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NOTE

From: Presidency
To: Working Party on Social Questions
Subject: Gender-Equal Economies in the EU: The Way Forward
- draft Council conclusions

Delegations will find attached a set of draft Council conclusions prepared by the Presidency in advance of the meeting of the Social Questions Working Party on 11 October 2019.

The report 'Beijing +25 – The 5th Review of the Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in the EU Member States', prepared by the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) at the request of the Finnish Presidency, is set out in ADD 2 to this document. An executive summary is set out in ADD 1.

Procedure

*The Presidency hopes that an agreement on these conclusions can be reached in two meetings. Delegations are therefore invited to make every effort to develop their positions in good time, with a view to holding a productive discussion at the meeting on 11 October. Written comments are welcome **even before the first meeting**, and should be sent to the following email addresses:*

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*NB. The **deadline for written comments after the first meeting will be 17 October.***

GENDER-EQUAL ECONOMIES IN THE EU: THE WAY FORWARD
TAKING STOCK OF 25 YEARS OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BEIJING PLATFORM
FOR ACTION

**Draft conclusions of the Council of the European Union and the representatives of the
governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council,
on the review of the implementation of the
Beijing Platform for Action by the Member States and the EU institutions**

1. **ACKNOWLEDGING** that equality between women and men is one of the common and fundamental principles enshrined in the Treaties, and is explicitly mentioned in Articles 2 and 3(3) of the Treaty on European Union, Article 8 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union and Article 23 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union.
2. **REAFFIRMING** the importance of ensuring equal opportunities for both women and men and the full promotion and protection of, and respect for, the human rights and fundamental freedoms of women and girls, which are universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated and are essential for the empowerment of women and girls and the advancement of peace, security and development. Full realisation of the UN Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and vigorous implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in the EU's internal and external action is an integral part of this process and approach.
3. **RECALLING THAT** gender equality and work-life balance are recognised in Principles 2 and 9 of the European Pillar of Social Rights proclaimed by the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission on 17 November 2017.
4. **STRESSING** that gender equality forms an integral part of *the economy of wellbeing*, which is based on recognising that human well-being is a prerequisite for economic growth and vice versa, and that gender equality and the promotion, protection and fulfilment of women's and girls' rights are preconditions for equitable and inclusive sustainable development, as well as important values and objectives in themselves.

5. **STRESSING** the importance of continuing with a dual approach to gender equality, established as a major global strategy for the promotion of gender equality in the Beijing Platform for Action, combining specific measures with the systematic integration of a gender perspective into all EU policies and activities (gender mainstreaming).
6. **STRESSING** that economic and fiscal policies may affect women and men differently and that it is important to systematically assess them from the perspective of gender equality and the projected impact on women and on men.
7. **CONSIDERING** that 2020 marks a particularly important year for gender equality and women's rights: the international community will celebrate the 25th anniversary of the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the 20th anniversary of UN Security Council resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. Various strategic frameworks with particular relevance to gender equality will come to the end of their term, including the European Pact for Gender Equality (2011-2020), the Commission's 'Strategic engagement for gender equality 2016-2019' and the EU Gender Action Plan II, 'Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: Transforming the Lives of Girls and Women through EU External Relations 2016-2020'.
8. **RECALLING** that gender equality is central for the achievement of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and that the EU is committed to the gender-transformative implementation, follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda in both its internal and external action, and **TAKING NOTE** of the Commission's Reflection Paper 'Towards a Sustainable Europe by 2030' and the Council conclusions 'Towards an ever more sustainable Union by 2030' on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in the EU.
9. **WELCOMING** the EIGE's report 'Beijing +25: The 5th Review of the Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in the EU Member States' which presents the main trends, current progress, and major challenges in the field of gender equality in the EU.

10. **ACKNOWLEDGING** that progress has been made in certain areas, including the adoption of the Work-Life Balance Directive, the increased share of women on the boards of large companies and improvements in gender mainstreaming in the EU's external action. This reflects the commitment of the EU and its Member States to the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action.
11. **STRESSING** that old challenges remain, new ones are emerging and objectives set for gender equality have not been fully achieved. In order to tackle these challenges, continued efforts are needed at both EU and Member State level to ensure effective gender equality policies and gender mainstreaming and the full realisation of women's rights.
- (a) Women continue to face lower levels of pay and pensions and thus less economic independence than men. There is still a large gender gap in the employment rate in the EU.¹ For those women participating in working life, jobs are more likely to be precarious, untenured and part-time. Substantial gender gaps in pay and pensions persist in the EU.
 - (b) Fiscal consolidation and budgetary cuts and the ongoing shrinking of the public sector have affected particularly female-dominated economic sectors. Women are more likely to be at risk of poverty than men.
 - (c) Many of the economic inequalities between women and men stem from the unequal distribution of care responsibilities and household tasks. Care responsibilities are keeping 7.7 million women out of the labour market in the EU. The majority of family-related leave is still taken up by women and gaps in the provision of formal childcare services and long-term care services severely impede women's ability to participate in working life.

¹ In 2017 there was a 16.0 % gender gap in pay and a 34.8 % gender gap in pensions. The gender employment gap stood at 11.5 percentage points.

- (d) Gender-based violence continues to be a reality for millions of women and girls living in the EU. Violence against women and girls is a severe manifestation of gender inequalities and a human rights violation with immeasurable human suffering, and it also represents a significant cost to the economy and society.²
 - (e) Women continue to be under-represented in all fields of decision-making observed under the Beijing Platform for Action, including the areas of politics and business. While the proportion of women in decision-making has increased since 2013, especially due to government action, progress has been slow.
 - (f) New gender-equality challenges have emerged in recent years. Despite its positive potential in working life, digitalisation may further challenge women's position on the labour market, for example because there is a relatively low number of women in ICT education and the ICT professions. In addition, more and more women and girls are experiencing cyber violence, including online harassment, cyberbullying and sexist hate speech.
 - (g) The mainstreaming of gender equality in different areas of EU policy, including the implementation of the Europe 2020 Strategy and the European Semester, is fragmented and lacks continuity and a systematic approach. Mainstreaming tools, such as gender impact assessments or gender budgeting, are only seldom used in EU and Member State policy-making processes and there are shortcomings in the collection, analysis and policy use of sex-disaggregated data.
12. **STRESSING** the role of civil society organisations in promoting women's rights and gender equality and the importance of continued cooperation with civil society in order to achieve the objectives of the Beijing Platform for Action.

² Women and girls comprise 95 % of identified victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation and are victims of female genital mutilation (FGM) and forced marriage. Women are also subject to gender-based harassment, including sexual harassment: as many as one in two women in the EU have experienced sexual harassment.

13. **TAKING NOTE** of the outcome of the High Level Conference ‘Europe for Gender Equality? Taking Stock – Taking Action’ held in Helsinki on 30 September and 1 October 2019.
14. **WELCOMING** the four new indicators³ proposed by the EIGE in its 2018 report on the review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in the EU Member States, entitled ‘Gender equality and youth: opportunities and risks of digitalisation’⁴, which focused on *digital skills, self-confidence in using digital technologies, the use of the internet for civic or political participation, and cyberbullying*.

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

CALLS ON THE MEMBER STATES, in accordance with their competences and taking into account national circumstances and respecting the role and autonomy of the social partners, TO:

15. Strengthen the effectiveness of governmental gender equality structures by placing them at the highest possible level, and by providing them with strong, clearly defined mandates and with adequate personnel and financial resources for fulfilling their mandates, and ensure the effective implementation of and sufficient funding for national gender equality strategies, including both specific measures and gender mainstreaming in all areas of decision-making.
16. Strengthen the political commitment to and accountability and capacities for gender mainstreaming, and develop gender impact assessment and gender budgeting in all policy fields, including in economic, education, employment, social and innovation policies, in order to more efficiently tackle existing challenges and to strengthen knowledge-based policy-making and decision-making.

³ New indicators for monitoring critical area of concern L: ‘The girl child’. A complete list of indicators for monitoring critical area of concern L: ‘The girl child’ appears in Annex I. For further details, see 14348/18 ADD 2.

⁴ 14348/18 ADD 2. An executive summary appears in 14580/18 ADD 1.

17. Intensify efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls by addressing holistically the prevention and prosecution of all forms of violence and the protection of all victims, continue working on the EU's accession to the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention) and, for those Member States that have not yet done so, ratify the Convention.

CALLS ON THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION AND THE MEMBER STATES, in accordance with their respective competences and respecting the role and autonomy of the social partners, TO:

18. Strengthen gender equality and the human rights and empowerment of women and girls as a political priority at EU and Member State level and within both internal and external policies, including by actively promoting high-level political dialogue on gender equality issues at EU level, and at the highest political level.
19. Strengthen the link between EU gender equality policies and the implementation of the EU's international commitments, especially the Beijing Platform for Action and the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and develop synergies between the EU's follow-up of the Beijing Platform for Action and the 2030 Agenda.
20. Step up gender equality policies, including by strengthening the dual approach to promoting gender equality as well as the necessary structures and processes, at EU and Member State level, with a view to accelerating progress towards reaching the objectives set out in the Beijing Platform for Action.
21. Strengthen the commitment to promoting gender equality and women's empowerment, in particular in the areas identified in the EIGE's report on the Beijing +25 review.
 - (a) Step up and effectively implement measures to close the gender pay gap and gender gap in pensions, including measures to combat pay discrimination and improve pay transparency, beyond the current EU Action Plan on Tackling the Gender Pay Gap (2017-2019), and monitor the results achieved.

- (b) Strengthen the efforts to foster women's participation and gender equality in the labour market in order to promote women's economic independence and sustainable and inclusive economic growth. Ensure a better balance between work and private life for women and men by effectively implementing the Directive on work-life balance for parents and carers and the Barcelona objectives concerning childcare facilities. Analyse the impact of digitalisation on gender equality in working life and take it into account in future policy-making.
 - (c) Reaffirm the elimination of gender-based violence, including cyber violence, as a priority of the European Union and the importance of the implementation of effective measures by the Member States as required by EU law. Take necessary measures to eliminate violence and harassment in the world of work.
 - (d) Continue to introduce and implement targeted measures, including legislative and/or non-legislative numerical targets and timelines to ensure gender balance in political and economic decision-making, including in the EU institutions.
 - (e) Ensure the effective and systematic implementation and continuity of gender mainstreaming in all areas of decision-making by strengthening the practical tools of mainstreaming, including through the introduction of gender-specific targets and indicators, gender impact assessment of legislative and policy measures, and gender budgeting, as well as through cross-sectoral cooperation and accountability mechanisms for monitoring gender mainstreaming at both EU and Member State level.
 - (f) Promote a stronger focus on gender equality within different phases of the European Semester process, including by continuing to develop gender equality indicators, sex-disaggregated data collection and statistical methods for monitoring progress on gender equality.
22. Pursue gender equality, with a high level of ambition, as a policy priority in all EU external relations by continuing the EU Gender Action Plan after 2020.

23. Reinforce and continue to support the activities of national equality bodies as well as that of the European Network of Equality Bodies (Equinet), taking into account the Commission's Recommendation on standards for equality bodies.
24. Reinforce continuous cooperation and strategic partnerships with European and national social partners, NGOs and academia to promote gender equality and develop gender equality policies.
25. Regularly follow up on all the Beijing indicators, including the revised indicators set out in Annex I, for systematically monitoring progress, making full use of the expertise and outputs of the EIGE and Eurostat. Strengthen the effective use of the Beijing indicators in EU and national gender equality policies and in all other relevant policy areas, and seek to make all relevant statistics widely available.
26. Support the production and analysis of sound and comparable data disaggregated by sex, including through the work of Eurostat and the EIGE, as well as national statistical institutions, in order to reinforce knowledge-based policy-making.
27. Continue to adopt annually a Commission report to monitor progress in the field of gender equality and gender mainstreaming at EU and Member State level and encourage the future Council Presidencies to forward it to the European Council. Use this report to enhance gender mainstreaming in the context of all relevant post-2020 policy frameworks in the EU, including the European Semester, as well as in the context of the implementation of the UN 2030 Agenda and the Beijing Platform for Action in the EU.

CALLS ON THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION TO:

28. Explicitly set gender equality as a political priority in its current term (2019-2024) and adopt a Communication setting out a stand-alone high-level EU gender equality strategy for the period post-2019, including both specific measures and the integration of a gender perspective into EU policies and activities.

29. Systematically mainstream a gender perspective into all future EU strategies and policies, including by developing gender budgeting and gender impact assessment of legislative and policy measures as key tools for gender mainstreaming.
30. Take concrete steps to integrate a gender perspective into the EU's economic policies, in line with the commitments made in the framework of the European Pillar of Social Rights and the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and especially into the strategies and procedures that will succeed the Europe 2020 Strategy and the European Semester, including by setting specific targets and ensuring effective implementation and monitoring of gender mainstreaming.

Compilation of all indicators for critical area of concern L: ‘The girl child’⁵

Indicator 1: Sex and relationship education: parameters of sexuality-related education in schooling (primary and secondary)⁶.

Indicator 2: Body self-image: dissatisfaction of girls and boys with their bodies⁷.

Indicator 3: 15-year-old girls and boys: performance in mathematics & science⁸.

Indicator 4: Proportion of all and top performers girls and boys in science aged 15 expecting to work in science-related occupations at age 30⁹.

NEW Indicator 5: Share of young women and men (aged 16-19) with above-basic digital skills.

This indicator consists of four sub-indicators, which measure digital skills in four specific areas:

- (a) information skills;
- (b) communication skills;
- (c) problem-solving skills;
- (d) software skills.

NEW Indicator 6: Share of girls and boys (aged 15-16) who feel confident performing certain tasks with digital technologies.

This indicator consists of three sub-indicators:

- (a) the share of girls and boys who feel comfortable using digital devices that they are less familiar with;
- (b) the share of girls and boys who feel that they can start solving a problem with digital devices on their own;
- (c) the share of girls and boys who feel that they can install new software they need by themselves.

NEW Indicator 7: Share of young women and men (aged 16-19) who use the internet for civic or political participation.

⁵ For further details, see the EIGE’s report in 14348/18 ADD 2.

⁶ Existing indicator. See 9669/08.

⁷ Existing indicator. See 9669/08.

⁸ Existing indicator. See 15468/17.

⁹ Existing indicator. See 15468/17.

NEW Indicator 8: Share of girls and boys (aged 15) who have been cyberbullied by messages or by pictures at least once.

This indicator consists of two sub-indicators:

- (a) the share of girls and boys (aged 15) who have experienced cyberbullying by message at least once (i.e. have received mean instant messages, wall posts, emails or text messages);
- (b) the share of girls and boys (aged 15) who have experienced cyberbullying by picture at least once (i.e. posting unflattering or inappropriate pictures online without permission).

References

1. EU interinstitutional

- European Pillar of Social Rights,
https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/social-summit-european-pillar-social-rights-booklet_en.pdf.

2. Council

All Council conclusions adopted on the review of the Beijing Platform for Action¹⁰ and other Council conclusions on gender equality and other subjects, including especially those cited below:

- Council conclusions of 7 March 2011 on the European Pact for Gender Equality (2011-2020) (OJ C 155, 25.5.2011, p. 10);
- Council conclusions of 16 June 2016, 'Response to the Commission's Strategic engagement for gender equality' (10416/16);
- Council conclusions of 8 December 2016 on Women and Poverty (15409/16);
- Council conclusions of 3 March 2017 on Enhancing the Skills of Women and Men in the EU Labour Market (6889/17);
- Council conclusions of 7 December 2017 on Enhanced measures to reduce horizontal gender segregation in education and employment (15468/17);
- Council conclusions of 13 June 2019 on Closing the Gender Pay Gap: Key Policies and Measures (10349/19);
- Council conclusions of 9 April 2019, 'Towards an ever more sustainable Union by 2030' (8286/19).

3. Trio Presidency

- Trio Presidency Declaration on Gender Equality signed by Romania, Finland and Croatia (15 March 2019).
- Joint Declaration on 'Gender Equality as a Priority of the European Union today and in the future'. Proposed by the Austrian, Estonian and Bulgarian trio Presidency at the informal meeting of EU Gender Equality Ministers, 12 October 2018, Vienna.

¹⁰ http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/tools/statistics-indicators/platform-action/index_en.htm

4. European Commission

- Commission Staff Working Document, ‘Strategic engagement for gender equality 2016-2019’ (SWD(2015) 278 final).
- 2019 Report on equality between women and men in the European Union, https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/aid_development_cooperation_fundamental_rights/annual_report_ge_2019_en.pdf.
- Reflection Paper: Towards a Sustainable Europe by 2030, https://ec.europa.eu/commission/files/reflection-paper-towards-sustainable-europe_en.
- Recommendation of 22 June 2018 on standards for equality bodies (C(2018) 3850 final).

5. European Parliament

6. EIGE

- EIGE report, ‘Beijing +25 – The 5th Review of the Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in the EU Member States’ (12595/19 ADD 2).
- EIGE report, ‘Gender equality and youth: opportunities and risks of digitalisation’ (14348/18 ADD 2).

7. Other
