



COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION

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NOTE

from : Permanent Representatives Committee (Part I)
to : Council EPSCO

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Subject : **Review of the implementation by the Member States and the EU institutions
of the Beijing Platform for Action
- Indicators in respect of the Girl Child
= Draft Council Conclusions**

1. In the context of the follow-up of the Beijing Platform for Action, adopted during the United Nations World Conference on Women in 1995, the Slovenian Presidency has chosen to work on the subject of "the Girl Child" and has produced a report including a set of indicators. Delegations will find attached in the Annex draft Council Conclusions concerning this topic, on which the Committee of Permanent Representatives confirmed its agreement at its meeting on 20 May 2008.
2. The Council is invited to adopt the draft Conclusions set out in the Annex, and to take note of the accompanying report set out in Addendum 1.¹

¹ Addendum 1 will be forwarded separately in due course.

DRAFT COUNCIL CONCLUSIONS

**on the review of the implementation by the Member States and the EU institutions of the
Beijing Platform for Action**

THE GIRL CHILD

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

1. RECOGNISING that gender equality is a fundamental principle of the European Union enshrined in the EC Treaty and one of the objectives and tasks of the Community and that mainstreaming equality between women and men in all its activities represents a specific mission for the Community;
2. CONSIDERING that:
 - (a) following the UN's Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995, the Madrid European Council (15-16 December 1995) requested an annual review of the implementation in the Member States of the Beijing Platform for Action;
 - (b) on 2 December 1998, the Council agreed that the annual assessment of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action would include a proposal on a set of quantitative and qualitative indicators and benchmarks;
 - (c) since 1999, sets of quantitative and qualitative indicators have been developed by subsequent Presidencies in some of the 12 critical areas of concern in the Beijing Platform for Action, namely: Women in power and decision-making (1999);

Women in the economy (reconciliation of work and family life) (2000); Women in the economy (on equal pay) (2001); Violence against women (2002); Women and men in economic decision-making (2003); Sexual harassment at the workplace (2004); Women and health (2006); Institutional mechanisms (2006); the Education and training of women (2007); and Women and poverty (2007). Each year the Council has adopted conclusions on these indicators;

- (d) in line with the request from the European Council of 20-21 March 2003, the European Commission prepares, in collaboration with the EU Member States, an annual report to the Spring European Council on developments towards gender equality and orientations for the gender mainstreaming of policy areas;
- (e) in the context of the 10-year review of the Beijing Platform for Action, the EU ministers responsible for gender equality, meeting in Luxembourg on 4 February 2005, adopted a common declaration which, inter alia, reaffirms their strong support for and commitment to the full and effective implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action;
- (f) on 2-3 June 2005, the Council invited Member States and the European Commission to strengthen institutional mechanisms for promoting gender equality and to create a framework to assess the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, in order to create a more consistent and systematic monitoring of progress, and invited the Commission to include the assessment of relevant indicators, developed for the follow-up of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, in its annual report to the Spring European Council;
- (g) the Beijing Platform for Action reaffirms the fundamental principle set forth in the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action adopted by the World Conference on Human Rights on 25 June 1993, whereby “the human rights of women and of the girl child are an inalienable, integral and indivisible part of universal human rights”;

- (h) the Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children adopted at the 1990 World Summit for Children places particular emphasis on the girl child's survival, protection and development. It affirms the equal rights of girls with respect to boys in all areas of life as a prerequisite for successful and sustainable development.

The Slovenian Presidency of the EU has prepared a report presenting the following three indicators concerning the girl child:

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

The indicator assesses the sex and relationship education provided in school programmes, at the primary and secondary levels, and identifies and analyses the key elements of such education. Adequate sex and relationship education plays an important role in the development of the girl child's sexual and reproductive health, and gender roles and relations, and is thus a necessary prerequisite for gender equality.

- (2) *Body self-image: dissatisfaction of girls and boys with their bodies*

The indicator examines the different self-perception of girls and boys regarding their body image, which has implications for public health. Girls' and young women's dissatisfaction with their bodies does not always reflect a physical condition such as a weight problem, but may be the result of culturally imposed norms and images, which might lead to destructive behaviours such as eating disorders and dysfunctional self-perception of the body image and of sexual attractiveness; these norms and images are significantly influenced by the media. It is therefore important to tackle the reasons underlying the dissatisfaction of girls and boys with their bodies.

- (3) *Educational accomplishments: comparison of 15-year-old students' performance in mathematics and science and the proportion of girl students in tertiary education in the field of science, mathematics and computing and in the field of teacher training and education science*

The indicator addresses the discrepancy between the aptitude of girls in mathematics and science literacy (which does not significantly differ from that of boys), as compared with their subsequent choice of further educational field at the tertiary level (ISCED 5-6), where boys and girls continue to follow traditional educational paths. The indicator helps to assess the potential impact of policies and measures to encourage both girls and boys to explore non-traditional educational paths and thus to use their talents and potential to the full, thereby also contributing to the achievement of the goals of the Lisbon strategy for growth and jobs.

3. RECALLING:

- (a) the commitment of the Member States to eliminate all barriers, so as to enable all girls to develop their full potential and skills to the same extent as boys, through equal access to education and training, nutrition, and physical and mental health care, and to active, effective and equal participation in social, economic, political and cultural life, as well as to related information, as laid down in the Beijing Platform for Action;
- (b) that in the Beijing Platform for Action, the Member States have agreed that, in addressing issues concerning children and youth, an active and visible policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes should be promoted, so that before decisions are taken, an analysis is made of the effects on girls and boys respectively;
- (c) that the European Council of 23-24 March 2006 requested the Member States “to take necessary measures to rapidly and significantly reduce child poverty, giving all children equal opportunities, regardless of their social background”;

- (d) that on 5-6 May 2003, the Education, Youth and Culture Council agreed on the following benchmark: “The total number of graduates in mathematics, science and technology in the European Union should increase by at least 15% by 2010, while at the same time the level of gender imbalance should decrease”.
4. TAKES NOTE of the report on the girl child presented by the Slovenian EU Presidency and of the three indicators for the future follow-up of the Beijing Platform for Action regarding the critical area of “the Girl child”.
 5. WELCOMES the fact that the Member States have made progress in the realisation of the strategic objective of the Beijing Platform for Action concerning the elimination of all forms of discrimination against the girl child and the promotion of policies and programmes for the advancement of the girl child in society.
 6. WELCOMES the report on Child Poverty and Child Well-Being in the EU, prepared by the Commission and the Member States in the EU Task-Force on Child Poverty and Child Well-Being, and endorsed by the Social Protection Committee on 17 January 2008, including the recommendations aiming to improve the monitoring and assessment of child poverty and well-being at national and Community levels.
 7. STRESSES that, despite the high political priority given to children’s rights and needs by the Member States and the Commission, the interests of girls as a distinct but diverse social group continue to be under-represented in policies and programmes.
 8. STRESSES that access to sexual and reproductive health care and education; equal access to and opportunities in education, training and active citizenship, including the mastery and use of information and communication technologies (ICT); and the elimination of all forms of violence against the girl child, including trafficking and harmful traditional practices, are crucial for the empowerment of girls and women, and for the achievement of equality between women and men in society.

9. URGES the Member States and the European Commission to improve and strengthen, as a part of gender mainstreaming, the inclusion of a girl child perspective in the planning, implementation and monitoring of all legislation, policies, programmes and projects, including in the fields of human rights and the fight against violence, health, social inclusion and social protection, education, sport and youth policy, as well as in policies in the area of external relations and justice and home affairs.
10. URGES the Member States and the European Commission to mainstream a gender perspective into all child and youth policies and measures, including those related to the fight against poverty and violence, and to pay special attention to children from disadvantaged groups, including children with disabilities, children from immigrant and ethnic minority backgrounds, as well as children from specialised institutions or with no parents, taking into account the special needs of boys and girls, in planning and implementing child, youth and other policies and programmes.
11. RECOGNISES that in most Member States, sex and relationship education is integrated into school curricula, and ENCOURAGES all Member States to further develop those curricula and to integrate sex and relationship education, including the subjects of responsible family planning and parenthood, interpersonal relations, gender roles and gender equality, self-image, gender-based violence, safe sex and sexually transmitted diseases, into formal and informal education programmes, and to assess the impact of such education.
12. ENCOURAGES the Member States and the European Commission to promote the elimination of gender stereotypes in the context of education and training from an early age and at all levels in national and Community policies and programmes, and encourages the Member States to develop education and training programmes and curricula, as well as awareness-raising activities and the exchange of good practices, to promote the access, participation and work opportunities of girls and boys and women and men in non-traditional educational fields and occupations, in particular in order to reduce gender segregation and gender gaps in tertiary education and in the labour market.

13. ENCOURAGES the Member States to combat gender stereotypes and stereotypical gender roles from an early age, and to develop awareness-raising campaigns and/or other activities aimed at parents with a view to promoting gender equality, the equal sharing of domestic and family duties, and the free choice of education, training and employment for both girls/women and boys/men.
14. WELCOMES the fact that most of the Member States are using regulatory mechanisms, awareness-raising and information campaigns and programmes to promote the safe use of the Internet and to fight against harmful content, and ENCOURAGES the Member States to strengthen and further develop policies and programmes, and statistics disaggregated by sex and age, on media literacy and the use of ICT, giving priority to formal education programmes and to ensuring safe use and the protection of girls and boys from harmful content and sexual harassment when using ICT.
15. ENCOURAGES the Member States to continue active cooperation with, and promote the involvement of, the civil society actors, in particular, women's and youth NGOs and associations at the national, regional and local levels, in the endeavour to counteract stereotypes and negative attitudes and practices against girls and boys, to empower girls and women, and to foster equality between women and men in society.
16. INVITES the Member States and the Commission to ensure the disaggregation by sex and age of all data related to children in all relevant sectors, including health, violence, social inclusion, poverty and education, in order to integrate a gender perspective in the planning, implementation and monitoring of legislation, policies, programmes and projects.

17. INVITES the Member States, and the Commission to further improve the collection, compilation, analysis and dissemination of timely, reliable, and comparable data disaggregated by sex and age, including data on children, especially through the involvement of the European and National Statistical Institutes, and within the framework of the Community Statistical Programme, as well as by the European Institute for Gender Equality, so that statistics and information on the three indicators proposed by the Slovenian Presidency, as well as statistical information on other indicators relating to the Beijing Platform for Action, can be improved and regularly produced and reviewed.

18. ENCOURAGES the monitoring and assessment of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action on “Women in armed conflicts”, as well as the other remaining critical areas of concern.

19. URGES the Member States and the Commission to take into account the issues discussed in the context of the follow-up of the Beijing Platform for Action, for which indicators have already been adopted, in other relevant Community processes, and especially in the Commission’s annual report to the Spring Council; TAKES NOTE of the review report on “Women in political decision-making” presented by the Slovenian EU Presidency for the future follow-up of the Beijing Platform for Action regarding this critical area of concern; and INVITES the Member States and the Commission to regularly review progress on the Platform areas of concern, in particular, with a view to preparing a general review of all the critical areas of concern.
