



REPUBLIC OF ESTONIA
MINISTRY OF SOCIAL AFFAIRS



Ministry of Labour and Social Policy



MINISTERIUM
FRAUEN
GESUNDHEIT

TRIO PRESIDENCY DECLARATION ON EQUALITY BETWEEN WOMEN AND MEN

Estonia, Bulgaria and Austria, the Member States holding the Presidency of the Council of the European Union during the 18-month period from July 2017 to December 2018, hereby present this joint trio declaration on gender equality of 19th of July 2017.

RECALLING

The **Treaty on European Union and the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union**, as well as the **Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union**, in which equality between women and men is enshrined as a fundamental value of the European Union, and emphasizing that achieving gender equality is one of the objectives and tasks of the Union and mainstreaming equality between women and men in all its activities is a general aim of the Union.

The **European Pact for gender equality (2011-2020)**, in which the Council of the European Union reaffirmed its commitment to fulfil EU ambitions on gender equality, in particular to close the gender gaps in employment and social protection, including the gender pay gap; to promote better work-life balance for women and men throughout their life course; and to combat all forms of violence against women.

The **Strategic engagement for gender equality 2016-2019** published by the European Commission in December 2015, which underlines the need for increased efforts to promote gender equality and suggests a wide range of activities focused on: equal economic independence of women and men; reducing the gender pay, earnings and pension gaps; equality in decision-making; ending gender-based violence; and the promotion of gender equality beyond the EU; and which emphasises the need to integrate a gender equality aspect into all EU policies as well as into EU funding programmes.

The **Rome Declaration** of 25 March 2017, in which the Leaders of 27 Member States and of the European Council, the European Parliament and the European Commission pledged to work towards a Social Europe: a Union which, inter alia, promotes equality between women and men as well as rights and equal opportunities for all.

The **European Pillar of Social Rights**, which sets out an agenda for better-performing economies and more equitable and resilient societies, enshrines gender equality as one of the EU's key principles and rights, and underlines that equality of treatment and opportunities between women and men must be ensured and fostered in all areas.

The **European Commission's and EEAS Joint Staff Working Document on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: Transforming the Lives of Girls and Women through EU External Relations 2016-2020**, in which the said institutions jointly commit to promoting gender equality and women's empowerment in the EU's external relations.

The United Nations' **Beijing declaration and Platform for Action** and the twelve critical areas of concern identified therein, and the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, and the outcomes of their review conferences.

The United Nations' **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**, which outlines a set of 17 universal, integrated and transformative Goals, and envisages a world in which every woman and girl enjoys full gender equality and all legal, social and economic barriers to their empowerment have been removed.

STRESSING THAT

Progress towards gender equality has recently stalled and the subject is not being given sufficiently high **priority on the political agenda**. Renewed efforts are therefore needed to strengthen the political will to achieve positive change in the area of gender equality.

While a gender equality perspective has recently been adopted in more EU policy fields, the consistent implementation of **gender mainstreaming** in all EU policies and activities as well as in the allocation of funds is still missing.

Gender stereotypes remain the key underlying cause of persisting **gender segregation**, in particular in education and the labour market, as well as in political and economic leadership.

A stronger gender equality perspective is needed in the implementation of the Europe 2020 Strategy to meet the ambitious headline target of a **75% employment rate for both women and men**; as things stand, women's overall employment rate is still much lower than men's.

Despite their high educational achievements, women remain over-represented in **low-pay sectors and jobs**, and under-represented in **management and leadership positions**. Structural inequalities in the labour market and wage discrimination result in a high **gender pay gap**, which harms women's economic independence over their life course, leading to a wide gender gap in overall earnings, a high **gender gap in pensions**, and exposes **women to a higher risk of poverty and social exclusion**.

Unequal sharing between women and men of **unpaid care and household work**, as well as of **parental leave**, remains a major obstacle to women's labour market participation, especially in full-time and managerial positions. **Work-life balance policies** are often insufficient, and there is often not enough **quality and affordable care available for children and other dependants**; this severely limits women's personal career choices and opportunities.

Technological change will continue to transform the labour market, creating new job opportunities. But unless more women enter fields benefitting from such developments, including those related to computer, technology and engineering, women will lose out on some of tomorrow's best job opportunities, while companies and entire sectors will suffer the disadvantage of a restricted applicant and talent pool and limited diversity within organisations.

Gender-based violence seriously hinders the enjoyment of all human rights and is in itself a serious violation of human rights. It is both a cause and consequence of gender inequalities and threatens the well-being, health, physical integrity, dignity and often the lives of those affected.

Although a vast majority of Europeans consider such violence unacceptable, it is still a part of daily life for many women. Structural violence against women and girls is a serious form of discrimination that persists as a phenomenon deeply embedded in European societies.

THE PRESIDENCY TRIO UNDERLINES

The need to place **gender equality and equal opportunities high on the EU's agenda**, in particular in discussions concerning the **future of the Union** and the **EU's financial framework**.

That continuous, effective and visible **governance of gender equality** has to be ensured, including institutionalised **high-level political debate** as well as **mechanisms** to closely monitor progress.

The need for a **stand-alone, high-level Strategy for equality between women and men** to follow the current Commission's Strategic Engagement in this area, including the aim to implement the comprehensive and ambitious approach of the Beijing declaration and Platform for Action; and the importance of an **annual report on progress** in equality between women and men published by the European Commission.

That a **dual approach** of gender mainstreaming by integrating the gender perspective into all policy areas combined with specific measures is needed. Structural inequalities need to be addressed in order to ensure equal treatment of all individuals.

That the equal economic engagement of women and men is a prerequisite for achieving the overall **Europe 2020 objective of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth**. To this end, the correlation between gender equality and economic competitiveness needs to be brought to the attention of policy makers at all levels, and of the social partners, employers and civil society.

That, in a **changing world of work**, accelerating efforts to abolish gender segregation by **addressing gender gaps** could unlock new opportunities for individuals, the economy and society at large. Targeting a wider pool of female and male talent in areas where the other sex is still predominant can help to address skills shortages.

That **gender segregation** should be tackled through a comprehensive set of measures, including measures actively encouraging and enabling women and men to choose educational paths and career options in areas where the other sex is currently predominant; and measures ensuring that women and men are equally skilled and thus ready to enjoy the opportunities and meet the challenges of future labour markets.

That strengthening women's labour market participation in quality jobs is a prerequisite of **equal economic independence** during working age and in retirement. To this end, varied action has to be taken to increase **men's participation in both paid and unpaid care**. Further efforts are needed to strengthen **work-life balance** by developing available, flexible, high-quality and affordable care services for children and other dependants.

The importance of effectively implementing the **right to equal pay for equal work and work of equal value** in order to close the **gender pay gap** and the **gender gap in pensions**, including by attributing equal value to the skills of women and men and promoting non-discriminatory

job evaluations and income transparency, combined with practical support for employers to close the gender pay gap in their companies.

That eliminating all forms of **gender-based violence**, including online violence, is a precondition for achieving gender equality. It presumes enhanced and co-ordinated efforts at the Union and Member States level to simultaneously prevent and combat violence against women, to protect victims and to prosecute perpetrators. The EU's accession to the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence can amplify these efforts.

ACTIVITIES TO BE CARRIED OUT DURING THE PRESIDENCIES OF ESTONIA, BULGARIA AND AUSTRIA

The Presidency Trio will continue the work and negotiations started by the preceding Presidencies to promote gender equality. It will encourage discussions in all appropriate fora, including the EPSCO Council, and promote the exchange of good practice and other actions related to gender equality. In addition, new knowledge and indicators for monitoring progress at the EU level will be presented.

The Presidency Trio commits to the following common goals:

- **Bringing gender equality back onto the EU's list of priorities**, especially by strengthening and institutionalising discussions;
- **Supporting systematic and effective co-operation between Member States and the European Commission on gender equality and gender mainstreaming policy**, especially by hosting meetings of the High-Level Group on Gender Mainstreaming, and **monitoring of the progress**, especially by tabling draft Council Conclusions on gender equality;
- **Strengthening gender mainstreaming in all policy areas**, especially by including a gender equality perspective in high-level discussions and proposed policy documents;
- **Intensifying efforts to achieve equal economic independence**, especially by actively leading discussions on the creation of strong and sound policies to support a more **equal sharing of care responsibilities** between women and men;
- **Accelerating efforts to eliminate gender-based violence**, especially through further work towards the accession, by the European Union, to the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence;
- **Addressing the impact of digitalisation on gender equality**, especially by leading discussions on potential benefits and related challenges.

With these goals in mind, the Estonian, Bulgarian and Austrian Presidencies will undertake specific activities as follows:

ESTONIA

- An **Informal Meeting of Ministers for Employment, Social Affairs, Family and Gender Equality**, with a focus on **work-life balance** in a changing world of work and families, tackling also the need for equal sharing of care responsibilities between women and men, will be organised in Tallinn on 19.-20.07;

- A meeting of the **High Level Group on Gender Mainstreaming** will be hosted in Tallinn on 7.-8.09;
- Co-operating with the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) on launching the third edition of the **Gender Equality Index** in Brussels on 11.10;
- The **8th EU Diversity Charters' Annual Forum "Diversity and Leadership in a World in Flux"**, including discussions on women, leadership and diversity, will be co-organised with the European Commission and the co-ordinator of the Estonian Diversity Charter, the Estonian Human Rights Centre in Tallinn on 6.-7.11;
- A **discussion on fighting against the digital violence against women** will be organised in Brussels on 5.12;
- **Draft Council Conclusions on gender segregation in tertiary and vocational education, training and the labour market** and the links between the gender pay gap and gender segregation will be tabled, based on the EIGE's Beijing Platform for Action follow-up report (Conclusions to be adopted by the EPSCO Council in December 2017);
- Discussions will be furthered on the **work-life balance package**, notably on the proposed Directive on work-life balance for parents and carers and repealing Council Directive 2010/18/EU in the Social Questions Working Party;
- Discussions will be furthered on the conclusion, by the European Union, of the **Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence** in the Working Party on Fundamental Rights, Citizens' Rights and Free Movement of Persons.

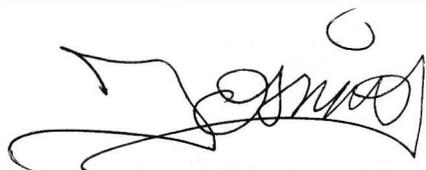
BULGARIA

- A meeting of the **High Level Group on Gender Mainstreaming** will be hosted in Sofia during the period 31.01 -1.02.2018;
- Cooperation with the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) with a focus on the topic of "**Women in the digital world**";
- Addressing **women's participation in the area of digitalization**, in the course of all appropriate events during the Bulgarian presidency;
- Working with the Social Questions Working Party on the **work-life balance package**, notably on the proposed Directive on work-life balance for parents and carers and repealing Council Directive 2010/18/EU;
- Organising a side event during the 62nd Session of the **UN Commission on the Status of Women**.

AUSTRIA

- To inspire an open and future-oriented dialogue about gender equality, the Austrian Presidency will focus on the topic of "**Youth and gender equality**". Based on a report from EIGE, this topic will be addressed in the context of monitoring progress in the area of "**The girl-child**" as identified in the Beijing Platform for Action. Austria will also stimulate discussion on emerging topics in the area of gender equality, including the potential benefits of digitalisation for gender equality (e.g. as a means to facilitate the social and political participation of young women and men) as well as the risks of digitalisation (e.g. online gender-based violence);
- **Draft Council Conclusions** on youth and gender equality will be tabled for adoption by the EPSCO;

- A meeting of the **High Level Group on Gender Mainstreaming** will be hosted in Vienna in late September 2018;
- With the objective of strengthening high-level political debate on gender equality, an **informal meeting of Ministers for Gender Equality** will be hosted in Vienna in late September 2018. Ministers will be invited to discuss ways to strengthen cooperation and to institutionalise the dialogue between them in the area of gender equality;
- In parallel to the informal Ministerial Meeting, a **conference on “Youth and Gender Equality”** will be dedicated to the future priorities for the work on gender equality in order to strengthen their effective implementation. By actively involving young people, youth representatives and NGOs, and by facilitating discussions between them and Ministers for Gender Equality, the conference seeks to ensure that young people’s visions and needs regarding gender equality are being heard and taken into account.



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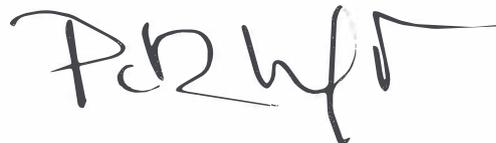
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