

**TRIO PRESIDENCY DECLARATION
ON
EQUALITY BETWEEN WOMEN AND MEN**

We, the fourth Trio of Presidencies – Ireland, Lithuania and the Hellenic Republic - the Member States holding the Presidency of the Council of Ministers during the 18 month period from January 2013 to June 2014, hereby present this joint declaration on actions to foster equality between women and men at the Presidency Conference on Gender Equality and Employment in Dublin, during the Irish Presidency.

1. We recall that the principle of equality between women and men has been enshrined in the Treaties establishing the European Union since its earliest days and has been restated in the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union which states that “in all its activities, the Union shall aim to eliminate inequalities, and to promote equality, between men and women”.
2. We note that the Charter of Fundamental Rights underpins equality as an indivisible, universal value of the European Union and states that “equality between women and men must be ensured in all areas, including employment, work and pay”.
3. We reaffirm the view of the European Commission in its Women’s Charter that Europe has made remarkable progress towards equality between women and men during the past decades but concur with its view that obstacles to real equality remain.
4. We endorse the view of the Council of the European Union which acknowledged, in the “European Pact for Gender Equality 2011- 2020”, that gender equality policies are vital to economic growth, prosperity and competitiveness and that a new impetus is needed to reaffirm the close link between the Commission’s Strategy for Equality between Women and Men 2010 to 2015 and “Europe 2020: the European Union’s Strategy for jobs and smart, sustainable and inclusive growth” and reaffirmed its commitment to reinforce governance by integrating a gender perspective into all policy areas, while recommending its integration into the mechanisms of the Europe 2020 Strategy.
5. We acknowledge the commitment of the European Commission to address the key priority areas identified in its Strategy Statement for Gender Equality through gender mainstreaming initiatives and through special measures included in the Commission’s annual work programme.
6. We fully support and continue to collaborate with all Member States on the full and effective implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and, in this regard, will continue the work of successive Presidencies to develop quantitative and qualitative indicators on the twelve areas of concern in the Beijing Platform.

7. We recognise the contribution being made by the European Institute for Gender Equality to work on gender equality at EU level, through innovative research, the collection and dissemination of data, the development of indicators and the exchange of good practices and information between Member States and research bodies across all Member States.
8. We acknowledge that the economic downturn has presented unprecedented challenges for many Member States and for the European Union as a whole and has led to a contraction of public services in some Member States, including in the pursuit of gender equality;
9. We note that the impact of the economic downturn has varied for men and for women in differing ways among Member States, in accordance with national economic structures, particularly in the field of employment and that unemployment or underemployment can impact on the welfare of the individual and her/his family; on the risk of poverty and social exclusion; and on their pension entitlements in older age while, from a societal perspective, it can lead to social unrest and threaten social cohesion, affecting the well-being of both women and men;
10. Within these contexts, we commit to collaborate during our successive Presidencies on a range of initiatives to address gender equality with an emphasis on the role of women as decision-makers in the media, the economic engagement of women, women in employment and the achievement of de facto gender equality through effective functioning of institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women, bearing in mind the provisions of the Beijing Platform for Action, EU legislation and EU policies in relation to both gender equality and economic growth

The Europe 2020 Agenda

1. We fully subscribe to the Europe 2020 agenda and the European Employment Strategy, published in March 2012, and we welcome the focus on gender equality-related issues in country specific recommendations as part of the European Semester process and the work of the Treaty based Employment Committee in this regard. We believe that this work is beneficially serving the twin goals of economic growth for Europe and economic independence for its women.

Women as decision-makers in the media

1. The Beijing Platform for Action noted that the potential exists for the media to make a far greater contribution to the advancement of women¹. It also stresses that equal participation in decision-making provides a balance that more accurately reflects the composition of society² and better represents the interests of women and men.

¹ Para 234

² Para 181

2. Specifically referring to the media, the Platform recommends that Governments promote women's full and equal participation in the media, including management, programming, education, training and research³.

The economic engagement of women

1. The achievement of the employment goal of 75 per cent for men and women aged 20 to 64 contained in the Europe 2020 Strategy requires the Union to address the challenges of unemployment of both sexes and of youth unemployment and to encourage the reattachment to the labour market of women or all ages who have opted out of the labour market voluntarily, often for child rearing purposes.
2. There is statistical evidence to show that women frequently attain higher standards of education than men and therefore they must be encouraged to reach their full potential within the labour market, while, as a well-educated cohort of human capital, their potential contribution to European growth and international competitiveness should be maximised.
3. Successive Presidencies have dealt with the issue of sharing of family responsibilities to facilitate the labour market participation of both women and men and the Council of EPSCO Ministers has already agreed to Council Conclusions which recommend action in this regard.
4. The availability of accessible and affordable childcare to support working parents was discussed at the Barcelona Meeting of the European Council in 2002 and this Council agreed targets for Member States which are still relevant.
5. The European Commission has also noted that, while *“there has been an encouraging upturn in women running businesses in the past decade or so, much more needs to be done to overcome the specific factors which discourage women in particular from starting or taking over small firms. We have to create an environment in which those women who do run a small business can more easily grow their firms”*.

The Effective Functioning of Institutional Mechanisms for the Advancement of Women

1. Equal, full and effective participation of women and men in all areas, in particular in employment, contributes to economic growth and prosperity and the targets of Europe 2020. Addressing equality between women and men as a horizontal priority in all policy areas, but especially in employment, requires effective governance and implementation.
2. The effective functioning of institutional mechanisms is a necessary precondition to make gender equality a reality of everyday life. Although the

³ Para 239

institutional mechanisms for gender equality may be diverse in form because of the different systems of public administration in the EU Member States, they should, however, all follow general principles of good governance. They should have clear mandates, sufficient and well-trained human resources, adequate financial resources, easy accessible tools and methods for gender mainstreaming, clear and measurable targets etc., but as one of the most important elements – they require political commitment, with the highest possible placement within the hierarchies and clear visibility of their activities and the results achieved, through systematic reporting and awareness raising.

3. The inclusion of de facto equality between women and men as a horizontal priority for a number of policy areas necessitates the development of specific working methods, in particular coordination, monitoring of progress, evaluation, measurable goals and visibility of the results, but also well developed and easily usable instruments to ensure effective gender mainstreaming, such as gender impact assessment before a decision is taken. Encouragement and involvement of different players in public and private sector, involvement of gender scientists and researchers, constructive cooperation and support for women's organizations are the factors unavoidable for eliminating inequalities in all areas and achieving substantial gender equality.

Women and the Economy

1. The immediate challenge for the EU following the publication of Europe 2020 has been the growth of unemployment on an EU-wide basis. There have been two main dimensions to unemployment, i.e. change in economic structures and the failure of young people to find employment. These situations both present a challenge to social cohesion as well as economic growth. Data for EU-27 show that in August 2012 over 13.7 million men and 11.6 million women were unemployed across the EU. This represents an unemployment rate of 10.5 per cent for men and 10.6 per cent for women.
2. Across Europe, women are over-represented in part-time work. According to the European Commission's annual report 'Progress on Equality between women and men in 2011', the share of part-time workers in total employment (persons aged 15 and over) in EU Member States in 2010 was 31.9% for women, compared with a figure of 8.7% for men. Part-time work is often associated with lower earnings and more limited opportunities for career advancement, training and education. Part-time employment, in conjunction with career breaks for child rearing/domestic purposes, can lead to a reduction in lifetime earnings which may impact on pension provision for women in old age. Thus, the gender pay gap in employment can be followed by a gender pension gap in retirement. The issue of 'quality' jobs for women, jobs which provide the opportunity for career advancement, is therefore as important an issue as that of job creation for women.
3. The economic empowerment of women can be achieved through either employment or self-employment. The establishment of well targeted small

enterprises may also offer the opportunity to women to use the flexibility of self-employment to link family responsibilities and economic engagement. The growth of the enterprise may make additional demands on the budding entrepreneur but this can be addressed by the employment of staff, creating in that way additional employment opportunities.

4. The Europe 2020 Strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth is a key to the economic recovery and further development of competitiveness of the European Union. The strengthened economic governance framework which has been put in place in the context of the European Semester has resulted in a better coordination and convergence of the Member States' economic policies. The integration of women in the labour market, by providing equal pay, adequate childcare, eliminating all kinds of discrimination and tax-benefit disincentives that discourage female participation, and optimizing the duration of maternity and parental leave can contribute substantively to economic growth.

ACTIVITIES TO BE CARRIED OUT DURING THE PRESIDENCIES OF IRELAND, LITHUANIA AND GREECE

1. The fourth Trio Presidency will, during the period from January 2013 to June 2014, 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. Women's employment, the economic downturn and the prospect of economic growth will be the key threads weaving through our Presidencies. Both the Irish and Greek Presidencies are addressing aspects of women's employment, the advancement of which is central to economic growth across Europe and personal and community well-being at a more micro level. The work of the Lithuanian Presidency on the national machineries will enable all Member States to refocus on the important contribution made by the institutional mechanisms in the achievement of true gender equality. Work by these bodies in ensuring gender equality, particularly in the labour market on issues such as equal pay, leave entitlements and progression opportunities, enables women and men to work together to maximise women's economic engagement and by extension, the achievement of economic growth and prosperity.
3. New research and new indicators for measuring progress on the Beijing Platform for Action will be developed in relation to one UN Beijing Area of Concern – women and the media - while previous work in indicators on two Areas of Concern – Institutional Mechanisms and Employment - will be reviewed and further developed. The outcome documents and related Council Conclusions will be submitted to the EPSCO Council.
4. Political discussions on gender equality issues will take place in all appropriate fora, including at the EPSCO Council as necessary. Expert and high level events will be organised to further promote gender equality and to foster the

further advancement of women towards de facto equality within the European Union while the Trio Members will assist with the advancement of women on the global front through active participation at the annual meeting of the UN Commission on the Status of Women.

5. The following events are envisaged in each of our Presidencies:

IRELAND

Ireland's overarching Presidency Programme will work to secure stability and to ensure that it leads to jobs and growth.

The Irish Presidency programme on gender equality includes a focus on women's employment, at both the informal EPSCO Council and at a High level Technical conference in Dublin, at which all the most up to date research will be presented to encourage debate on the contribution which women do and can make to economic growth through labour market participation.

The following are the key actions to be taken during the Irish Presidency:

- Ireland is focusing on the Beijing Area of Concern on Women and the Media. Building on previous work in relation to women's roles as decision-makers in specific sectors, Ireland has been collaborating with the European Institute for Gender Equality on research to look at the role of women in the broadcast and print media.
- Ireland is collaborating with the European Commission, Member States and the European Parliament on the Commission's draft Directive on improving the gender balance among non – executive directors on the boards of publicly listed companies. The Irish Presidency is committed to progressing the proposal through the Social Questions Working Group and then to the EPSCO Council, as appropriate, while at the same time working with the European Parliament on the dossier.
- Ireland has also developed draft Council Conclusions which propose new indicators in relation to women and the media and these will be presented to the June 2013 meeting of the EPSCO Council in tandem with the EIGE Report.
- To ensure continued co-operation between Member States and the European Commission, Ireland hosted a meeting of the High Level Group on Gender Mainstreaming on 10th and 11th January 2013.
- Ministers visiting Dublin to participate in the Informal EPSCO Council in Dublin on 7th and 8th February took part in a workshop on the theme "Older Women and the Labour Market", chaired by the Irish Minister of State with responsibility for Gender Equality.
- The Minister for Gender Equality led the Irish delegation to the 57th meeting of the UN Commission on the Status of Women in March 2013.

- An Expert Conference on the “Economic Engagement of Women and the Europe 2020 Agenda” was held in Dublin in April 2013. Delegates heard from a wide range of speakers on the key issues and a Presidency note on the outcomes will be forwarded to the June 2013 meeting of the EPSCO Council.

LITHUANIA

- Lithuania will focus on the Beijing area of concern on Institutional mechanisms. Building on the existing indicators in this area of concern adopted in the Finnish Presidency and the related study on the situation at that point in the Member States, Lithuania is cooperating with the European Institute for Gender Equality on the preparation of a comparative study to look at the subsequent changes in institutional mechanisms in the Member States and the impact of these changes on the effectiveness of the institutional mechanisms for gender equality. .
- Lithuania will develop Council Conclusions reviewing indicators on institutional mechanisms towards effective governance of gender equality, thus contributing to Europe 2020 targets. These Council Conclusions will be presented to EPSCO in December 2013.
- To ensure continued co-operation between Member States and the European Commission, Lithuania will host a meeting of the High Level Group on Gender Mainstreaming on 11th and 12th September, 2013 in Vilnius.
- An Experts’ Conference on the effective functioning of Institutional mechanisms and their contribution towards the achievement of de facto gender equality as a contribution to Europe 2020 targets is to be held in Vilnius on September 13, 2013 in conjunction with the HLG meeting. ,
- A high level Government representative led the Lithuanian delegation to the 57th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women in March.
- In close collaboration with the European Commission, Member States and the European Parliament, Lithuania will progress work on the Commission’s Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on improving the gender balance among non-executive directors of companies listed on stock exchanges and related measures.

GREECE

Greece is planning on the following activities and these may be developed further as our Presidency approaches

- Greece is focusing on the Beijing area of concern “Women and the Economy” and its strategic objective “Promote women’s economic rights and independence, including access to employment, appropriate working conditions and control over economic resources”.

- A Report will be prepared in cooperation with the European Institute for Gender Equality, aiming at the development of new indicators and Council Conclusions on the same issue will be proposed by the Greek Presidency.
- To ensure continued cooperation between Member States and the European Commission, Greece will host a meeting of the High Level Group on Gender Mainstreaming (Athens, January 2014).
- Greece will cooperate with the European External Action Service aiming at the coordinated presence of the European Union at the 58th Session of the UN Commission of the Status of Women (New York, March 2014).