

Advisory Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men

Opinion on Gender Equality in the EU in the 21st century: remaining challenges and priorities

Final version

The Opinion of the Advisory Committee does not necessarily reflect the positions of the MS and does not bind the MS

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Gender Equality in the EU in the 21st century: remaining challenges and priorities

Introduction

As the twentieth anniversary of the UN Beijing Platform for Action approaches, it is pertinent to review progress made across the European Union (EU) in the quest to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of women and to make recommendations for the further steps which are needed to ensure that all men and all women experience equality, as envisaged in the founding principles of the Union and in the Charter of Fundamental Rights¹. The European Institutions – including the European Commission, Council of Ministers, European Parliament – have collaborated with EU Member States (MS) over this twenty year period to foster the advancement of women and there have been many positive outcomes, leading to a greater presence of women in the EU labour market and in positions of responsibility, including as decision-makers and in political life across the EU. The annual report prepared by the European Commission on Progress on Equality between Women and Men² notes that, while gender gaps persist, they have been reducing in recent years. However, positive developments tend to vary between the individual MS.

Women continue to participate less than men in the labour market while men still take a less active role than women in the division of care and domestic roles; Women experience a significant gender pay gap and a resultant pensions' gap; they remain under-represented in all key decision-making roles; while women disproportionately experience gender based violence. At the same time, men and boys may often underachieve in education and experience poorer health status than women. Many of these factors impact on the economic output and growth potential of the Union and/or on the poverty levels and well-being of its population.

Accordingly it is essential that the European Institutions continue to collaborate to address the persistent gender deficits to maximise the economic and social well-being of women and men across Europe. Furthermore, many global partner countries continue to look to Europe for guidance in the implementation of gender equality principles and therefore the EU continues to have a responsibility to foster gender equality both internally and in its partner countries.

The recent elections to the European Parliament, the appointment of a new European Commission and a new President of the European Council and the mid-term review of the EU's ten year economic policy "Europe 2020"³ offer an opportunity to review and re-launch the Union's commitment to the achievement of comprehensive gender equality policies. Furthermore, the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) is now fully functional and undertaking significant work to foster gender equality in accordance with its mandate.

The post-2015 agenda, currently being negotiated among UN member states and to be endorsed in September 2015 as well as the current Beijing+20 and ICPD+20 review processes provide a welcome opportunity to envisage aligning the new strategy (including possibly indicators) and other relevant policy documents with the new framework and outcome of the Beijing+20 review.

In this context, the Advisory Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men has prepared this Opinion, which serves to highlight the main challenges in the area at the present time; to offer an opinion on the Commission's current Strategy and the content of a future Strategic framework. The

¹ Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (2000/C 364/01) : *The Union is founded on the indivisible, universal values of human dignity, freedom, equality and solidarity; it is based on the principles of democracy and the rule of law*

² Report on Progress on Equality between Women and Men: April 2014: Accompanying the 2013 Report on the Application of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights (COM(2014) 224 final)

³ European Commission COM (2010) 2020 final: Europe 2020 A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth: March 2010

Opinion is largely based on the responses made by the members of the Working Group to the set of questions contained in the mandate, which is reproduced in Appendix 4.

Main Challenges in the area of Equality between Women and Men

The European Commission's most recent Strategy for Gender Equality⁴ prioritised five key areas for action over the period 2010 – 2015: equal economic independence for women and men; equal pay for work of equal value; equality in decision-making; dignity, integrity and ending gender violence; and promoting gender equality beyond the EU.

The Advisory Committee recognizes that these key areas of focus must be included in any future gender equality strategy as the positive actions taken to address them over the past five years, while successful, need more time to bring about the necessary changes.

This is borne out by research from EIGE in monitoring the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action but especially through the establishment, by EIGE, of the Gender Equality Index⁵. This EU 27⁶ Index, summarised in Appendix 1, shows that, on a continuum of 1 (inequality) to 100 (equality), the EU, with a score of 54, is only slightly more than half way towards real gender equality, based on the six domains of work; money; knowledge; time; power and health. This average score at EU level masks some very large variations between MS. Twenty-two MS score between 40 and 60.4 on the Index and only three MS (all Nordic) rank above 70 while two MS lie below 40, showing significant levels of gender inequality. The ranges are less pronounced for work and money but are particularly broad for time and power.

The four year period since the European Commission published its Women's Charter⁷ and its 2010 – 2015 Strategy⁸ and since the EPSCO Council adopted a more comprehensive European Pact for Gender Equality⁹ has been challenging for MS due to the economic downturn. The impact of the downturn on economic growth, on employment and on State budgets has led many MS to reduce levels of public services to meet the cost of rising unemployment. Strong evidence has been presented of the benefits of maintaining a focus on gender equality issues in these circumstances, including the importance of dual earner households to avoid poverty at times of unemployment¹⁰. However, diminishing resources have brought challenges to some national equality bodies in meeting the mandate given to them under the EU Directive to promote gender equality and combat discrimination. In this regard, the Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) has recommended that the EU establish minimum standards for and ensure that adequate resources are made available for these bodies¹¹.

The achievement of the economic independence of women is closely linked to the key employment target of the Europe 2020 agenda. Country Specific Recommendations to MS as an element of the Semester process stressed the linkages between gender equality factors and economic outputs, particularly in the field of employment. It is worth noting that the projected gain from full convergence in labour market participation rates is an increase of some 12.4% in GDP per capita by 2030¹². If achieved this would make a significant increase in economic recovery and European competitiveness. It shows the importance of focusing on female labour market participation as an instrument for economic growth, while economic independence also enables women to secure their human rights in accordance with the Beijing Platform and the UN CEDAW Convention.

⁴ European Commission: COM/2010/0491 final : Strategy for equality between women and men 2010-2015 : 2010

⁵ European Institute for Gender Equality: Gender Equality Index: June 2013

⁶ The development of The Gender Equality Index predates the accession of Croatia to the EU

⁷ European Commission: A Strengthened Commitment to Equality between Women and Men A Women's Charter : March 2010

⁸ Op. cit.

⁹ Council of Ministers : New European Pact for equality between women and men for the period 2011 – 2020: Annexed to EPSCO Council Conclusions 7166/11

¹⁰ DG Justice: The Impact of the Economic Crisis on the Situation of Women and Men and on Gender Equality Policies: European Commission: 2012

¹¹ Fundamental Rights Agency: Fundamental Rights in the Future of the European Union's Justice and Home Affairs: December 2013

¹² OECD: Closing the Gender Gap: Act Now: 2012

As the table in appendix 2 shows, employment targets for most MS have not grown as had been anticipated. Overall male employment has fallen since 2008, while female employment is almost stable. The experiences of MS differ in accordance with their underlying economic structures. Overall male employment rates fell from 77.9% in 2008 to 74.2% in 2013, while the female rates fell from 62.7% to 62.5% in the same time period. However, these female data mask the lower levels of attachment of women to the labour market, due to part time employment and career interruptions. Employment rates for men and for women adjusted to whole time equivalents in 2013 were 71.9% for men and 53.6% for women¹³. This represents a significant under-utilisation of the EU's well educated female human capital resource, while it is also worth noting that the European Council has specifically endorsed the need to increase female labour market participation¹⁴, echoing the Country Specific Recommendations and the views of EMCO, the Employment Committee.

The complexities of female labour market attachment were explored in recent publications of DG Justice which showed, inter alia, that

- Mothers are much more likely than fathers and non-parents to work part-time.¹⁵
- Over 42% of working mothers have interrupted their careers for caring purposes, compared with only 3% of fathers¹⁶.
- The numbers of men taking this period of parental leave is almost negligible in most MS¹⁷.
- Lone (single) mothers are less likely on average across the EU to be professionals and are more likely to be engaged in elementary, sales or services occupations¹⁸.
- Irrespective of the earnings profile of the family, women spend significantly longer periods on domestic work than men, with women who are the main provider doing 20.9 hours of domestic work and women who are the sole provider in a two parent family doing 25.4 hours of domestic work per week¹⁹.
- The availability of affordable quality childcare to support working parents continues as a major issue in many MS although a revision of the Barcelona targets to incorporate factors such as ages of compulsory schooling and the use of informal childcare arrangements merits consideration²⁰.

Table 2 in the appendix shows that in all MS, there is still a significant gender pay gap (GPG). The GPG and the significant gap between the lifelong earnings of men and of women impact upon women's pension entitlements and their risk of poverty in older years and/or when relationships break down. The GPG is influenced by multiple causes which makes it more difficult to develop effective policy options. In 2013, the Commission published a report²¹ which found that the equal pay principle is hindered by a lack of transparency in pay systems, a lack of legal certainty on the concept of work of legal value and by procedural obstacles. The Commission has recently launched a new Recommendation on the GPG, addressed to all MS and requiring them to facilitate greater wage transparency through specific measures in collaboration with economic entities, civil society, the social partners and the equality bodies²².

The third strategic priority for which comparative data are available is decision-making. The Commission's 2013 Report on Progress between Women and Men reviewed the presence of women in three decision-making roles – as senior Government Ministers, as national parliamentarians and on the boards of large corporate companies (reproduced in Appendix 3). While the UN speaks of a critical mass of 30% to achieve meaningful representation of the under-represented group, with their

¹³ European Commission : Female Labour Market Participation based on Eurostat LFS and other sources : 2014

¹⁴ European Council : Council Conclusions 14th to 15th March 2013

¹⁵ DG Justice: Parents at Work: Men and Women Participating in the Labour Force: Short statistical paper No.2: European Commission: April 2014

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ DG Justice: Single Parents and Employment in Europe: Short Statistical Report No. 3: European Commission: April 2014

¹⁹ DG Justice: Emerging Trends in Earnings Structures of Couples in Europe: Short Statistical Paper No. 5: European Commission: April 2014

²⁰ DG Justice: Use of Childcare in the EU MS and Progress towards the Barcelona Targets: Short Statistical paper No. 1: European Commission: April 2014

²¹ European Commission: COM (2013) 861 final: 6 December 2013

²² European Commission: C(2014) 1405 final 7 March 2014

ongoing commitments to de facto gender equality, EU Member States should be more ambitious in this regard and should set 40% as a short-term target, with a realistic fixed-term goal to achieve true parity. Women exceed 40% of Ministers in just four MS and 40% of parliamentarians in just five EU MS²³. In relation to parliamentary representation, increasing numbers of MS are adopting quotas for either candidates or members.

Although still far from a minimum critical mass in almost all MS²⁴, the most significant increase in women's representation in recent years comes in their presence on the boards of the larger publicly listed companies²⁵, which increased from 12% in 2010 to 18% in 2013. However the range remains wide with 15 MS at or below 15%. This increase has probably been achieved in response to the Commission's initiative in this regard, which was strongly led by former Vice President Reding and due to political and regulatory pressure and which led to the draft resolution currently being examined at technical²⁶ level at the Council of Ministers and in the European Parliament. However, most of the significant progress took place in MS that have taken or have considered taking legislative action or have had an intensive public debate on this issue.

The development of statistics on the different forms of gender based violence and violence against women is difficult as these are frequently hidden and unreported crimes, which may not always lead to prosecutions or the accurate measurement of true numbers of victims. Qualitative surveys are the most usual methodology used. The FRA Report²⁷ acknowledges the issue of under-reporting but its recent study estimates that a third of women aged over 15 in the EU have experienced sexual or physical violence since they were 15, while 8% experienced it in the previous year. As with other equality parameters, there is a wide range of outcomes across the MS, with the range for those who had experienced violence since 15 extending from 19% to 52%. The Report concludes that there is a need for further work in this area, although subsidiarity can be an issue. However, it is also worth noting that the Victims Directive²⁸ has strengthened the entitlements of victims, including victims of gender based violence as they cross national borders. The Commission has also spearheaded work on Female Genital Mutilation, with the former Justice Commissioner/Vice President playing a key role while the Council of Ministers has adopted Council Conclusions with recommendations for further work at all levels.

The EU, including the Commission, continues to actively engage on gender equality issues at the UN Commission on the Status of Women and through funding of aid programmes. The European Union also works in close partnership with UN Women – they signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in 2012 to support gender equality and women's empowerment around the world and to ensure closer collaboration on policies and programmes and joint advocacy.²⁹

The MoU focuses on the following (non-exclusive) thematic areas: gender justice, women's leadership and political participation; women's access to economic empowerment and opportunities; Combatting sexual and gender based violence; Humanitarian aid; Women, Peace and Security; Responsiveness of plans and budgets to gender equality, including financing for gender equality as well as gender equality and women's empowerment in the context of global issues.

Future Work and Collaboration to Address the Challenges to Gender Equality - a New Commission Strategy

The Advisory Committee is very praiseworthy of the work of the European Commission in developing and implementing its 2010 – 2015 Strategy on Gender Equality. MS recognize the Strategy as a blueprint or reference framework for action on gender equality for both the MS and the EU Institutions.

²³ Sweden is at 54% for Ministers and 44% for representatives in parliament

²⁴ Finland and France each achieved 30 % in 2013 for female membership of the largest publicly quoted companies

²⁵ Based on the sample of 610 EU wide companies which are sampled by the Commission's data collection service

²⁶ Council Working Group

²⁷ Fundamental Rights Agency: Violence against Women; An EU-wide Survey: March 2014

²⁸ Directive 29/2012/EU

²⁹ The Memorandum of Understanding between the EU and UN Women, signed on 16 April 2012: Europeaid Website

Many report that it helps to set and maintain the national agenda for gender equality and increases its visibility. The dissemination of data and good practices support local actions.

The Advisory Committee continues to identify with all of the priorities included in the present Commission Strategy. It has also prioritised a number of related and stand-alone issues which might be incorporated into or strengthened in future work by the Commission. These include

- the reconciliation of work and family life, including the use of leave entitlements
- gender stereotypes including segregation in education and the work force
- the implementation of gender mainstreaming and
- fostering cultural change through the greater engagement of men in gender equality.
- addressing gender equality problems experienced by men.

Future work must also focus on vulnerable persons who are subject to multiple discriminations, including discrimination based on gender, and other grounds such as persons with a disability, migrants, women from ethnic minorities and lesbian and transsexual women. Steps must also be taken to build upon progress and to ensure that the backlash against equality for women and women's rights, currently being experienced in some quarters, is not allowed to deter future progress to advance gender equality and the role of women.

There is consensus within the Advisory Committee that the programme period for a new Strategy should be five years to coincide with the current Europe 2020 Strategy. In preparing follow-on Strategies, consideration might be given to longer term Strategies to coincide with the time span of key EU economic and social policies but longer term Strategies MUST include a provision for an in depth mid-term review and reprioritisation to take account of changes in the operational environment.

WORKING TOGETHER

It is recognized that the achievement of real gender equality in all its diverse forms requires ongoing collaboration between all the key players. Some facets fall outside EU competence and require action on the part of individual MS. Others are enshrined in EU legislation, although there are still gaps between the legislative provisions and their expected outcomes. MS must ensure that gender equality is mainstreamed across all policies; that all relevant policies foster the principles and goal of gender equality; and that policy-makers are fully aware of the benefits – both economic and societal – of achieving gender equality.

For decades, the European Commission has been, and it must continue to be, a key player in fostering the advancement of gender equality, through a multiplicity of actions and successive Strategies and through the work of, inter alia, the Advisory Committee on Equality between Women and Men and the High Level Group on Gender Mainstreaming. The Commission has fostered the mainstreaming of gender in the European Institutions and has ensured its position as a horizontal principle in successive EU structural funding programmes. The Commission has also added significantly to the body of relevant research and has funded initiatives at Member State and Institutional levels through Progress and Daphne. The new Rights, Equality and Citizenship (REC) Programme continues this important work in funding research and development projects in this area. The Council and the Parliament are also key players at institutional levels. The Commission's work helps to drive gender equality agendas for the MS.

The national machineries for gender equality including national equality bodies play an important role both in protecting the interests of citizens who perceive that they have experienced discrimination and in creating awareness of the EU's and national gender equality provisions. A number of MS have downsized their equality machineries in recent years although the European institutions at the highest levels have counselled against this. Priority should be given to restoring gender equality machineries including equality bodies. As FRA underlines in a recent report, equality bodies should be adequately resourced to fulfil the functions entrusted to them³⁰. The social partners also play an important role in

30 FRA, Fundamental rights in the future of the European Union's Justice and Home Affairs, December 2013.

fostering gender equality, as evidenced by the successful negotiations that led to the revision of parental leave³¹ and more recently through the joint launch by European employers and the trade union organisations of a toolkit of initiatives to promote gender equality³².

EIGE is now fully established as an Agency which undertakes significant work to foster gender equality in accordance with its mandate and is quickly establishing its presence as a centre of excellence. It can further develop its role as an important resource for the European Institutions; a research body; a developer of methodological tools for implementation by the MS; a promoter and disseminator of high quality research and statistics and as a key player in raising awareness of gender equality across Europe. In general, it is important to have **all** statistics on all levels gender differentiated in order to be able to analyse the gender aspect.

Recommendations for a New Gender Equality Strategy

In the preparatory work for this Opinion, National Authorities have endorsed the ongoing relevance of the priorities identified by the European Commission in its 2010 – 2015 Strategy. Many MS have linked the target of the gender pay gap with the economic independence of women. A significant number of MS have again stressed the importance of gender mainstreaming at all levels. Accordingly, gender mainstreaming is recommended as an additional priority for the next cycle of work on gender equality. As mentioned previously, a number of other issues have also been identified for new or further work. These include the issue of stereotypes; migrant women; trafficking; the role of men and gender equality. These issues can largely be linked to the main priorities and might therefore be addressed in the context of work on the individual priorities.

The paragraphs which follow explore each of the priorities including a brief outline of the ongoing issues and the steps which might be taken to address them.

PRIORITY 1: FOSTERING EQUAL ECONOMIC INDEPENDENCE FOR WOMEN

The economic engagement of women in the EU is centrally linked to EU economic and social policy and must remain a key priority for the EU and its MS in the next five years. This goal includes a range of key issues, including the attachment of women to the labour market, (as employees or as entrepreneurs), the gender pay gap and a number of supporting factors such as the reconciliation of work and family life, particularly the engagement of men in domestic duties and caring for children and other dependants; the sharing of family leaves; the protection of working mothers; the need for cultural change in the workplace to recognize the benefits of retaining women in the workplace and of the need for employers to support the reconciliation of work and family life; the availability of affordable quality childcare and other care services to support men's and women's attachment to the labour market; and gender segregation in education and subsequently in the workforce, which result in the sharing of occupational and managerial roles.

(a) Increasing the economic engagement and independence of women

It is essential that female employment rates are increased if the Europe 2020 employment target of 75% is to be met and accordingly dedicated measures must be taken to impact on female employment. Labour market attachment benefits women as individuals in that it helps them to build up pension entitlements and avoid poverty particularly in older years.

It was already noted that the whole time equivalent employment rate for women is only 53.6% and almost 20 pps behind the male rate. This gap must be narrowed and the overall employment rate in the EU must be driven higher if the EU is to remain competitive on the global economic stage. It is

³¹ Transposed as Directive 2010/18/EU

³² ETUC - Business Europe – CEEP – UEAPME : Press release May 2014

essential that all MS continue to address the issues which are discouraging women from fully engaging in the labour market. This can only be achieved with a panoply of actions on the part of a wide range of key stakeholders. Furthermore the additional engagement of women must be in well remunerated quality jobs, commensurate with women's skills in which women can advance in their careers without the presence of harassment, both psychological and sexual, stereotyped attitudes and employment sectors (such as the white and green economies).

Migration, both internal and external, has led to the movement of significant numbers of persons, men and women, across EU borders and into the EU. Work undertaken by the Council of Europe³³ suggests that women are particularly vulnerable and do not easily integrate into their new communities, either economically or socially and the CoE Parliamentary Assembly specifically encourages the EU to address the economic integration of migrant women. Consideration must also be given to the labour market attachment of women with intersectional disadvantages.

Recommendations

- This goal of increasing the economic engagement and independence of women must remain as the key priority for any future EU gender equality strategy.
- The Europe 2020 Strategy can foster this priority by encouraging national gender specific targets for female employment, in recognition of the European Council's Conclusion in March 2013 that "work must continue on the Employment package, including as regards bringing significantly more women into work..."³⁴. The development of national gender specific targets for female employment rates will activate awareness and incentivise further action at Member State level to encourage women to join/rejoin the labour market.
- In addition, consideration should be given to targets based on whole time equivalent engagement in the labour market for the sexes. MS should take appropriate action in order to diminish the negative image and impact of gendered part-time work and fixed-term, contract based, employment on the status of women.
- The gender perspective must be strengthened in all key areas of the Europe 2020 Strategy, including through the incorporation of a gender equality pillar in its governance strategy through the review of progress made by MS to reduce the gender employment gap³⁵. A gender perspective should also be included in social protection and education, when implementing, monitoring and evaluating policies developed within the Europe 2020 Strategy. Sex-disaggregated data should be provided in this area.
- The European Commission should undertake a gender analysis of the National Reform Programmes and continue to make relevant Country Specific Recommendations while national programmes should set specific goals for gender balance in their funding and activities.
- The Employment Committee should continue to support the economic engagement of women and strengthen gender equality considerations in its work.
- The monitoring mechanisms of the Structural and Cohesion Funds must be strengthened and reviewed more closely to ensure that the equal opportunities goals between women and men set forth in the regulations of these Funds are actually achieved.
- The European Institutions should collectively undertake an awareness raising programme on the economic imperative to increase female labour market engagement, targeting MS, employers, civil society and the public and outlining the key issues in a constructive and informative manner.
- Economic engagement should not be confined to paid employment but should also include women as researchers and women as entrepreneurs to boost job creation and growth. Initiatives should be supported to promote women's entrepreneurship such as mentoring programmes, the creation of networks and targeted financial incentives for business creation

³³ Council of Europe: Parliamentary Assembly: Reply to (CoE) Council of Ministers Recommendation 1970 (2011) : Protecting migrant women in the labour market

³⁴ European Council Conclusions 14/15 March 2013 paragraph 9 a

³⁵ EPSCO Council Conclusions June 2014

and to ensure the visibility of such initiatives.³⁶ This should go hand in hand with better data collection including the monitoring of self-employment.³⁷ Furthermore, men and women should be actively encouraged to engage in non-traditional sectors, occupations and training in order to break gender stereotypes.

- All national employment policies should include measures to encourage women from new communities to engage in the labour market. Similarly economic independence of women experiencing multiple discrimination should be particularly addressed, including women with disabilities, older and younger women and women from ethnic minority backgrounds.
- MS should establish cooperation mechanisms between authorities and parties in working life on how the equality challenges are to be dealt with through a tripartite agreement between the authorities, the employers' organisations and the trade unions.

(b) Addressing the Gender Pay Gap

The fact that the gender pay gap frequently leads to an even larger pension gap for women is widely acknowledged, as is the complexity of the factors which lead to the gender pay gap. Therefore its resolution as an issue presents an important challenge at both EU institutional and Member State levels. In this regard, the implementation by MS of some of the initiatives recommended recently by the European Commission³⁸ is likely to open up discourse further at national levels while also closing the pay and earnings gaps.

Recommendations

- MS and social partners must review and implement the recent European Commission Recommendation strengthening the principle of equal pay between women and men through transparency and notify the Commission of measures taken by 31 December 2015. The Commission must then assess its efficiency and the need for further measures. There is a need to further examine the current methodology for the collection of comprehensive statistics on earnings, which are essential to the determination of the gender pay gap.
- While the European Commission has sponsored a significant body of research on the gender pay gap, it is recommended that further EU wide research look at some of the underlying causes including the segregation (albeit frequently self-selected) of young women and men in educational and professional choices; the reasons for the hesitant attitude of many women to seek career advancement; hesitant attitudes among managers in both the public and private sectors to the engagement of women in senior and non-typical positions³⁹; and the other causes of women's detachment from the labour market.
- Further work should be undertaken based on research and available data to develop a new indicator for the gender pay gap that simultaneously takes into account several variables related to the gender pay gap.
- Efforts must be made to close the pay gap between employment sectors dominated by women and those dominated by men.
- An awareness raising campaign/conference/best practice exchange should take place to encourage and train women to better negotiate their salaries and, where relevant, to promote collective bargaining to reduce the gender pay gap in sectors and professions.
- Pay transparency must be implemented in all sectors and organisations, both public and private in order to render pay negotiation more fair and transparent.
- An EU-wide awareness raising programme on the linkages between the gender pay gap and the long term pensions gap/poverty in older years should be considered by the Commission.

(c) Reconciling Work and Family Life, including the use of family leave entitlements

³⁶ EPSCO Council Conclusions : June 2014, para 32

³⁷ Op cit: para 33 and Annexe 1 new indicator and sub-indicator 20

³⁸ http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/files/gender_pay_gap/c_2014_1405_en.pdf

³⁹ DG Justice's RAND Report (No. 4) published in April 2014 found evidence that when women have studied in male-typical fields, they have a significantly slower entry into the labour market: European Commission DG Justice: April 2014: Page 46

While women are likely to avail of child-friendly arrangements, both statutory and non-statutory, the take up of these arrangements by men is negligible across most EU MS. Recent research shows no significant improvement, which is disappointing particularly as the social partners actively fostered action in relation to the availability of parental leave. In order to enable women to increase their participation in the labour market, men must increase their participation in unpaid work at home, care work and parental leaves. This must include not just childcare but also elder care and care for other dependent family members.

It seems likely that this is an area of gender equality where culture and attitudes are still strongly influenced by traditional gender roles. There has been some evidence, particularly in the Nordic countries, that behavioural change, particularly on the part of senior male politicians and other key role models, has normalised the taking of parental leave, with some impact on the responses of the wider workforce. This may require attitudinal change on the part of many employers and may be linked closely to the failure of employers (both public and private) to fully understand and/or acknowledge importance of female engagement in the labour market in terms of economic and organizational benefits. Norwegian research shows that having a non-transferable father's quota of parental leave makes it easier for men to use the parental leave. Fathers avoid the need to negotiate with an un-cooperative employer, since the family will lose the leave if the father does not use it.⁴⁰ There is also a need for employers to rethink the "long hours" culture which often prevails in the middle and upper echelons of business - both public and private - and which impacts on the ability of parents - especially mothers - to advance in the work place.

Recommendations

- The reconciliation of work and family life requires a special effort not only by women but also by men. It should be prioritised by policy makers as an issue which is a matter of social co-responsibility for private, family and work life, involving the social partners and public and private bodies. The participation of the whole of society is essential to develop the strategies of change and establish the equitable sharing between women and men of time as a priority resource and of responsibility for the care of dependent family members and the discharge of household tasks. Public policy plays a key role in the regulation of family leaves, in the provision of social infrastructure to sustain the reconciliation of work and family life and in regulating working time and minimum standards. Accordingly Member States must actively pursue policies to achieve this long standing goal while MS should continue to collaborate to strengthen the provision of family leaves including maternity leaves particularly in MS where the statutory entitlements currently fall below the EU norms.
- It is further recommended that the European Institutions seek to become role models in this regard by creating awareness internally and externally of the economic and social benefits of reconciling work and personal life for all staff, irrespective of grade and sex.
- It is also recommended that the new Commissioner with responsibility for gender equality prioritises this issue of reconciling work and family life and takes a special interest in promoting it, as her predecessor did successfully on a number of gender equality related issues⁴¹, through dialogue with the highest key stakeholders and other well publicised actions.
- MS should assign a specific non-transferable portion of parental leave to fathers and should consider introducing financial incentives for a more gender-equal distribution of work and family time.
- The European Institutions should continue to work closely with employers and employees' representatives to promote change in the working culture in relation to work-life balance especially in high ranking and top decision-making positions.
- It is recommended that the EU institutions raise the profile of pregnancy-related discrimination. EU institutions could seek a raise in rights awareness and in reporting levels by means of support to gender equality bodies' independence and effectiveness.

⁴⁰ Brandth and Kvande (2013): Fedrekvoten – og den farsvennlige velferdsstaten

⁴¹ Such as female genital mutilation and women's presence on corporate boards

- In view of demographic change throughout the EU, special attention must be paid to care for the elderly and disabled. These responsibilities – both in the professional and the private spheres – have to be taken on by men as well as women.

(d) The availability of affordable, quality childcare

The European Commission has actively encouraged MS to develop comprehensive childcare services to support working parents for many years and EU Structural Funds are being used for this purpose in a number of MS. Any new gender equality strategy must underline the fact that the availability of affordable, quality childcare is important to both women and men; that such a strategy must not reproduce traditional gender roles by imputing childcare solely or largely as a role for women; and by recognizing that the availability of quality affordable childcare and the sharing of family responsibilities are prerequisites for the advancement of women's careers and to their ability to engage in decision-making roles, including in politics.

Recommendations

- It is recommended that the Commission and the Employment Committee continue to address the availability and affordability of quality childcare as an important issue relating to labour market attachment in the European Semester Process and that this issue be highlighted as relevant to working parents, both mothers and fathers.
- A recent report prepared for the European Commission⁴² looked at the use of childcare in 2010, based on a special unit of the Eurostat Labour Force Survey and recommended that the Barcelona targets be recast to take account of parents' use of informal childcare and differences in the compulsory school attendance ages of MS. These recommendations should be further examined and implemented as appropriate.
- A further consideration for working parents is the availability of affordable quality childcare for school going children outside of school hours and during vacation periods. It is recommended that a further special enquiry under the Labour Force Survey be taken as soon as possible to include questions on these issues. This would then serve as the basis for the development of new targets to update the Barcelona targets in relation to the availability of childcare for school going children outside of school hours.
- Revisions to the Barcelona targets for childcare should be agreed at European Council level as part of the Semester process.

(e) Gender stereotypes including segregation in education and in the workforce

The European Pact for Gender Equality 2011 – 2020 urges action at Member State level and, as appropriate at Union level to 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. Education is largely a matter for national competence and therefore the European institutions are limited in their influence in this area.

Recommendations

- MS must play a key role in ensuring that educational curricula at all levels are structured to eliminate gender stereotyping and should initiate awareness raising programmes targeting the education sector and all citizens, with a special focus on parents and teachers in order to create a broad understanding of gender stereotyping with a view to its elimination.
- This is an important issue which impacts on both boys and girls and one on which the European Institutions should consider funding research and other appropriate initiatives.

⁴² European Commission: DG Justice; Use of childcare in the EU MS and Progress towards the Barcelona Targets: April 2014

- The European Commission might also consider collaboration in this regard with other transnational bodies such as the Council of Europe (CoE)⁴³ and the OECD.
- MS should initiate programmes for breaking gender stereotypes on all levels in the education system, including measures to improve the expertise of kindergarten and primary/lower secondary school employees. The equality perspective in the advice to pupils given by schools and by career guidance counsellors should be strengthened and mentor schemes in further education within very gender segregated subjects should be established.
- The European Commission should consider further exchanges of good practice among the MS on these issues.
- Equality bodies, civil society and the social partners must be tasked to play a significant role in the elimination of gendered attitudes in the workplace and in society as a whole.
- Steps should be taken by MS to establish equality-grant scheme for the under-represented sex on selected and very gender unequal higher education courses.
- The European Commission should consider examining the impact of the current exclusion of the fields of education, advertisement and media from the scope of the Gender Goods and Services Directive in order to determine whether new steps might be taken to foster equal treatment in the field of education with the same level of protection as is already foreseen on the ground of race, and to eliminate gender stereotypes in media content⁴⁴.

PRIORITY 2: THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN INTO DECISION-MAKING

This issue has been an identified priority of the European Commission and the EU for many years and the Commission has implemented a very useful on-line data collection system to identify progress in the achievement of the overall goal. The benefits of gender inclusive decision-making procedures are emerging more and more from both psychological and business research, including in the context of the financial “crash” experienced in a number of sectors and countries in the past six years.

This is a further complex and multi-causal gender equality issue. For example, in the context of women’s engagement in politics, a study undertaken by a Sub-Committee of the Irish Parliament on women’s comparatively low representation in Irish political life identified five causes: confidence, cash, childcare, candidate selection and culture⁴⁵. Confidence, childcare and culture seem to be of relevance in relation to women’s appointment to most decision-making roles, and not just in politics.

Former Commission Vice President Viviane Reding actively espoused the cause of increasing women’s representation on corporate boards. The overall presence of women on corporate boards has increased over the past few years, most noticeably in MS which have adopted legislative measures. While, at the time of writing, there is still a lack of consensus at EU level on the Commission’s proposals for time-bound targets for female representation on corporate boards, these proposals are still under discussion and there is Union-wide support for the principle and the issue has received considerable publicity through the Commission’s proposals.

The achievement of goals in relation to decision-making is made easier through the services of high profile advocates. Such advocates do not need to be women and there is evidence among American led multinationals that key male decision-makers have played an important role in changing the culture of organisations to encourage women to rise to the top. This key role, linking men and the achievement of key gender equality goals, should be fostered by members of the College of the Commission and other key EU institutional players as they undertake their work programmes and engage with key stakeholders.

Very usefully, the European Commission has made EU PROGRESS funding available over a two year period to end 2015 to enable both MS and civil society to undertake a wide range of projects to

⁴³ Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy 2014 – 2017: Strategic Objective 1: combating gender stereotypes and sexism, including in and through education. For more information see http://www.coe.int/equality-education_Helsinki_2014

⁴⁴ While respecting the subsidiarity of education and freedom of the press

⁴⁵ Houses Of The Oireachtas : Joint Committee On Justice, Equality Defence And Women’s Rights : Women’s Participation in Politics : 2009

advance women into decision-making roles, and this continues under the Rights, Equality and Citizenship (REC) Programme.

Recommendations

In very few MS and very few sectors of activity have women yet achieved the critical mass of 30% recommended by the United Nations or the more ambitious goal of 40%⁴⁶ as an interim step towards gender parity and accordingly the advancement of women into decision-making roles in all sectors – politics, employment and corporate/public governance – must remain as a priority.

- The Commission should continue to monitor progress towards the aim of having a minimum of 40% of each sex on committees and expert groups established by the European Commission.
- The incoming Commissioner with responsibility for gender equality should actively engage with key players, including senior managers - both male and female - to encourage them to work proactively to foster the advancement of women within their organisations. This can normally be achieved by fostering issues such as reconciliation of work and private life for both men and women, by both encouraging and sponsoring mentoring programmes for suitably qualified women and by creating a workplace culture of gender inclusivity at all levels.
- Steps must be taken at MS level and at Institutional levels to tackle the under-representation of women in political decision-making with a view to attaining a more balanced participation of women and men in the European institutions and in the appointment of holders of executive bodies of the European institutions, so that the EU Institutions become models of good practice to be emulated by the MS. The database established by the European Commission should be maintained and further developed as an up-to-date source of indicative data.
- Consideration must be given to the broad dissemination of the outcomes of the Progress projects as well as on the new Rights, Equality and Citizenship (REC) projects on women and leadership, possibly through an international conference, an award or through modern communications channels. In addition, the outcomes of other good practices including targeted initiatives and quotas developed at MS levels, should be disseminated widely.
- Women's organisations, including organisations of business women should be actively encouraged and supported to raise awareness on the under-representation of women in senior positions and support relevant decision-makers to design/implement measures to achieve gender balance in their organisations.
- A study might be initiated on the possibility of elaborating a European system for equal opportunities management using an equality label to distinguish those companies that have undergone an external evaluation process to verify compliance with previously established gender equality standards.
- The European Commission and EIGE might also consider collaboration and synergies with the CoE's ongoing work on the monitoring of the Recommendation REC (2003) of the Committee of Ministers to member states on balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision-making.⁴⁷

PRIORITY 3: ADDRESSING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

The European Commission prioritised violence against women and gender based violence in its last Gender Equality Strategy for Equality between Women and Men and this must remain a priority in any future strategic approach to gender issues. Understanding of the prevalence of the phenomenon has been strengthened with the publication of the FRA survey results⁴⁸ although this also serves to

⁴⁶ Also recommended by the Council of Europe Recommendation Rec(2003)3 on balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision which recommends that the representation of either women or men in any decision-making body in political or public life should not fall below 40%.

⁴⁷ Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy 2014 – 2017: Strategic Objective 4: Achieving balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision-making

⁴⁸ Op. cit.

illustrate the difficulties in gathering data on such a sensitive issue and frequently under-reported crime. The Commission brought forward proposals which have resulted in, among others, the very useful Victims Directive⁴⁹ and, based on the EIGE study on female genital mutilation (FGM) has also prioritised awareness raising in relation to FGM, while making ongoing funding available to MS at grassroots levels under the DAPHNE and PROGRESS programmes. Finally, the Commission has promoted exchanges of good practice among MS.

Other international bodies have played important roles in relation to violence against women. The CoE established a routine monitoring process of services provided by its 47 MS to support victims, which is updated regularly⁵⁰ while the CoE Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence⁵¹ entered in to force on 1 August 2014, following its ratification by 14 MS (including eight EU MS) and its signature by a significant majority of CoE members. The UN has long been a strong advocate against violence against women in all its forms, for example through the Secretary General's Campaign to End Violence against Women (UNiTE) while the UN Statistical Commission has also developed a suite of indicators to be introduced by State Parties to measure violence against women.

There is a need to strengthen data collection on the incidence of gender based violence across Europe and it is essential that the harmonisation of a minimum set of indicators and data is achieved on European and international level and that the major players concerning data collection are involved in that process. This is necessary in order to achieve a minimum of comparability of data on violence in the international context in the long run. EIGE has been tasked to develop this work as part of its current and future work programmes.

Although victims of gender based violence come from all social classes, the EU's policy of encouraging female economic independence also serves to enable women victims of domestic violence to leave abusive relationships and establish an independent life.

Recommendations

- The European Commission should continue to prioritise violence against women in all its forms through the existing range of supports and measures including awareness raising, funding and exchanges of good practices.
- The appropriate services of the Commission should collaborate closely with EIGE, with Eurostat and with the Council of Europe, together with the executive of the UN Statistical Commission to develop statistics and indicators to assist policy makers and other key stakeholders.
- The appropriate services of the European Commission might also consider the role they can actively play in further raising awareness of the issue through targeted campaigns, possibly in collaboration with the Council of Europe and EU and CoE MS and through projects financed under the Rights, equality and Citizenship Programme.
- Consideration should be given to the designation of 2016 as an EU Year to end Violence against Women and Girls.
- The EU Institutions should encourage all MS to ratify and adopt the package of measures in the Istanbul Convention and the EU should also consider ratifying the Convention, if appropriate.
- Further consideration should be given to the establishment of the EU wide telephone number 116016 as a central helpline in all MS, to be supported by high quality counselling supports.
- Male Heads of State, male Commission members, male Government Ministers, male MEPs and senior male staff in the European Institutions should be encouraged to support and publicise the White Ribbon campaign to increase awareness among male Europeans of violence against women as unacceptable behaviour and UN Women's HeforShe gender

⁴⁹ Op. cit.

⁵⁰ Analytical study of the results of the 4th round of monitoring the implementation of Recommendation REC (2002) 5 on the protection of women against violence in the Council of Europe.

⁵¹ Council Of Europe Convention On Preventing And Combating Violence Against Women And Domestic Violence: Ratified August 2014

equality awareness raising campaign, that engages men and boys as advocates and stakeholders to raise their voices and take action for the achievement of gender equality.

- Trafficking is a further issue which is frequently linked to violence against women because women make up the majority of victims and are normally exploited by male perpetrators. The Commission should also establish linkages between its work on violence and its work on trafficking to maximise the opportunities afforded by the two initiatives.

PRIORITY 4 – WOMEN, DEVELOPMENT AND HUMANITARIAN AID

This Opinion is being prepared at a time of great unrest across the globe, including in some European and Mediterranean partner countries. Although few are fighting soldiers, women are anyway involved and more frequently the victims of conflict, and are more likely to carry the burden of both providing for and caring for their family. Women are also widely under-represented in decision-making and planning bodies in conflict and post conflict processes and areas of conflict.

The EU has been an active player in the support of development for women in the 20 years since the Beijing Platform for Action was agreed at the Fourth World Conference in 1995⁵². MS, the European Commission and the European External Action Service collaborate annually in the work of the UN Commission on the Status of Women. This work has been more challenging in recent years as certain States have sought to rewrite the Beijing Agenda. These States appear to disregard the day to day issues women still face in parts of the developing world - issues such as hunger and malnutrition, lack of food security, clean drinking water and sanitation, high rates of maternal and child mortality, high levels of violence including against girls, harmful traditional practices, lack of education and health services, poor levels of sexual education and reproductive health and information.

Recommendations

- It is essential that the EU hold firm in supporting gender equality as a human right in the developing world and continues to work to secure this in the post 2015 Agenda, in accordance with the principles contained in the Beijing Platform for Action, especially in ensuring women's access to decision-making. Accordingly, the issue of Women, Development and Humanitarian Aid should continue as a priority in any future gender equality strategy.
- The appropriate services of the European Commission should collaborate closely, including with MS, as appropriate, on supporting a global objective on gender equality and women's empowerment and on the development of gender equality-focused targets and gender sensitive priorities for inclusion in any future strategies including in the EU's positions on the future of the Millennium Development Goals and when developing EU views and policies on post-2015 related policies as well as in the financing for development agenda including the Third Conference on Financing and the report of the IGESDF – intergovernmental committee of experts on financing sustainable development (building on language already contained in the Open Working Group for Sustainable Development Goals and the outcome document for the Rio+20 Summit which, inter alia, highlight the importance of gender equality and women's empowerment for sustainable development).
- The appropriate services of the European Commission should continue to collaborate closely, including with MS as appropriate, in preparing for sessions of the UN Commission on the Status of Women to ensure that all parties are fully aware of the sensitivities which are attached to language on gender equality in order to ensure progress rather than regress in outcome documents.
- All steps should be taken to ensure that the key challenges such as hunger and malnutrition, lack of food security, safe water and sanitation, high rates of maternal and child mortality, high levels of violence against women and girls, harmful practices, lack of education and health services, human rights, poor levels of comprehensive sexuality education and sexual

⁵² This is not to imply that the Beijing Platform is only of relevance in developing countries – it is equally relevant to the developed world.

and reproductive health and information and reproductive rights in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences remain as priorities for the EU to support women living in developing countries.

- The European Commission should also collaborate with all relevant authorities to create awareness of issues such as crimes against women as weapons of war and the need to support the UN Security Council Resolutions on women, peace and security and the implementation of National Action Plans and global studies on these issues.

PRIORITY 5 – IMPLEMENTING GENDER MAINSTREAMING

Gender mainstreaming is a globally accepted mechanism to foster the achievement of gender equality. It makes women's and men's specific needs as well as gender equality goals central to the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of all policies and programmes. Integrating a gender perspective is about developing administrative routines and improving the standard of preparatory work.

While gender mainstreaming is usually regarded as a tool to identify deficits in outcomes for women and girls, it is equally important as a tool to identify deficits in outcomes for men and boys. As an example, the outcomes of men and boys from education and their health status can often fall behind the achievements and status of women and girls. While both of these sectors are matters for national competence, certain strategic approaches are coordinated at EU level. In addition, early school leaving, more frequently done by boys is an important element of the Europe 2020 Strategy, It is essential that all parties engaged in the preparation and delivery of all such strategies adopt a gender impact assessment to ensure that the needs of both men and boys, women and girls are adequately addressed.

This will result in better decisions and measures from the perspective of both men and women. Although gender mainstreaming may be universally accepted by States as an approach, its implementation is far from universal. EU MS and the European Institutions have, at best, had moderate successes in rolling it out across all policies and programmes. It is a cause for concern that the concepts of gender equality and gender mainstreaming as strategies for the advancement of women has even come under attack in some MS, mainly from right wing groups claiming that it aims to “unnaturally re-educate” men and women.

Gender mainstreaming was not identified as a specific priority in the 2010- 2015 European Commission Strategy but rather as a cross-cutting issue. Since 2010, the UN and the CoE have each taken new approaches to mainstream gender equality within their organisations, which appear to be bringing some successes. At the CoE, this led to the appointment of gender rapporteurs for all Committees operating within the CoE while a number of those CoE Committees have recently developed gender specific recommendations for the first time. In 2012, the UN's Chief Executives Board endorsed an UN system-wide Action Plan (UN-SWAP) for gender mainstreaming prepared by UN Women. The UN-SWAP applies to all entities, departments and offices of the UN system and enhances the UN system's ability to hold itself accountable in a systematic and more harmonized manner for its work on gender equality and the empowerment of women.

Gender mainstreaming had been a specific priority in earlier European Commission gender equality strategies and its inclusion as such was a useful reminder of its importance to MS, particularly as the broad mainstreaming of gender by all key players was identified as a deficit in the Commission's feasibility study on the need for a European gender institute. With the full establishment of EIGE, it appears timely to reprioritise gender mainstreaming, drawing experience from the other transnational bodies and from the work previously done by MS, much of which has been drawn together by EIGE.

Recommendations

- For gender mainstreaming to be successful, it needs the unequivocal support of the Institutions and the national authorities, at the most senior management levels. Accordingly,

it is timely to introduce/reintroduce awareness of the concept of gender mainstreaming as a tool to achieve gender balanced decision-making to the College of the new Commission and to their cabinets, at all levels, possibly through high quality but short briefing sessions. Gender training should be provided to the entire personnel of the Commission.

- Steps must be taken to ensure that gender is mainstreamed within sectors by the sectors themselves, both in the European Institutions and in all Ministries and agencies in the MS. This can be achieved with the assistance of external experts in the first instance but this expertise must be developed within each sector/organisation/Ministry.
- The European Commission – DG Justice – already plays an important role in undertaking a gender analysis of the National Reform Programmes prepared as part of the Semester process and DG Justice might play a similar role in relation to other Commission and Union-wide policies including for example activities being developed by DG Enterprise to foster female entrepreneurship.
- Special attention should be paid to the gender impact analysis of the outcomes of all Strategies at both EU and national levels including those developed under the open method of co-ordination to ensure that, where relevant, the differing needs of men and boys and of women and girls are appropriately addressed.
- Management is responsible for changing organisational practices so that they include a gender perspective. Above all, management needs to ensure that such work is being carried out and that there are sufficient prerequisites in place for it to occur. Promoting a gender perspective in an organisation demands planning and development work. This requires the allocation of work hours for such activities. It is vital that management partakes in planning and implementing the mainstreaming of a gender perspective and that it sends out the message to the organisation that it expects results. The commitment and activity of senior management also assist in the work of middle management. In future hiring of managers, the organisation should pay attention to gender equality competence.
- A further approach which might be drawn from the CoE and the UN respectively would be the appointment of “gender equality rapporteurs” or “gender focal points” in the Cabinet of each Commissioner who might take a special interest in policy proposals from a gendered focus. It is important to nominate a person to be responsible for planning and coordinating - not implementing - the organisation's gender equality work. A clear mandate has to be defined for the work of the coordinator and the person should be placed at the centre of the organisation.
- Similar approaches might be reactivated by the European Parliament and by the Council Secretariat.
- The European Commission should arrange to provide awareness training on gender equality and gender mainstreaming for the Permanent Representations to the EU. This might be done in an innovative manner – high quality briefing breakfasts or lunches – to attract the teams from the Representations and the use of the expertise in EIGE might be considered.
- MS should also be encouraged to activate/reactivate their efforts to promote and fully implement gender mainstreaming at the highest levels. It is not possible to develop a unified model to meet the administrative needs of all MS but the body of material already available should be presented to the MS through exchanges of good practice while work might be done (if necessary) to develop a cohesive set of guidelines on gender impact assessment/analysis.
- Further advancement in gender budgeting should be given special focus, taking into account that it is one of the best ways of implementing gender mainstreaming, encouraging the elaboration of reports for this purpose, while the European Commission should promote exchanges of good practices in order to elaborate unified definitions and methodological tools.
- The European Commission should launch a public campaign to foster the full implementation of gender mainstreaming in all the EU Institutions and in the public institutions at MS level.

PRIORITY 6 – FOSTERING CULTURAL CHANGE – MEN AND GENDER EQUALITY

In 2012, DG Justice published a study on “The Role of Men in Gender Equality – European Strategies and Insights”,⁵³ an independent report funded by the Commission under PROGRESS. One of the key messages of the study is that men need gender equality and that gender equality needs men, as there cannot be full gender equality without the commitment of both men and women. The study is based on systematic research in all MS across a range of key issues, including the involvement of men in family, care and domestic work responsibilities; gender based violence; men’s participation in gender equality policy; the importance of education and work in increasing men’s contribution to gender equality and men’s health.

Recommendations

- This report offers significant insights into a wide range of issues which impact upon many of the key priorities proposed above. Accordingly, it should be evaluated carefully with a view to determining how it might be reflected in the actions to be taken to achieve the priorities for gender equality in any future Strategy.
- A second issue which should be reviewed under this priority is that of stereotypes which are also related to the first recommendation above in that stereotypes are normally conceived and perpetuated in traditional hierarchical structures. The use of influential men as role models and activists to break stereotypical attitudes can be influential and have positive outcomes with key stakeholders.
- Men and Women must be included in all work on gender equality in the EU and the MS. Both will gain from a more equal society and both must be included in the actions for change.
- A strong recommendation is to develop and implement gender equality strategies which include a set of measures to support and encourage men to devote more time and priority to the reconciliation of care, home and paid work. This is an important and challenging goal for all countries (see section 1d).
- Efforts must be strengthened to achieve coordinated and sustainable actions to foster the role of men in promoting gender equality in Europe. The gender mainstreaming approach should be implemented by addressing the needs of and impacts of policies on both women and men and the progress towards equality.
- A close connection between critical, pro-feminist research on men, masculinities and gender equality with policies is crucial. The concept and understanding of men and gender equality in government policy should be based on current research results and a balanced approach towards these issues.
- Gender equality strategies which seek to strengthen and improve the role of men in gender equality need to integrate an intersectional approach and take into account the differences between men. In this respect elaborated and evidence-based research on e.g. gender, social class and migration, on which gender equality policies can build, is crucial.

Framing the New Strategy

A new Strategy on Gender Equality should be concise in its focus. It must be democratic, focus on the key economic and social needs of all the citizens of Europe, both men and women. However it must also take cognizance of the most vulnerable groups who face additional challenges in their lives, including single mothers, older women, women from minorities, including Roma women, women with disabilities and LGBTI people that are subject to intersectional discrimination.

The establishment of quantitative and qualitative targets for any future Strategy on Gender Equality is necessary, in order to be able to assess progress at the end of the time period. Given the complexity of the principle of equality, it is likely that a mix of targets will be needed to address the various policy

⁵³ DG Justice : External expert study : “The Role of Men in Gender Equality – European Strategies and Insights :European Commission: December 2012

priorities. The use of clear indicators and targets is likely to appeal to central Government Ministries which can easily identify with statistical concepts and data.

Considerable work has already been undertaken to develop indicators to measure progress on the implementation of the areas of concern under Beijing. These should be gathered periodically and amended as appropriate. EIGE's services might be used to develop further harmonised data, including for measuring violence against women while all data collected should link seamlessly with the data sets proposed by the UN and the Council of Europe.

Given the importance placed by MS on the need to gender mainstreaming, it is recommended that the Commission undertake exchanges of good practice as MS relaunch their actions nationally, while the ongoing exchanges of good practice should also be sustained.

APPENDIX 1

EUROPEAN INDEX OF GENDER EQUALITY 2013

(Perfect Equality = 100)

MS	Index	Work	Money	Knowledge	Time	Power	Health
BE	59.6	66.4	79.3	54.7	45.5	45.2	94.1
BG	37.0	49.9	40.7	32.0	17.3	33.8	84.5
CZ	44.4	71.6	59.3	37.3	23.2	29.6	89.6
DK	73.6	81.6	79.2	75.1	64.9	60.0	91.8
DE	51.6	72.5	76.3	44.1	41.6	28.0	89.5
EE	50.0	64.6	49.1	53.0	51.4	27.5	83.8
IE	55.2	71.0	77.0	52.8	53.4	26.5	96.4
EL	40.0	59.7	63.3	36.7	17.4	24.4	92.4
ES	54.0	61.3	60.7	53.5	33.8	47.2	90.7
FR	57.1	67.0	75.9	49.4	35.8	50.3	90.6
IT	40.9	60.6	68.2	32.1	33.0	18.6	90.8
CY	42.0	68.7	74.1	52.9	25.3	12.2	91.1
LV	44.4	54.9	42.0	38.8	35.2	38.6	77.1
LT	43.6	61.0	41.5	47.4	24.1	32.1	84.9
LU	50.7	66.4	90.9	61.1	48.9	14.7	93.9
HU	41.4	55.9	54.4	35.1	32.5	24.4	83.7
MT	41.6	55.0	68.2	34.0	37.5	18.7	93.2
NL	69.7	73.1	82.5	65.5	71.3	52.2	94.7
AT	50.4	73.9	77.9	44.6	40.0	24.3	91.6
PL	44.1	61.4	52.2	44.0	20.9	34.5	82.6
PT	41.3	66.2	56.3	30.4	22.4	30.6	84.5
RO	35.3	60.4	39.0	28.8	17.8	24.9	84.0
SI	56.0	69.1	70.2	51.4	49.1	36.0	88.7
SK	40.9	61.0	53.7	35.0	17.8	33.1	85.8
FI	73.4	82.0	78.4	67.0	63.8	68.8	89.9
SE	74.3	78.6	80.2	66.3	63.9	74.3	93.1
UK	60.4	76.6	74.3	68.8	43.2	35.2	95.4
EU27	54.0	69.0	68.9	48.9	38.8	38.0	90.1

Source: European Institute of Gender Equality

APPENDIX 2

SELECTED EMPLOYMENT STATISTICS 2008 TO 2013

Member State	Employment rate aged 20 - 64				Employment rates adjusted to WTE 2013		Gender Pay Gap (unadjusted form)	
	2008		2013					
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	2008	2012
EU 28	77.9	62.7	74.2	62.5	71.9	53.6	17.3	16.4
AT	81.7	68.6	80.3	70.8	77.9	56.2	25.1	23.4
BE	74.7	61.3	72.3	62.1	70.2	52.1	10.2	10.0
BG	76.1	65.4	66.4	60.7	65.9	59.9	12.3	14.7
CY	85.2	68.2	72.6	62.2	69.9	57.1	19.5	16.2
CZ	82.0	62.5	81.0	63.8	80.6	61.3	26.2	22.0
DE	80.1	67.8	81.9	72.3	78.2	55.8	22.8	22.4
DK	83.9	75.5	78.7	72.4	75.0	64.4	17.1	14.9
EE	81.7	72.8	76.7	70.1	75.7	67.3	27.6	30.0
ES	78.1	58.3	63.3	53.1	61.3	46.5	16.1	17.8
FI	78.4	73.1	74.7	71.9	72.8	67.3	20.5	19.4
FR	75.5	65.5	73.7	65.5	71.9	58.5	16.9	14.8
EL	80.4	52.5	62.9	43.3	61.6	40.7	22.0	:
HR	70.7	55.2	58.3	49.7	57.2	48.2	:	18.0
HU	69.0	55.1	69.7	57.0	69.4	55.7	17.5	20.1
IE	80.4	64.1	70.9	60.3	67.2	50.8	12.6	14.4
IT	75.4	50.6	69.8	49.9	67.6	43.2	4.9	6.7
LT	75.5	68.8	71.2	68.6	70.9	67.2	21.6	12.6
LU	77.2	60.1	78.0	63.9	76.9	55.0	9.7	8.6
LV	79.7	72.1	71.9	67.7	71.4	66.2	11.8	13.8
MT	78.2	39.4	79.5	49.8	78.9	45.1	9.2	6.1
NL	85.5	72.2	81.3	71.6	74.7	48.1	18.9	16.9
PL	79.0	57.3	72.1	57.6	72.6	56.0	11.4	6.4
PT	79.4	67.0	68.8	62.4	66.7	58.8	9.2	15.7
RO	71.6	57.3	71.6	56.2	70.4	54.7	8.5	9.7
SE	83.5	77.2	82.2	77.2	79.9	69.6	16.9	15.9
SI	77.4	68.5	71.2	63.0	70.3	59.9	4.1	2.5
SK	77.4	60.3	72.2	57.8	71.2	56.3	20.9	21.5
UK	81.8	68.8	80.5	69.4	76.6	55.9	21.4	19.1

Source: Employment Statistics: Eurostat LFS; Gender Pay Gap: Progress on Equality between Women and Men 2013 : European Commission

APPENDIX 3

PROPORTION OF WOMEN IN POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC DECISION-MAKING 2010 - 2013

Member State	SENIOR MINISTERS		NATIONAL PARLIAMENTS (Single/Lower House)		BOARD MEMBERS LARGE PUBLIC COMPANIES	
	2010	2013	2010	2013	2010	2013
EU 28	26	27	24	27	12	18
AT	43	43	28	33	9	13
BE	33	38	40	40	10	17
BG	17	39	22	25	11	17
CY	17	8	13	14	4	7
CZ	0	7	22	20	12	11
DE	38	33	33	36	13	21
DK	47	45	38	38	18	23
EE	8	8	23	18	7	7
EL	17	5	17	21	6	8
ES	50	29	37	40	10	15
FI	55	47	40	43	26	30
FR	34	47	19	26	12	30
HR	16	19	25	24	16	15
HU	0	10	9	9	14	11
IE	20	13	14	16	8	11
IT	22	29	21	31	5	15
LT	13	7	19	24	13	16
LU	27	27	20	23	4	11
LV	21	23	19	25	23	29
MT	22	13	9	14	2	2
NL	25	38	41	38	15	25
PL	25	20	20	24	12	12
PT	29	20	30	31	5	9
RO	12	21	11	14	21	8
SE	46	54	46	44	26	26
SI	26	21	16	33	10	22
SK	14	7	16	19	22	24
UK	16	18	22	23	13	21

Source: Report on Progress on Equality between Women and Men in 2013

APPENDIX 4

MANDATE FOR THIS OPINION

At its meeting in November 2013, the Advisory Committee decided to set up a working group to prepare an opinion entitled "Gender equality in the 21st century: remaining challenges and priorities". It was decided that the opinion should provide input to a reflection on remaining challenges towards gender equality in the European Union beyond 2015, possible policy priorities for further EU action and objectives to be achieved, as well as insights on the complementary of EU and MS level actions for gender equality.

It is proposed that in preparing this opinion the working group should inter alia consider the following questions:

A/ What are the main challenges in the area of equality between women and men?

- *What are the current main challenges for equality between women and men in the EU? Please do not list more than ten.*
- *Which of these challenges should be addressed by the EU institutions and which by the Member States at national level?*
- *Taken these challenges, which priority actions at EU level does the Advisory Committee recommend the Commission to take once the lifespan of the Strategy for equality between women and men comes to an end in 2015?*

B/ The Advisory Committee's opinion on the Strategy for equality between women and men (2010-2015)

- *What was the added value of the Strategy for equality between women and men?*
- *Has it served as a useful guidance for continuous action at national level? Were developments in national gender equality policies facilitated through the existence and implementation of the Strategy for equality between women and men? Has the Strategy increased visibility for gender equality policies at national level?*
- *Was there sufficient complementarity between the key actions announced by the Commission in the Strategy and actions taken at national levels? If not, how could this link be strengthened?*

C/ The content of a potential new strategic framework at European level

- *If a new strategic framework were to be adopted at EU level, which time period should it cover (less than 5 years? 5 years? 10 years)?*

- *What should be the main objective of such a new strategic framework at EU level? Why is it needed?*
- *Related to the challenges and priorities identified under A), are the six priority areas of the Strategy for equality between women and men (2010-2015) still valid? Do priority areas need to be changed, refocused, extended, added or deleted?*
- *Also related to the challenges and priorities identified under A), what are the key actions which should be announced in a potential new strategic framework? Please limit yourself to 15 key actions.*
- *Which are the main target groups of these actions (e.g. vulnerable groups of women, including girls, migrant women, older women; other groups such as men, working parents, etc.)?*
- *Should objectives and targets be set? If so, which targets? Should these be quantitative or qualitative targets?*
- *Is the dual approach of specific gender equality actions and gender mainstreaming still valid and sufficiently clear?*
- *What type of monitoring, reporting and evaluation should be carried out?*