



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

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NOTE

from : The Presidency
to : COUNCIL (Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs)
Subject : **Conference of Experts on "Employability and Entrepreneurship - Gender Stereotypes" (3 and 4 October 2007)**
(Any other business item)

Delegations will find attached a note by the Portuguese Presidency on the outcome of the above-mentioned conference.

Conference of Experts on Gender Equality
“Employability and Entrepreneurship: Gender Stereotypes”
(3 and 4 October 2007)

This conference took place in Lisbon on October 3-4 within the context of the Portuguese Presidency of the European Union. Its participants were gender equality experts from EU member-states, representatives of the European Parliament, from the European Commission, Social Partners as well as NGO's and other representatives from the civil society.

The main objectives were the sharing of best practices among the different member states in order to foster the development of public policies and legislation that enhances the implementation of gender equality practices. The focus was on the need for the growth of women's participation in the labour market and entrepreneurship and the reinforcement of the Gender Equality dimension in the Lisbon Strategy in particular in the framework of the preparation of the guidelines for the new cycle 2008-2011. The implementation of the *European Pact for Gender Equality* (2006) and the *Roadmap for Equality between Men and Women 2006-2010*, from the European Commission (2006) were also taken into account.

Acknowledging the contribution of women in the labour market as a key factor for growth and competitiveness this conference aimed at how to facilitate women's access to more and better jobs as well as the promotion of women's entrepreneurship.

Gender Stereotypes were also analysed considering its transversal nature which influence social representations of male and female roles. These stereotypes have a determinant impact on gender based inequalities affecting all spheres of life, namely employability and entrepreneurship.

The debates also highlighted the roles, responsibilities and contributions of the different actors – governments, regional and local authorities, social partners, research and education as well as civil society – in searching solutions and implementing policies and measures to promote women's employability and entrepreneurship and combat gender stereotypes.

Conclusions:

The need to strengthen the gender dimension in the Lisbon Strategy as a way to meet the targets for female participation in the labour market (60% in 2010), encouraging access for women to decent, high-quality jobs (more and better jobs).

Encourage female entrepreneurship as a factor for innovation and competitiveness through vocational training and skills development, financial incentives, micro-credit, creation of organisational networks, meetings and sharing good practices, thus fostering a positive climate for female entrepreneurs.

To promote the knowledge of female entrepreneurship by developing specific indicators as a means of exchanging good practices and monitoring the several modalities of entrepreneurship, namely innovation and sustainability entrepreneurship, as well entrepreneurship based in needs.

To promote measures which ensure that women entrepreneurs are not a target of gender discrimination when applying for a bank loan.

To foster increased public aid to access credit and micro-credit, not only for women who are undertaking an economic activity for the first time, but also for those activities already created, increasing the information available about possible innovative business forms.

To promote the integration of entrepreneurship education into national study programmes, establishing clear targets to eliminate gender stereotypes that influence the professional and personal choices of men and women as a way to increase the number of female entrepreneurs.

To eliminate segregation in the labour market, thus facilitating, on the one hand, the entry of women into non-traditional sectors and promoting, on the other, the presence of men in traditionally female occupations. To place greater emphasis on the lifelong education, skills and vocational training of men in the areas of care and social action and of women in the areas of knowledge, leadership, innovation and new technologies whilst also taking into account the skills acquired in informal contexts.

To overcome the disadvantage faced by men as regards the conditions for participating in family life, defining measures to foster male participation in private life, namely by creating new options at national level for paid paternity leave or increasing the possibility of non-transferable, paid parental leave.

To promote measures which ensure maternity and paternity rights for women and men who carry out self-employment activities.

To develop specific indicators for paid and unpaid work carried out by men and women in order to generate data about the difference in the way time is spent and promote measures that support spouses of those that undertake independent work.

To develop effective measures to encourage the reintegration of women and men into employment, without a loss of skills or pay following a period of maternity or paternity leave or leave to care for dependant family members. National plans to reform the system for calculating pensions should also prevent women from losing the right to a pension or seeing the value of their pension considerably reduced because of part-time work and interruptions in their professional career due to family obligations, considering the necessity to overcome pay gap, time gap and care gap.

To promote corporate social responsibility with regard to real equality between women and men in accessing jobs, training and career progress and in reconciling professional, personal and family life.

To motivate public and private sector companies to adopt equality plans and encouraging social partners and all participants in this social dialogue to incorporate the many dimensions of gender equality into the various levels of intervention.

To promote the adoption of political measures that ensure the elimination of gender pay gap.

To ensure that national “flexicurity” strategies adopt a gender perspective.