



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

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NOTE

from: Presidency
to: Council

Subject: Gender equality in rural areas
- Presidency paper and questionnaire

Delegations will find attached (in Annex I) the paper and questionnaire drawn up by the Presidency with a view to structuring the exchange of views at the Council (Agriculture and Fisheries) session on 17 May 2010.

The conclusions of the seminar "Women in the Sustainable Development of the Rural World" held in Cáceres on 27-29 April 2010 are set out in Annex II¹.

¹ Available only in English.

On 27-29 April 2010, the Spanish Ministry of the Environment and Rural and Marine Affairs, in the framework of the Spanish Presidency, held a Forum on Women in the Sustainable Development of the Rural World. The conclusions of the forum are set out in Annex II.

One of the most important conclusions reached was the recognition that gender equality is essential to keeping the rural environment alive.

Women constitute over 50% of the rural population in the European Union. Although these women play a fundamental role in the development of the environment in which they live and which they build, often their contribution is invisible and goes unnoticed.

Furthermore, women's continued presence in the rural environment is the best way to keep agricultural and cattle production active and to fight the threat of depopulation, which undermines the cultural and natural heritage in many Member States.

In order to elicit contributions from all Member States, the following questionnaire has been prepared to guide discussion:

- 1. Do you believe that an approach to gender can be incorporated in the framework of the CAP? Is this issue addressed in your country's national agriculture and rural development policy? If so, how?**
- 2. How could this be implemented under Pillar 1 of the CAP? What specific measures would you suggest (e.g. voluntary selection criteria giving priority to women in the national reserve, etc.)?**
- 3. How could this be implemented under Pillar 2 of the CAP? What specific measures would you suggest (e.g. increasing the intensity of various aid schemes, such as the setting up of young farmers if they are women)?**
- 4. Regardless of the particular situation of your country, do you consider it necessary that the issue of gender be addressed in the next reform of the CAP?**

**Conclusions of the Technical Seminar – European Forum
"Women in the Sustainable Development of the Rural World"
Cáceres, 27–29 April 2010**

RECALLING THAT:

- thirty years have passed since the adoption of the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women* (1979), the first human rights instrument to oblige States to take measures to ensure the participation of women in rural development,
- the *Rio Declaration* (1992) recognises the vital role of women in environmental management and development and considers that their full participation is essential to achieve sustainable development,
- the 15th anniversary of the *Beijing Platform for Action* (1995), which introduced the principles of mainstreaming and empowerment of women, has been celebrated,
- the *European Pact for Gender Equality* (2006) calls on Member States to introduce measures to guarantee gender equality, to combat stereotypes and sexist attitudes and to promote the participation of women in political and economic life,
- the objectives of the *Treaty of Lisbon* (2009) include the elimination of inequality between men and women and the promotion of equality in all public policies,

AND WHEREAS:

- equality between men and women is a fundamental principle of European legislation and an essential requirement for achieving the European Strategy 2020 objectives of sustainable growth, employment, competitiveness and social cohesion,

- the lack of statistical data and information about the situation of rural women is widespread in all the countries of the EU. The gender bias and opacity of agricultural census data and other instruments mask the true contribution and participation of women in the social and economic development of rural areas,
- there are precedents of Community financial instruments which mainstreamed the gender perspective and contemplated the possibility of funding specific actions to promote equality and to fight discrimination against women,
- the European Parliament has indicated that Cohesion Policy and Rural Development measures must be complementary and coordinated,
- the promotion of multifunctionality in rural areas and the diversification of the rural economy, creating new opportunities for employment and encouraging the entrepreneurial spirit in order to keep people on the land and improve their quality of life, form part of the European strategy for rural development,
- improving local governance and mobilising the potential for endogenous development in rural areas is a horizontal objective to be included in all rural development policies. To this end, the principle of gender equality, particularly in policy-making, monitoring and evaluation, is an essential requirement,
- the trend in the female unemployment rate in Europe over the last decade has been positive, though it still shows considerable differences with regard to the male unemployment rate. Wage differences between men and women in the EU are around 15%, rising to 33% in some countries,
- the future of the rural world requires, alongside the creation of employment opportunities, the development of care services for young children to facilitate the participation of women in the labour market and contribute to the achievement of the Lisbon objectives,

- women are under-represented in the decision-making bodies of companies and political and social organisations at all levels,
- the work of women in the agricultural sector is hidden and few women hold title to farms, the majority being collaborating spouses,
- the promotion of self-employment among women in rural areas is an important element of European rural development policy,
- the European digital inclusion strategy establishes the objectives of reducing by half the number of persons who do not use the internet and increasing the availability of broadband infrastructure until at least 90% of the population and companies are covered,
- The use of information and communications technology encourages the creation or exploitation of new sources of employment in the rural world, training and the management of everyday activities without the need for travel;

WE RECOMMEND:

- a legal framework that makes possible the application of measures to promote equality and the introduction of a gender perspective into the CAP, as established in the dual strategy adopted by European legislation, in those cases where this is necessary in order to ensure equality;
- opening a debate on the harmonisation of methodology for the incorporation of the gender perspective within the framework of Community policies;
- the promotion, especially within the EU, of viable formulas to guarantee women's joint title to smallholdings in order to favour their economic independence and visibility;

- that data be broken down by gender in the official statistics and indicators of Rural Development Policies;
 - the promotion of gender equality and the participation of women in the decision-making bodies of key organisations in the elaboration, management and monitoring of rural development policies;
 - better provision of care services for young children and dependent persons, in order to increase the presence of rural women in the labour market, improve the quality of life of the rural population and address the problem of ageing.
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