

TRIO PRESIDENCY DECLARATION: GENDER EQUALITY

Informal meeting of ministers in charge of gender equality
14th November 2008 – Lille

We, the second Trio of Presidencies – France, Czech Republic and Sweden – recognise the need for a common declaration and present it at the informal meeting of ministers for gender equality on 14 November 2008.

Considering that:

- gender equality is a fundamental right, a fundamental principle of the European Union enshrined in the EC Treaty, as well as one of the EU objectives;
- professional equality between women and men is an important component in the Lisbon Strategy and is an economic stake facing the demographic challenge;
- realising that equal economic independence for women and men is crucial;
- gender equality is important for economic growth and employment in the next decade;
- measures to ensure that the productive potential of both women and men is fully put to use are fundamental for achieving the goals of the Lisbon strategy;
- in spite of a real improvement of the situation of women and the men in employment in Europe, efforts are still necessary to improve the participation of women in the labour market and to facilitate the conciliation of the family and professional life for both women and men, according to the Lisbon Strategy for growth and employment and the objectives of Barcelona on child care facilities;
- violence against women constitutes an unacceptable phenomenon, a breach on the fundamental right to life, safety, freedom and dignity. It often also creates obstacles for women's employment and career development.

Emphasizing that the European Pact for gender equality adopted by Member States at the European Council in March 2006 and the European Commission Roadmap for equality between women and men (2006-2010) create the framework for the presidential trio's initiatives;

Reaffirming our strong support and commitment to the full implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action;

Recalling the Social Partner's Framework on Actions on Gender Equality;

In the continuity of the 1st presidential Trio, we reaffirm the importance of a Trio declaration as a means to promote gender equality and will commit ourselves to implement the following priorities, for the forthcoming 18 months:

1. Further strengthen gender equality through gender mainstreaming and specific measures in the forthcoming Post Lisbon Strategy with a focus on measures to increase women's employment and to reduce the gender gaps in employment, unemployment and inactivity;
2. Intensify the fight against gender stereotypes, in order to diversify career guidance and improving gender balance in professional life;
3. Support women's access to decision making and managerial positions;
4. Develop female entrepreneurship;
5. Improve the quality of employment for women, by providing flexible working hours rather than part-time work;
6. Tackle the gender pay gap, by combining a social dialogue, active measures of Member States and the promotion of best practices from companies;
7. Develop vocational training and validation of the experiences of women, frequently employed in low-qualified jobs;
8. Pursue the development of accessible, affordable and good quality child-care facilities, with the support of local authorities and encourage companies to facilitate the conciliation of professional, family and personal life for both women and men ;encourage men to take a greater part family responsibilities ;
9. Implement active measures to prevent and fight against all forms of violence against women;
10. Continue to evaluate the progress achieved in the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and plan for the way forward after 2010; the French presidency propose a set of indicators on "women and armed conflicts" and a report evaluating the indicators on reconciliation between professional and family life. Sweden will prepare a report to the United Nations on the follow-up of the Beijing Platform for Action +15.
11. The Trio will continue to promote gender mainstreaming in Council formations, including through awareness raising on gender mainstreaming among permanent representations of Member States to the EU.

With a view to promote and further implement gender equality in regard to the areas of priority, the following events and activities took place or will take place during the second Trio Presidency of France, Czech Republic and Sweden :

1/ France:

Meeting to raise awareness on gender mainstreaming among permanent representations of Member States to the EU on the theme: women and armed conflicts;

Meeting of the High Level Group on Gender Mainstreaming;

Euromed ad hoc meeting on strengthening the role of women in society;

Informal meeting of ministers for family affairs on reconciliation of professional and family life;

Conference: “professional equality between men and women, an economic stake facing the demographic challenge”;

Informal meeting of ministers for gender equality on professional equality between men and women;

Second Equality summit;

Follow-up of the Beijing Platform for Action: adoption of Council conclusions on: reconciliation between professional, family and personal life; women and armed conflicts including the proposal of indicators;

2/ Czech Republic:

Meeting of the High Level Group on Gender Mainstreaming;

The 53rd Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (United Nations);

The 42nd Session of the Commission on Population and Development (United Nations - the Millennium Development Goals);

European conference on new ways in overcoming gender stereotypes;

Adoption of Council conclusions on equal opportunities for women and men in generation 50+ in active life and dignified ageing;

The 98th Session of the International Labour Conference 2009;

Euromed ad hoc meeting on strengthening the role of women in society (Barcelona Process: Union for Mediterranean)

3/Sweden

Meeting of the High Level Group on Gender Mainstreaming;

Ministerial conference on gender equality for economic growth and employment in the next decade, adoption of Council conclusions based on conclusions from conference;

Expert conference on men’s violence against women;

Euromed ad hoc meeting on strengthening the role of women in society;

The second Euromed ministerial conference on strengthening the role of women in society;

Follow-up of Beijing Platform for Action: adoption of Council conclusions based on a report on Beijing +15;

Expert conference “From SME to the SBA” (small business act) with a workshop on best practice on women’s entrepreneurship;

Promote women entrepreneurship at the Informal Competitiveness Council;

Conference on gender difference in educational achievements