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NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Delegations

Subject: Call for a Commission Communication on a gender equality strategy
- Information from the German and Swedish delegations

Delegations will find attached an information note on the above subject from the German and Swedish delegations, in view of the EPSCO Council on 8 December 2016 (AOB item).

Call for a Commission Communication on a gender equality strategy

Germany and Sweden propose this new AOB item for the following reasons:

With the Council Conclusions “Response to the Commission’s strategic engagement for gender equality” adopted by the EPSCO in June 2016, all the Member States urged the Commission to give its strategic engagement for gender equality the status of an official Communication, in an effort to raise its formal strength and visibility and send a strong political message.

Given the importance of a new stand-alone strategy for gender equality at a time of economic and demographic change, when gender equality is being downgraded, and in order to recall the Council Conclusions from June and underline their key message once again, the German gender equality Minister Manuela SCHWESIG and her Swedish colleague, Åsa REGNÉR, have drafted a letter to Commissioner JOUROVÁ.

In this letter, the Ministers call on the Commission to build on the solid framework for equality between women and men that the European Union has created over the past three decades – especially by means of the Strategy 2010-2015 – and continue with this good work. While welcoming the substantive contents of the “Strategic Engagement” for gender equality 2016-2019 that the Commission presented in December 2015, they regret that the strategy was not accorded the same status as the Gender Equality Strategy 2010-2015, which could mark the end of stand-alone strategic policy papers on gender equality adopted as Commission Communications. At the same time, they express their trust that the Commission will consider presenting the new strategy from 2016 onwards in the form of a Commission Communication once again.

All gender equality Ministers from other Member States are invited to sign the attached letter as well to support the call for a Commission Communication on a new gender equality strategy.

Letter from the European Gender Equality Ministers to the Commission regarding the European Strategy for Gender Equality between Women and Men

Dear Madam Commissioner,

Over the past three decades, the European Union has created a solid framework for equality between women and men – and this good work should be continued. Precisely the Strategy 2010-2015 was a major reference framework, also for the Member States.

While we wholeheartedly welcome the substantive contents of the “Strategic Engagement” for gender equality 2016 – 2019 that the Commission presented in December 2015, we regret that the strategy did not come in the same format as the Gender Equality Strategy that used to be published as a Commission Communication.

If this marks the end of stand-alone strategic policy papers on gender equality that are adopted as Commission Communications, we fear that the gender equality policy and the Commission’s ambitions to enhance gender equality on the EU level will continue to lose its strength and visibility – all the more so since the Europe 2020 Strategy does not include a gender equality objective in its own right.

However, even though they do not explicitly refer to gender equality, the objectives of Europe 2020 cannot be achieved without a higher level of gender parity, especially in the world of work and a strong link between gender equality and poverty reduction. Therefore, precisely at a time of economic and demographic change, when gender equality is being downgraded, we need a new version of the Strategy for Gender Equality more than ever before.

Therefore, we would like to recall the fact that the EPSCO adopted, in June 2016, the Council Conclusions “Response to the Commission’s strategic engagement for gender equality”. With this document, all of the Member States urged the Commission to give its strategic engagement for gender equality a different format, specifically that of an official Communication, in an effort to raise its formal strength and visibility. Moreover, the European Parliament had voiced this request as early as June 2015 in a relevant Resolution.

In light of the foregoing, we trust that the Commission will consider to present the new strategy for gender equality between women and men from 2016 onwards in the form of a Commission Communication.
