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NOTE

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Delegations
Subject:	Draft Council Conclusions on Mainstreaming a gender equality perspective in policies, programmes and budgets

Delegations will find attached a set of draft Council Conclusions on "Mainstreaming a gender equality perspective in policies, programmes and budgets" prepared by the Presidency.

This document will be discussed by the members of the Social Questions Working Party on 22 March 2023.

A report prepared by the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) will be distributed as an addendum to the present document (ST 7220/23 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 22 March. Written comments are welcome even before the first meeting.

Mainstreaming a gender equality perspective in policies, programmes, and budgets**Draft Council Conclusions¹****ACKNOWLEDGING THAT**

1. Gender equality and human rights are at the core of European values, and equality between women and men is a fundamental principle of the European Union, enshrined in the Treaties and in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union.²
2. Article 8 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) requires the Union, in all its activities, to aim to eliminate inequalities between women and men and to promote equality.³
3. Gender equality policies are vital to economic growth, prosperity, and competitiveness. The equal, full, and effective participation of both women and men in all areas, including in employment, is a prerequisite for attaining and sustaining a prosperous Union.⁴ Forward-looking policy responses, such as the Barcelona targets for 2030⁵, are essential for economic growth and the advancement of women's economic empowerment.

¹ Conclusions drawn up within the context of the review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, with particular reference to Critical Area of Concern H (Institutional Mechanisms for the Advancement of Women).

² Article 23 Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, 2012:
http://data.europa.eu/eli/treaty/char_2012/oj (OJ C 326, 26.10.2012.)

³ (OJ C 326, 26.10.2012.)

⁴ Council of the European Union, *Council conclusions on the effectiveness of institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women and gender equality*, point 15, December 2013:
https://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/lsa/139978.pdf

⁵ Council Recommendation on early childhood education and care: the Barcelona targets for 2030. (OJ C 484, 20.12.2022.) [EUR-Lex - 32022H1220\(01\) - EN - EUR-Lex \(europa.eu\)](#)

4. According to Principle 2 of the European Pillar of Social Rights ("Gender equality"), "Equality of treatment and opportunities between women and men must be ensured and fostered in all areas, including regarding participation in the labour market, terms and conditions of employment and career progression. Women and men have the right to equal pay for work of equal value."
5. Employment Guideline 8 emphasises the importance of supporting social investment, fighting poverty, and addressing inequalities, including through the design of Member States' tax and benefit systems and by assessing the distributional impact of their policies.⁶
6. Government tax and spending decisions have powerful social and economic implications, shaping people's choices regarding work and economic participation.⁷ Increasing women's participation in paid work is highly conducive to economic growth and competitiveness.⁸
7. The Beijing Platform for Action adopted by the Fourth World conference on Women in 1995, identifies "Institutional Mechanisms for the Advancement of Women)" (area H) as one of twelve critical areas of concern and a prerequisite for gender mainstreaming.⁹
8. According to paragraph 202 of the Beijing Platform for Action, "Governments and other actors should promote an active and visible policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective in all policies and programmes so that, before decisions are taken, an analysis is made of the effects on women and men, respectively."¹⁰

⁶ OJ L 344, 19.10.2020, Council Decision (EU) 2020/1512, October 2020: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/dec/2020/1512/oj> and OJ L 304, 24.11.2022, p. 67–77: [EUR-Lex - 32022D2296 - EN - EUR-Lex \(europa.eu\)](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dec/2020/1512/oj).

⁷ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, *Draft for discussion - OECD Best Practices for Gender Budgeting*, p. 3, August 2022.

⁸ EIGE, *Economic Benefits of Gender Equality in the European Union: How closing the gender gaps in labour market activity and pay leads to economic growth*, August 2017. See also Nicol, Scherie (2022), "Gender budgeting: The economic and fiscal rationale", OECD Journal on Budgeting, Vol. 22/3.

⁹ United Nations, *Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action, adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women*, October 1995: <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/index.html>

¹⁰ United Nations, *Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action, adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women*, paragraph 202, October 1995: <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/index.html>

9. It is of great importance to pursue a dual approach to gender equality, combining a systematic integration of a gender equality perspective into all policies and activities (gender mainstreaming) with specific measures.

RECALLING THAT:

10. In 2019, the Council called on the European Commission and the Member States to “ensure the effective and systematic implementation and continuity of gender mainstreaming in all policy areas 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.”¹¹
11. In 2021, the Council called on the European Commission to “step up efforts to systematically mainstream a gender equality perspective into future EU strategies and policies, including by developing gender budgeting” and “gender equality tracking methodology” and by “gradually strengthening the gender analysis of relevant EU legislative and policy measures in accordance with the Better Regulation Guidelines, as key tools for gender mainstreaming.”¹²
12. The European Commission’s Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025 states that “the inclusion of a gender perspective in all EU policies and processes is essential to reach the goal of gender equality.”¹³

¹¹ Doc. 14938/19. *Council Conclusions on Gender-Equal Economies in the EU: The Way Forward*, p. 11, December 2019: <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-14938-2019-INIT/en/pdf>

¹² Doc. 12829/21 *Council Conclusions on the European Court of Auditors Special Report 10/2021 on Gender Mainstreaming in the EU Budget*, para. 15, October 2021: <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-12829-2021-INIT/en/pdf>

¹³ Doc. 6678/20. European Commission, *A Union of Equality: Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025*, March 2020: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52020DC0152> (COM/2020/152, Document 52020DC0152)

13. The Council of Europe defines gender mainstreaming as: “the (re)organisation, improvement, development and evaluation of policy processes, so that a gender equality perspective is incorporated in all policies at all levels and at all stages, by the actors normally involved in policy-making”¹⁴.
14. Successful implementation of gender mainstreaming requires overall political commitment, *inter alia*, to *ex-ante* gender impact assessments of policies, strong institutional mechanisms, and capacity building. Statistical data disaggregated by sex is an indispensable tool for realising gender equality policy objectives.
15. Implementation of gender mainstreaming, *inter alia* by institutionalising gender budgeting, is essential for funding relevant policies to close gender gaps, such as the gender employment gap, the pay gap, the pension gap, and the care gap.¹⁵
16. Crisis response measures should be used to gradually close longstanding gender gaps, to promote women’s economic empowerment, and to ensure inclusive growth¹⁶ and competitiveness. In the context of crisis responses, applying a gender equality perspective in analyses, assessments and budgeting is particularly important for successfully tackling persistent gender gaps and thus accelerating progress towards gender equality.
17. Recital 28 of the Regulation on the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF) notes that women have been particularly hit by the COVID-19 pandemic.¹⁷

¹⁴ Council of Europe. Gender mainstreaming: conceptual framework, methodology and presentation of good practices. Strasbourg, 1998.

¹⁵ European Institute for Gender Equality, *Gender budgeting. Mainstreaming gender into the EU budget and macroeconomic policy framework*, 2018: <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/methods-tools/gender-budgeting> Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, *Gender budgeting in OECD countries*, 2017: <https://www.oecd.org/gender/Gender-Budgeting-in-OECD-countries.pdf>

¹⁶ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, *Towards gender-inclusive recovery*, May 2021: <https://www.oecd.org/coronavirus/policy-responses/towards-gender-inclusive-recovery-ab597807/>

¹⁷ OJ L 57, 18.2.2021, p. 17-75. Regulation (EU) 2021/241 establishing the Recovery and Resilience Facility. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32021R0241>

18. Article 18, paragraph 4, point o of the Regulation requires Member States to provide an explanation of “how the measures in the recovery and resilience plan are expected to contribute to gender equality and equal opportunities for all and the mainstreaming of those objectives, in line with principles 2 and 3 of the European Pillar of Social Rights, with the UN Sustainable Development Goal 5 and, where relevant, with the national gender equality strategy.”¹⁸
19. In November 2022, the Advisory Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men adopted an Opinion on “Gender mainstreaming in budgets at national, regional and local levels”¹⁹ containing recommendations addressed to the Member States, the European Commission, and the Council.

TAKING NOTE OF:

20. The report by the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) entitled “*Gender equality and gender mainstreaming in the COVID-19 recovery*” which presents, *inter alia*, an analysis of the provisions regarding gender equality contained in the RRF Regulation²⁰ and an analysis of gender equality in the national recovery and resilience plans (RRP).
21. The conclusion of this report, according to which a gender equality perspective was lacking in the original Proposal for the RRF Regulation.
22. EIGE’s finding that only a very small part of the actions and reforms included by Member States in their RRFs focuses on gender-responsive measures, in spite of the fact that mitigation of the adverse social and economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on women, among other affected groups, is a general objective of the RRF.

¹⁸ OJ L 57, 18.2.2021, Article 18(o) Regulation (EU) 2021/241, p. 39, February 2021: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32021R0241>

¹⁹ Advisory Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, *Opinion on gender mainstreaming in budgets at national, regional, and local level in the EU*. https://commission.europa.eu/publications/opinions-advisory-committee-equal-opportunities-women-and-men_en

²⁰ Regulation (EU) 2021/241 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 12 February 2021 establishing the Recovery and Resilience Facility, OJ L 57, 18.2.2021, Recital (28) p.21, Recital (39) p.23, Article 4.1 p.31, Article 16.2 (a) p.37 and Article 18.4.(o), p.39, February 2021.

23. EIGE's finding that the insufficient involvement of gender equality experts in Member States during the preparation and drafting of the national RRP indicates a lack of necessary institutional mechanisms and has resulted in a missed opportunity to foster synergies with the national gender equality policy priorities, to support gender mainstreaming in the plans and to respond to the gender equality challenges emerging from the COVID-19 pandemic.
24. EIGE's finding that: "Sex disaggregated data and gender mainstreaming tools are essential to provide the necessary data, information and means to integrate a gender perspective into the RRP." ²¹
25. The European Commission's quantitative analysis of the RRF as regards its impact on equality, which shows that in the national RRP adopted by November 2022 the share of measures with a focus on gender equality ranged from 8 percent to 11 percent for the three top ranking Member States. ²²

CONSIDERING THAT

26. This set of Conclusions builds on previous work and political commitments voiced by the Council, the Commission and the European Parliament and relevant stakeholders in this area, including the documents listed in the Annex.

²¹ EIGE, *Gender equality and gender mainstreaming in the COVID-19 recovery*, p.41

²² European Commission, *Recovery and Resilience Scoreboard Thematic analysis on Equality*, January 2023.

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION CALLS ON THE MEMBER STATES, in accordance with their competences and taking into account the role and autonomy of the social partners, to:

27. Step up efforts to promote gender equality and gender mainstreaming through institutional mechanisms at all levels, by:
- a) ensuring that effective government-wide gender mainstreaming practices are implemented in an informed manner and in a way that makes full use of the available expertise on gender equality;
 - b) continuing delivering on previous Council Conclusions on effective institutional mechanisms,²³ and establishing gender mainstreaming coordinators within all ministries and departments;
 - c) establishing an inter-ministerial coordinating group on gender mainstreaming in government policy, in order to strengthen implementation and facilitate exchanges of good practices and lessons learned;
 - d) monitoring, following up and evaluating gender mainstreaming work, so as to enhance implementation; and
 - e) adopting national policy objectives, national policy frameworks or national gender equality strategies.
28. Promote and develop the collection, analysis, publication, and use of data disaggregated by sex as a basis for gender mainstreaming in all policy areas, including in the budget process, by:

²³ Council conclusions 9 and 10 December 2013 on the effectiveness of institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women and gender equality (17605/13). Council Conclusions of 30 November and 1 December 2006 on Review of the implementation by the Member States and the EU institutions of the Beijing Platform for Action – Indicators in respect of Institutional Mechanisms (14376/06).
[Reference to be kept in the final version of the Conclusions: “Docs. 17605/13 and 14376/06).”]

- a) tasking the national statistical authorities to collect, analyse, and present data disaggregated by sex, and make this data available to the public;
 - b) tasking all other government authorities to include data relating to individuals or groups of individuals to be disaggregated by sex in all reporting to the central government, in all policy areas;
 - c) providing methodological support, guidance, and training to civil servants so as to enable them to work effectively with statistics disaggregated by sex and to improve their understanding of the relevance of such statistics; and
 - d) taking concrete measures to ensure that collecting statistics disaggregated by sex becomes a requirement in the public sector.
29. Ensure sufficient and targeted funding for measures to reduce inequalities between women and men, including measures to reduce the employment and pay and pension gaps, as well as measures to follow up the recent Council Recommendations supporting access to affordable and high-quality early childhood education and care and long-term care.²⁴
30. Systematically integrate agender equality perspective into all policymaking and legislation, including the budget process.
31. Collaborate with gender equality experts, including through meaningful consultations with civil society organisations and academia, so as to ensure that a gender equality perspective is included in all stages of planning, implementation, and evaluation of all major initiatives.
32. Support gender mainstreaming at local and regional level, including by providing sufficient funding for this purpose.

²⁴ Council Recommendation on early childhood education and care: the Barcelona targets for 2030 (OJ C 484, 20.12.2022). Council Recommendation on access to affordable high-quality long-term care (OJ C 476, 15.12.2022). [EUR-Lex - 32022H1215\(01\) - EN - EUR-Lex \(europa.eu\)](#)

CALLS ON THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION AND THE MEMBER STATES in accordance with their respective competences, and taking into account the role and autonomy of the social partners, to:

33. Implement gender mainstreaming in all policymaking, by
 - a) collecting, disseminating and analysing data disaggregated by sex;
 - b) formulating concrete policy objectives and specific targets to close existing gender gaps;
 - c) making use of available tools and methodologies to strengthen gender mainstreaming processes, including within their budget processes; and
 - d) adopting steering policy documents to ensure the systematic long-term implementation of gender mainstreaming, including in the budget process.
34. Ensure that gender equality aspects are fully addressed within the framework of the European Semester, in line with the Employment Guidelines, and that the Semester is used to its full potential for promoting gender equality in the Union, including through the Country Specific Recommendations.
35. Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of gender mainstreaming already undertaken, including in the context of the budget process, including by commissioning external and independent evaluations.
36. Evaluate and assess the distributional impact for women and men of policies and of the allocation of funding and other resources, so as to enable effective targeted measures in the future.
37. Ensure systematic capacity building, training, and use of methodological tools, so as to facilitate and enhance gender mainstreaming across all policy areas.

CALLS ON THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION to:

38. Ensure that a gender equality perspective is systematically mainstreamed in policy initiatives, in order to deliver on the commitment made in its Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025 as well as its commitment to creating a Union of Equality.
39. Promote a common Union definition of the concept of ‘gender budgeting’, which is defined by the Council of Europe as a “gender-based assessment of budgets incorporating a gender perspective at all levels of the budgetary process and restructuring revenues and expenditures in order to promote gender equality.”²⁵
40. Ensure that gender equality considerations are integrated into the MFF, in order to close persisting gender gaps, including by ensuring sufficient funding for measures to advance gender equality and women’s economic empowerment and by fully implementing the European Commission’s methodology for tracking gender equality expenditure in the EU budget.
41. Ensure the collection of statistics disaggregated by sex throughout the reporting and their consistent use in policy documents, *inter alia* in the drafting of the annual Joint Employment Report, so as to uncover and to gradually close remaining gender gaps.
42. Ensure the integration of a gender equality perspective in the drafting of potential future crisis response packages and other initiatives, particularly by:
 - a) mainstreaming a gender equality perspective in all future legislative acts relating to crisis response packages;
 - b) carrying out a systematic mainstreaming of gender equality perspectives in the crisis response context and in crisis management;

²⁵ Council of Europe (2005), Final report of the Group of Specialists on Gender Budgeting (EG-S-GB), EG-S-GB (2004) RAP FIN; Equality Division, Directorate-General of Human Rights, Council of Europe, Strasbourg, p. 10. Available: [Gender budgeting \(coe.int\)](https://www.coe.int/t/e/gender/gender_budgeting.aspx)

- c) including an analysis of how gender mainstreaming has been implemented in mid-term reports and review reports in the crisis response context; and
 - d) promoting available tools that support mainstreaming of gender equality considerations in the crisis response context at national level.
43. Ensure necessary structures, resources, and capacity for the effective steering, coordination, and monitoring of gender mainstreaming, including in the EU budget.
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References

1. EU interinstitutional

European Pillar of Social Rights

https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/social-summit-european-pillar-social-rights-booklet_en.pdf

2. EU legislation

Regulation (EU) 2021/241 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 12 February 2021 establishing the Recovery and Resilience Facility (OJ L 57, 18.2.2021, p. 17-75)

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32021R0241>

3. Council

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

- Council Conclusions on the effectiveness of Institutional Mechanisms for the Advancement of Women and Gender Equality (17605/13)

https://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/lsa/139978.pdf

- Council Conclusions on Equality between women and men in the field of decision-making (14327/15)

[pdf \(europa.eu\)](#)

- Council Conclusions on Gender-Equal Economies in the EU: The Way Forward: Taking Stock of 25 Years of Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action (14938/19)

<https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-14938-2019-INIT/en/pdf>

- Council Conclusions on the Socio-Economic Impact of COVID-19 on Gender Equality (8884/21)
- Council Conclusions on the European Court of Auditors Special Report 10/2021 on Gender Mainstreaming in the EU Budget (12829/21)
<https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-12829-2021-INIT/en/pdf>
- Council Decision (EU) 2020/1512 of 13 October 2020 on guidelines for the employment policies of the Member States (OJ L 344, 19.10.2020, p. 22-28.)
<http://data.europa.eu/eli/dec/2020/1512/oj>

4. Trio Presidency

Trio Presidency Declaration on Gender Equality signed by France, the Czech Republic and Sweden (January 2022)

https://www.vlada.cz/assets/ppov/rovne-prilezitosti-zen-a-muzu/dokumenty/trio-presidency-declaration-on-gender-equality-france-the-czech-republic-and-sweden-2022-2023_1.pdf

5. European Commission

2023 Report on equality between women and men in the European Union (SWD (2023)55final)

[Gender Equality Strategy \(europa.eu\)](#)

A Union of Equality: Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025. 6678/20. (Commission reference: COM(2020) 152 final.)

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52020DC0152>

The European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan (6649/21 + ADD 1 + ADD 2)

[pdf \(europa.eu\)](#)

Recovery and Resilience Scoreboard Thematic analysis on Equality, January 2023.

Opinion on gender mainstreaming in budgets at national, regional, and local level in the EU,
by the Advisory Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men

https://commission.europa.eu/publications/opinions-advisory-committee-equal-opportunities-women-and-men_en

6. European Parliament

European Parliament resolution of 23 June 2022 on the implementation of the Recovery and Resilience Facility (2021/2251(INI))

7. European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE)

Gender equality and gender mainstreaming in the COVID-19 recovery (7220/23 ADD1)

Gender budgeting. Mainstreaming gender into the EU budget and macroeconomic policy framework, 2018.

<https://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/methods-tools/gender-budgeting>

Gender Impact Assessment: Gender Mainstreaming Toolkit, 2016.

<https://eige.europa.eu/publications/gender-impact-assessment-gender-mainstreaming-toolkit>

8. Council of Europe

Final report of the Group of Specialists on Gender Budgeting (EG-S-GB), EG-S-GB (2004) RAP FIN; Equality Division, Directorate-General of Human Rights, Council of Europe, Strasbourg, p. 10.

[Gender budgeting \(coe.int\)](https://rm.coe.int/gender-budgeting-coe-int)

Gender Budgeting - Practical Implementation - Handbook CDEG(2008)15 (2009).
<https://rm.coe.int/1680599885>

Gender mainstreaming: conceptual framework, methodology and presentation of good practices. Strasbourg, 1998.

9. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)

Draft for discussion - OECD Best Practices for Gender Budgeting (2022)

[OECD Best Practices for Gender Budgeting](https://www.oecd.org/gender/Budgeting-in-OECD-countries.pdf)

Gender budgeting in OECD countries (2017).

<https://www.oecd.org/gender/Gender-Budgeting-in-OECD-countries.pdf>

Towards gender-inclusive recovery (2021)

<https://www.oecd.org/coronavirus/policy-responses/towards-gender-inclusive-recovery-ab597807/>

10. United Nations

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (UN agenda for gender equality and women's empowerment)

<https://www.refworld.org/docid/3dde04324.html>

[Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women \(un.org\)](https://www.un.org/en/treaties/index/treatybrowser/cond/tbr/index.asp?lang=en&tp=on&tid=4363)
