

Council conclusions of 7 March 2011 on European Pact for Gender Equality (2011-2020)

2011/C 155/02

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

RECALLING THAT:

1. Equality between women and men is a fundamental value of the European Union enshrined in the Treaties and is one of the objectives and tasks of the European Union, and mainstreaming the principle of equality between women and men in all its activities represents a general aim for the Union (1);
2. Gender equality is enshrined in Article 23 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union;
3. While the European Union possesses a significant body of legislation promoting compliance with the principle of equal treatment of men and women in areas such as employment and access to goods and services (2), successive annual reports on 'Equality between Women and Men' (3) adopted by the European Commission demonstrate that progress is slow and that de facto gender equality has yet to be attained;
4. 'Europe 2020', the European Union's new strategy for jobs and smart, sustainable and inclusive growth (4), will help the Member States and the European Union to deliver high levels of competitiveness, productivity, growth, social cohesion and economic convergence;
5. The Europe 2020 Strategy includes the headline target of aiming to raise to 75 % the employment rate for women and men aged 20-64, which means it is necessary to give priority to addressing barriers to women's participation in the labour market when implementing the Strategy;
6. The Employment Guidelines, which form part of the 'Europe 2020 integrated guidelines' (5) and are monitored within the Joint Assessment Framework (6), underline, in this regard, the importance of the implementation, assessment and follow-up of employment policies that promote gender equality and work-life balance;
7. The Annual Growth Survey (7) adopted by the European Commission shows that involuntary part-time work is still an issue in some Member States and that women wishing to re-enter the labour market continue to face obstacles;

8. The European Commission's Strategy for equality between women and men 2010-2015 follows on from the Commission's Roadmap for equality between women and men (2006-2010) (8), which was the subject of a mid-term review (9), and the Women's Charter adopted by the European Commission on 5 March 2010 (10);
9. The European Commission's Strategy for equality between women and men 2010-2015 focuses on the following five priorities: 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 Strategy also addresses a set of important horizontal issues relating to gender roles, legislation, governance and tools for gender equality;
10. In 2006, the European Council adopted the first European Pact for Gender Equality (11), and in March 2010, the Trio of Presidencies called for the commemoration of the 5th anniversary of the Pact;

TAKING INTO CONSIDERATION THAT:

11. On 6 December 2010, the Council adopted Conclusions in support of the implementation of the European Commission's Strategy for equality between women and men 2010-2015 (12), as well as Conclusions on strengthening the commitment and stepping up action to close the gender pay gap, and on the review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action (13), which invited the European Council to adapt and improve the European Pact for Gender Equality in the spring of 2011 in the light of the Commission's new Strategy for equality between women and men 2010-2015, of the Europe 2020 Strategy and of the said Conclusions;
12. Appropriate actions to combat all forms of discrimination against women are necessary, and there is a need to examine the causes of multiple discrimination and to explore effective ways of eliminating it;
13. ADOPTS the European Pact for Gender Equality (2011-2020) as set out in the Annex;
14. INVITES the European Council to endorse the Pact in its Spring Conclusions, with a view to addressing current challenges in the field of gender equality policy as well as to ensuring that a gender dimension is integrated into all policy areas, and in particular in the context of the Europe 2020 Strategy;
15. ENCOURAGES the European Council to place the subject of gender equality on its agenda before the expiry of the European Commission's Strategy for equality between women and men 2010-2015.

(1) Articles 2 and 3(3) TEU and Article 8 TFEU.

(2) Council Directive 92/85/EEC of 19 October 1992 on the introduction of measures to encourage improvements in the safety and health at work of pregnant women and workers who have recently given birth or are breastfeeding (OJ L 348, 28.11.1992, p. 1); Council Directive 2004/113/EC of 13 December 2004 implementing the principle of equal treatment between men and women in the access to and supply of goods and services (OJ L 373,

21.12.2004, p. 37); Directive 2006/54/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 July 2006 on the implementation of the principle of equal opportunities and equal treatment of men and women in matters of employment and occupation (OJ L 204, 26.7.2006, p. 23); Council Directive 2010/18/EU of 8 March 2010 implementing the revised Framework Agreement on parental leave concluded by BUSINESSEUROPE, UEAPME, CEEP and ETUC and repealing Directive 96/34/EC (OJ L 68, 18.3.2010, p. 13); Directive 2010/41/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 7 July 2010 on the application of the principle of equal treatment between men and women engaged in an activity in a self-employed capacity and repealing Council Directive 86/613/EEC (OJ L 180, 15.7.2010, p. 1).

(3) For the most recent report, see 6571/11. The documents cited in footnotes 3-4 and 6-12 can be found on the Council's public register: <http://register.consilium.eu.int/>

(4) EUCO 13/1/10 REV 1.

(5) OJ L 308, 24.11.2010, p. 46.

(6) 16984/10 + ADD 1.

(7) 18066/10 + ADD 1-3.

(8) 7034/06.

(9) 17495/08.

(10) 7370/10.

(11) 7775/1/06 REV 1.

(12) 16880/10.

(13) OJ C 345, 18.12.2010, p. 1.

ANNEX

European Pact for Gender Equality (2011-2020)

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION acknowledges that equality between women and men is a fundamental value of the European Union and that gender equality policies are vital to economic growth, prosperity and competitiveness. Five years after the adoption of the first European Pact for Gender Equality, a new impetus is needed, particularly in order to reaffirm and support the close link between the Commission's Strategy for equality between women and men 2010-2015 and 'Europe 2020: the European Union's Strategy for jobs and smart, sustainable and inclusive growth'. THE COUNCIL therefore reaffirms its commitment to fulfil EU ambitions on gender equality as mentioned in the Treaty and in particular to:

1. close the gender gaps in employment and social protection, including the gender pay gap, with a view to meeting the objectives of the Europe 2020 Strategy, especially in three areas of great relevance to gender equality, namely employment, education and promoting social inclusion in particular through the reduction of poverty, thus contributing to the growth potential of the European labour force;
2. promote better work-life balance for women and men throughout the life-course, so as to enhance gender equality, increase women's participation in the labour market and contribute to meeting the demographic challenges; and
3. combat all forms of violence against women in order to ensure the full enjoyment by women of their human rights and to achieve gender equality, including with a view to inclusive growth.

THE COUNCIL urges action at Member State and, as appropriate, Union level in the following fields:

Measures to close gender gaps and combat gender segregation in the labour market:

- (a) promote women's employment in all age brackets and close gender gaps in employment, including by combating all forms of discrimination;
- (b) eliminate gender stereotypes and promote gender equality at all levels of education and training, as well as in working life, in order to reduce gender segregation in the labour market;
- (c) ensure equal pay for equal work and work of equal value;
- (d) promote women's empowerment in political and economic life and advance women's entrepreneurship;
- (e) encourage the social partners and enterprises to develop and effectively implement initiatives in favour of gender equality and promote gender equality plans at the workplace; and
- (f) promote the equal participation of women and men in decision-making at all levels and in all fields, in order to make full use of all talents.

Measures to promote better work-life balance for women and men:

- (a) improve the supply of adequate, affordable, high-quality childcare services for children under the mandatory school age with a view to achieving the objectives set at the European Council in Barcelona in March 2002, taking into account the demand for childcare services and in line with national patterns of childcare provision;
- (b) improve the provision of care facilities for other dependants;
and
- (c) promote flexible working arrangements and various forms of leave for both women and men.

Measures to tackle all forms of violence against women:

- (a) adopt, implement and monitor strategies at national and Union level with a view to eliminating violence against women;
- (b) strengthen the prevention of violence against women and the protection of victims and potential victims, including women from all disadvantaged groups; and
- (c) emphasise the role and responsibility of men and boys in the process of eradicating violence against women.

Governance, implementation and monitoring:

The relevant aspects of this Pact, and of the Commission's annual reports on 'Equality between Women and Men', should be taken into account in the mechanisms of the Europe 2020 Strategy as appropriate.

THE COUNCIL reaffirms its commitment to reinforce governance through gender mainstreaming by integrating the gender perspective into all policy areas including external EU actions, also taking into account the critical role of men and boys in the promotion of gender equality, and by ensuring that gender equality effects are taken into account in impact assessments of new EU policies. THE COUNCIL encourages the Member States and the Commission, in particular through Eurostat, to further develop existing statistics and indicators disaggregated by sex and to fully utilise the capacities of the European Institute for Gender Equality.

When developing and implementing their national reform programmes, the Member States are encouraged to apply a gender equality perspective and to promote gender equality policies, especially concerning the employment guidelines, and invited to make appropriate

use of agreed gender equality indicators developed within the Joint Assessment Framework and within the follow-up of the Beijing Platform for Action in all relevant policy areas and processes.

The Commission and the Council are also invited to incorporate a gender equality perspective into the Annual Growth Survey, the country opinions and the country specific recommendations. The progress made on the implementation of the European Pact for Gender Equality should be discussed by ministers annually, at the Council level.
