NOTING** that this set of Conclusions builds on the political commitments voiced by the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission in the field of gender equality as expressed in the documents listed in the Annex.
11. **STRESSING** that:
 - (a) In the context of rising overall poverty and social exclusion, certain groups of women and girls in the EU (e.g. migrants, minorities, lone mothers, young women, women and girls with disabilities, and elderly women) are more at risk. Moreover, although the economic activity rate of women is on the rise in the EU, they are still less likely than men to be in employment due in particular to family care responsibilities.

- (b) Despite progress made in the pursuit of the Millennium Development Goals that are of particular importance for women and girls, and although Millennium Development Goal 3 identifies gender equality and women's empowerment as a global priority, overall progress for women and girls across all the Millennium Development Goals remains slow and uneven, both within and between countries. Indeed, lack of progress on gender equality has hindered progress towards all of the Millennium Development Goals and is a particular reason of concern for poverty-stricken regions and areas and for marginalized, vulnerable and disadvantaged women and girls and those women and girls who experience multiple forms of discrimination and inequalities of different kinds.
- (c) Across Member States, governments have taken increasing responsibility for the promotion of gender equality. Over the last years, in a number of Member States, the governmental structures and equality bodies dealing exclusively with gender have been merged with entities that work to combat discrimination on several different grounds. In these cases Member States should ensure the capacity, efficiency and effectiveness of their structures and bodies in tackling gender inequalities.
- (d) Further policy commitment, expertise and dedicated human and financial resources are needed to ensure that gender mainstreaming, which is one of the main levers for the achievement of *de facto* equality, is fully implemented at the national and EU level.
12. **ACKNOWLEDGING** that "Violence against women and girls" means any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual, psychological or economic harm or suffering to women and girls, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.
13. **STRESSING** that violence against women and girls seriously harms individual women and girls as well as families, communities and societies more generally. In recent years, the problem of violence against women and girls has gained more visibility. It is recognised that violence against women remains prevalent in the European Union and constitutes one of the main sources of gender inequalities of our time and a violation of human rights.
14. **REAFFIRMING** their commitment to the promotion, protection and fulfilment of all human rights and to the full and effective implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the outcomes of their review conferences and in this context sexual and reproductive health and rights.
15. **STRESSING** their strong commitment to intensifying actions and measures to ensure the full and accelerated implementation of the Declaration and Platform for Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women and the Outcome Document of the 23rd Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly, including in the context of the forthcoming post-2015 global agenda.
16. **WELCOMING** EIGE's Report "Beijing + 20: the 4th Review of the Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in the EU Member States",¹ which presents the main trends, current progress, and major challenges in the field of gender equality in the EU.
17. **TAKING NOTE** of the outcome of the High Level EU Presidency Conference "Gender Equality in Europe: Unfinished Business? – Taking Stock 20 Years after the Beijing Platform for Action", held in Rome on 23 and 24 October 2014, where the participating Ministers and political authorities responsible for gender equality reiterated their commitment to the full and effective implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and to its follow-up.

¹ 13762/14 ADD 1.

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION AND THE GOVERNMENTS OF THE MEMBER STATES, MEETING WITHIN THE COUNCIL

18. CALL ON THE MEMBER STATES

- (a) To fulfil the commitments set out in the European Pact for Gender Equality (2011-2020) and pursue the targets set in the Europe 2020 Strategy by taking concrete measures to promote gender equality, including through the National Reform Programmes.
- (b) To support the Commission in its preparation of future strategies and programmes for or related to gender equality.
- (c) To make effective use of programmes and projects aimed at combating gender inequalities, particularly those financed through the European Structural and Investment Funds.

19. CALL ON THE COMMISSION

- (a) To develop a new strategy for gender equality after 2015, which should be closely linked to the Europe 2020 Strategy and supportive of its targets and include internal, external and development cooperation policies, and take into account the results of the implementation of the Strategy for Equality between Women and Men (2010-2015), and which should also take into account the United Nations post-2015 agenda.
- (b) To put a stronger emphasis on gender equality within the Europe 2020 Strategy governance framework and to mainstream the gender dimension into all relevant future EU strategies, policies and funding programmes.
- (c) To adopt annually a report on developments towards gender equality and gender mainstreaming of policy areas at EU and Member States level in time to maximise its usefulness in the context of the European Semester and the sessions of the UN Commission on the Status of Women.
- (d) To continue to promote and encourage the exchange of knowledge between the Member States in all critical areas of concern identified in the Beijing Platform for Action through new programmes for the exchange of good practice on gender equality in EU priority areas, with a view to facilitating the achievement of the objectives set in the Platform.

20. CALL ON THE MEMBER STATES AND THE COMMISSION, in accordance with their respective competences:

- (a) To ensure that gender equality and the human rights and empowerment of women and girls remain a policy priority at EU and Member States level and both for internal and external policies, including by enhancing the gender dimension in the European semester and by actively promoting, also within the framework of EU Presidencies, high level policy dialogue on gender equality issues at the EU level.
- (b) To strengthen the effectiveness of governmental gender equality structures by placing them at the highest possible level in the government, by providing them with clearly defined mandates and powers, and by supplying them with adequate personnel and financial resources for fulfilling their mandates.

- (c) To strengthen political commitment in the implementation of gender mainstreaming by making full use of policy-making tools such as, *inter alia*, gender budgeting, gender impact assessment and gender capacity building; and to include the gender perspective in all EU and national legislative, financial and other key processes, strategies, programmes and projects.
- (d) To take further measures to tackle the remaining challenges in the field of gender equality, including gender gaps in education and training, in the labour market, in the sharing of domestic and caring responsibilities, in pay and pensions and in decision-making; and, with this in mind, to tackle the stereotypes and norms that hinder the full participation of women and men in different areas of life.
- (e) To increase efforts and funding, where necessary, to support existing and/or new measures and strategies to combat all forms of violence against women and girls by applying a comprehensive policy that includes measures for prevention, protection and punishment, and also tackles emerging forms of violence such as those linked to the Internet and social media; and to involve men and boys in the prevention of and fight against violence against women and girls.
- (f) To consider signing, ratifying and implementing the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence.
- (g) To enhance the active participation and responsibility of men and boys and their commitment to policies aimed at achieving gender equality at national and EU level, and to pay more attention to the positive impact of gender equality for men and boys, for the economy and for the well-being of society as a whole, including by developing measures to support the equal sharing of domestic and caring responsibilities between women and men, as well as by formulating policies to overcome gender stereotypes.
- (h) To reinforce active cooperation with civil society actors, including non-governmental organisations, women's organisations and gender researchers and to support the further involvement of the social partners, the private sector and academia in the realisation of gender equality.
- (i) Seek to ensure that gender equality and the human rights and empowerment of women and girls, including the fight against all forms of violence against women and girls, are reflected as a stand-alone goal in the forthcoming UN post-2015 agenda and integrated into all goals through targets and indicators measured by sex-disaggregated data.
- (j) To cooperate in pursuing, implementing and disseminating common priorities, including those set out in the European Pact for Gender Equality (2011-2020), especially in the context of the preparation and implementation of the future strategy at the EU level in this field.
- (k) To strengthen the regular follow-up and revision of the sets of indicators already developed for the review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, and develop new ones, in particular in the area of "Human Rights of Women," drawing on the expertise of the High Level Group on Gender Mainstreaming and making full use of EIGE.
- (l) To further advance the collection, compilation, analysis, and dissemination of timely, reliable and comparable data disaggregated by sex and age, including by using alternative data sources, in order to improve the monitoring and follow-up of the Beijing Platform for Action at EU level, in cooperation with EU and national statistical offices and making full use of the capacity and expertise of EIGE, also encouraging the use of the EIGE Gender Equality Index.

- (m) To ensure the regular collection of reliable and comparable prevalence data as well as administrative data on violence against women and girls, making full use of EIGE and cooperating with EU and national statistical offices.
 - (n) To take into consideration the indicators developed for the review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action as a valuable tool for reinforcing the gender perspective in the monitoring mechanisms of all relevant national and European strategies.
 - (o) To ensure timely and regular monitoring of progress and increase accountability and to enhance the gender dimension in the European Semester."
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