



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

Brussels, 25 November 2011

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SOC 1029

NOTE

from : Permanent Representatives Committee (Part I)
to : Council (EPSCO)
prev. doc. 16835/11 SOC 988

Subject : Review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action
- Women and the Economy: Reconciliation of work and family life as a
precondition for equal participation in the labour market
= 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 European Institute for Gender Equality has produced a report on the subject of "Women and the Economy: Reconciliation of Work and Family Life as a Condition of Equal Participation in the Labour Market," as previously addressed under the French Presidency in 2000, when the Council adopted a set of indicators, and again in 2008, when the said indicators were revised.¹

¹ See 13481/00 and 17474/08.

2. In this context, the Presidency has also prepared a set of draft Council Conclusions on "Women and the Economy: Reconciliation of work and family life as a precondition for equal participation in the labour market." At its meeting on 23 November 2011, the Permanent Representatives Committee reached agreement on the text as attached.

 3. The Council is invited to adopt the attached Conclusions.
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Review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action

- Women and the Economy: Reconciliation of work and family life as a precondition for equal participation in the labour market

= Draft Council Conclusions

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

RECALLING THAT:

1. gender equality is a fundamental principle of the European Union guaranteed in the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) and is one of the objectives and tasks of the EU. Article 8 TFEU states: "In all its activities, the Union shall aim to eliminate inequalities, and to promote equality, between men and women." Equality between men and women is also enshrined in Article 23 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union² and mainstreaming the principle of equality between women and men in all activities (gender mainstreaming) is a horizontal policy of the EU;
2. in the European Pact for Gender Equality 2011-2020, adopted on 7 March 2011, the Council reaffirmed its commitment to promoting a better work-life balance for women and men throughout the life-course, so as to enhance gender equality, increase women's participation in the labour market and contribute to meeting the demographic challenges;
3. in its Conclusions of 17 June 2011,³ the Council stressed that better support for reconciliation measures will enable women and men to exercise greater choice in balancing work and family life. The Council also invited the Commission to consult the Member States on the possibility of designating 2014 as the European Year for Families;

² OJ C 364, 18.12.2000.

³ 10324/11.

4. on 8/9 March 2007, the European Council agreed that the establishment of an "Alliance for Families" would serve as a platform for the exchange of views and knowledge on family-friendly policies as well as of good practices between Member States;
5. at its meeting in Barcelona on 15/16 March 2002, the European Council agreed that the Member States should remove disincentives to female labour force participation and strive, taking into account the demand for childcare facilities and in line with national patterns of provision, to provide childcare by 2010 to at least 90% of children between 3 years old and the mandatory school age and at least 33% of children under 3 years of age. This target has not yet been achieved in most Member States;
6. the Member States have established a set of headline targets in the context of the Europe 2020 Strategy, including "aiming to raise to 75% the employment rate for women and men aged 20-64"⁴ which implies giving priority to addressing barriers to women's participation in the labour market when implementing the Strategy;
7. the current legislative *acquis* of the EU implementing the principle of equal treatment of women and men in the field of employment aims to facilitate the active participation of both women and men in the labour market, and that numerous political commitments have been made at the EU level with a view to further advancing this aim;
8. following the UN's Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995, the Madrid European Council (15/16 December 1995) agreed that the European Union would annually monitor the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action;
9. 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;

⁴ Doc. EUCO 13/1/10 REV 1.

10. on 2/3 June 2005, the Council called on the Member States and the Commission to strengthen institutional mechanisms for promoting gender equality and to establish the criteria to assess the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in order to enable a more consistent and systematic monitoring of its progress and invited the Commission to include the assessment of relevant indicators verifying the state of implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in its Annual Report on equality between women and men prepared for the Spring European Council;
11. on 5 December 2007, the Council invited the Member States and the Commission to regularly review progress on those areas for which indicators had already been adopted;⁵
12. on 28 November 2000, the Council adopted a set of Conclusions on the review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform, which focused on "the relationship between family life and working life,"⁶ including a set of nine quantitative and qualitative indicators. On 17 December 2008, the Council reviewed this topic, adopting a set of Conclusions on "Women and the Economy: Reconciliation of work and family life"⁷ in which the agreed indicators were revised and reduced to seven;
13. on 30 November 2009, the Council adopted a set of Conclusions on "Beijing +15: A Review of Progress";⁸
14. the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), in close cooperation with the Polish Presidency, has prepared a report on "Women and the economy: Reconciliation of Work and Family Life as a Condition of Equal Participation in the Labour Market," reviewing progress in this area;⁹

⁵ 13947/07.

⁶ 13481/00. See also Presidency Report (12577/00).

⁷ 17474/08. See also Presidency Report (16595/08 ADD 1).

⁸ 15992/09. See also Presidency Report (15487/09 ADD 1).

⁹ 16835/11 ADD 1. "F: Women and the economy" is one of the critical areas of concern identified in the Beijing Platform for Action.

15. the Member States are committed to promoting the reconciliation of work and family life for women and men in the context of the Beijing Platform for Action;¹⁰
16. equal economic independence is one of the priority areas set out in the European Commission's Strategy for equality between women and men (2010-2015)¹¹ which makes the case that "Member States which have put reconciliation policies in place are seeing high numbers of both women and men in work and relatively sustainable birth rates";¹²
17. the Women's Charter, adopted by the Commission on 5 March 2010, expresses a commitment to promote genuine opportunities for both women and men to enjoy a work-life balance;
18. the Trio of Presidencies in office from 1 January 2010 (Spain, Belgium and Hungary) reaffirmed the need to intensify efforts to advance the equal sharing of care responsibilities between women and men¹³ and acknowledged the importance of family-friendly policies;

TAKES NOTE:

19. of the report on "Women and the economy: Reconciliation of Work and Family Life as a Condition of Equal Participation in the Labour Market" prepared by the EIGE in the context of the follow-up of the Beijing Platform for Action, which highlights the fact that only few improvements have been made on the availability of data since 2008 and stresses that this situation could hinder the monitoring of this area of concern in the future;

¹⁰ Cf. Strategic objective F.6. of the Beijing Platform for Action: "Promote harmonization of work and family responsibilities for women and men".

¹¹ Doc. 13767/10 + ADD 1 + ADD 2.

¹² 13767/10, p. 4.

¹³ Trio Presidency Declaration on Equality between Women and Men adopted in Valencia on 26 March 2010 and Declaration by the Trio Presidency (Spain Belgium and Hungary) and Poland on the impacts of reconciliation of work and family life on demographic dynamics, signed on 1 April 2011 in Gödöllő.

20. of the valuable studies produced by the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound) which highlight the importance of implementing reconciliation policies for both women and men;

WELCOMES:

21. the progress made by the Member States in implementing measures aiming to facilitate the reconciliation of work, family and private life;

STRESSES THAT:

22. the equal participation of women and men in work and family life is a precondition for the practical realisation of equality between men and women, for mobilising the full labour force potential of the EU, for addressing expected shortages of skilled workers and for meeting two of the headline targets set within the framework of the Europe 2020 Strategy, namely, aiming to raise to 75% the employment rate for women and men aged 20-64, and aiming to lift at least 20 million people out of the risk of poverty and social exclusion, as well as for tackling the demographic challenges;
23. according to the report of the European Commission on "Progress on equality between women and men in 2010", progress is slow, real equality has not yet been achieved, and "a major reason for women's low employment rates is the challenge of reconciling work, family and private life."¹⁴ Efforts to enhance reconciliation should therefore be stepped up with a view to supporting both women and men throughout the life course, bearing in mind that the availability of quality care services is important for the achievement of equal opportunities for women and men;

¹⁴ 6571/11, p. 5.

24. according to the Joint Employment Report accompanying the Commission's "Annual Growth Survey"¹⁵, childcare facilities during working hours or after school hours are inadequate in some Member States and there is also a lack of services for children and other dependent persons. In its Communication on "Guidance for national policies in 2011-2012",¹⁶ the European Commission concluded that, on the basis of the national commitments made by the Member States in their 2011 national reform programmes, "additional efforts are required for reaching the targets in the areas of employment ... and poverty" as the combination of national commitments would not allow the EU to meet its headline targets by 2020. The Council has also adopted country-specific recommendations based on Articles 121 and 148 TFEU and addressed to some Member States, including with a view to improving childcare availability;¹⁷
25. the persistence of stereotypes based on traditional gender roles is an obstacle to the equal sharing of family and domestic responsibilities between women and men and hinders the realisation of equality in the workplace and in the labour market. Progress has been achieved, yet women continue to shoulder a disproportionate share of the burden when it comes to raising children and taking care of other dependants;

WELCOMES:

26. the exchange of views between the ministers responsible for gender equality, family and social affairs on the mechanisms of reconciliation of work and family life at the Ministers' Round Table on 18 September 2011 in Warsaw, as well as during the informal meeting of ministers for family and gender equality on 21 October 2011 in Cracow. The participants at these meetings acknowledged that it was essential to step up efforts to ensure that both women and men are able to participate in the labour market and that they can reconcile work and family life in accordance with their wishes;

¹⁵ 18066/10 ADD 3.

¹⁶ 11491/11.

¹⁷ Economic and Financial Affairs Council of 12 July 2011.

TAKES NOTE:

27. of the Declaration on gender equality presented at the informal meeting of ministers for family and gender equality in Cracow by the Trio of Presidencies in office from 1 July 2011 (Poland, Denmark and Cyprus) on 21 October 2011, which states that ensuring equal opportunities in practice is an urgent priority in a broad range of policy areas. The European Union cannot afford to waste its human capital. Too many women and men are still denied the chance to realise their full potential and face barriers and difficulties in their work life and in the educational system;

SUPPORTS:

28. the regular review of the progress achieved on those critical areas of concern identified in the Beijing Platform for Action for which indicators have already been adopted, and CALLS on the Commission to take the outcome of these reviews into account in its annual report on Equality between Women and Men;

CALLS ON THE MEMBER STATES AND THE COMMISSION, IN ACCORDANCE WITH THEIR RESPECTIVE COMPETENCES, TO:

29. develop indicators, using the capacity of the EIGE, on "Women and the Environment" and "Women and the Media," which are among the critical areas of concern identified in the Beijing Platform for Action that have yet to be thus addressed and to review the sets of indicators already developed, in accordance with the mid-term plan developed by the Commission following a discussion in the High Level Group on Gender Mainstreaming;

30. step up or continue efforts to effectively support the reconciliation of work, family and private life throughout the life course for both women and men, for example through formal care provision and appropriate support for informal carers, through parental leave and other family-related leave arrangements, and through the promotion of quality jobs involving more flexible arrangements that are freely chosen and have no negative impact on careers. Attention should be paid to issues such as making high-quality vocational training available to women and men re-entering the labour market after parental leaves, as well as to the need to make efforts to ensure that women and men on low incomes are able to benefit from the reconciliation measures that are available;
31. pay attention to the potential adverse effects that some forms of employment could have on gender equality. The possibility of working part-time can facilitate transitions into the labour market for women and men currently excluded from it and can enable others to stay on the labour market; however, the fact that women are more likely than men to work part-time or opt for flexible work arrangements may have a negative impact on women's careers, income, pension rights and economic independence at different stages of life, even increasing their risk of poverty. On the other hand, access to better part-time jobs that offer, for example, training, promotion prospects, flexible working hours and permanent contracts, may reduce the negative impact of part-time work on the careers of both women and men. From a gender equality perspective, it is also important to support freely chosen flexible working arrangements, as well as leave arrangements, for both women and men;
32. take effective measures, with the participation of the social partners, to promote the principle of equal pay for equal work or work of equal value, thereby reducing the gender pay gap and any resulting gender pension gap, and to contribute at all levels to enhancing the reconciliation of work, family and private life for both women and men;

33. conduct further studies and analyses of the efficacy of existing reconciliation measures including in terms of answering the needs and wishes of both women and men, with the participation of the EIGE and Eurofound where appropriate;
34. analyse the possible differential impact on women and men of the global economic and financial crisis and to ensure that it is taken into account in the development and adoption of policy measures to tackle the crisis, with a view to addressing the specific needs of women and men, to ensuring equal opportunities for both sexes, and to achieving gender equality;
35. continue to monitor progress on a regular basis within the framework of the follow-up of the Beijing Platform for Action by using the agreed indicators¹⁸ as set out in the Annex;
36. incorporate gender mainstreaming into the Europe 2020 Strategy and into the National Reform Programmes and to encourage the appropriate use of the agreed indicators developed for the follow-up of the Beijing Platform for Action and in particular the indicators on the reconciliation of work and family life, in all relevant policy areas and processes;
37. make effective use of existing comparable EU data and, in cooperation with national and European statistical offices, drawing on existing structures and instruments, encouraging efficiency and making full use of the work of the EIGE and Eurofound where appropriate, to further improve the collection, analysis and dissemination of comparable EU data, including in the following areas:
 - (a) parental leave. Indicators 1 and 2, in particular, should be monitored, especially by making recurrent and periodic the already existing Labour Force Survey ad-hoc module on reconciliation;

¹⁸ The indicators have been renumbered, but are otherwise identical to those in doc. 17474/08.

- (b) childcare. Indicator 3 should be monitored, paying particular attention to formal care provision outside pre-school and school hours;
- (c) dependent people and care received. Indicator 5, in particular, should be monitored, taking into account the particular lack of comparable EU data in this area;
- (d) time spent on paid work, family responsibilities, domestic work and travel time. Indicators 6 and 7, in particular, should be monitored, including by further developing time-use surveys so as to gather comparable statistical EU data on the organisation and activities of everyday life, in particular the division of paid and unpaid work (family care and domestic work) between women and men, complemented by periodic reviews of the progress made by the Member States in developing and implementing Indicator 4.

CALLS ON THE MEMBER STATES TO:

38. take measures to promote better work-life balance for women and men as recommended in the European Pact for Gender Equality (2011-2020),¹⁹ using the potential of the Structural Funds and specific EU programmes such as PROGRESS, and in particular to:
- (a) step up measures aiming to achieve the 2002 Barcelona childcare targets, taking into account the demand for childcare services and in line with national patterns of childcare provision, while guaranteeing the availability, affordability and high quality of childcare. The provision of formal childcare can contribute to several policy aims: allowing parents to work, tapping the employment potential of all members of the workforce, promoting gender equality throughout the life course, investing in early education and care so as to lay the foundation of children's future learning, and combating child and family poverty;

¹⁹ Doc. 7370/11.

- (b) increase efforts to implement measures to encourage men to share family and domestic responsibilities equally with women;
 - (c) to take measures to speed up progress in providing quality formal care for dependants, and measures to improve the recognition of the work undertaken by professional caregivers;
 - (d) encourage employers to adopt family-friendly measures related, for example, to flexible working arrangements and the possibility of choosing to work part time, for both women and men, with a view to promoting the reconciliation of work, family and private life without negative effects on career prospects; and promote specific measures to support the take-up of parental leave by fathers;
 - (e) take gender equality aspects into account when designing and implementing parental leave provisions, as well as the system of part-time work; and to support their use by both women and men, in order to avoid any negative impact on the employment and career prospects of women and men and on their economic independence; and
 - (f) increase efforts to combat gender stereotypes relating to the division of responsibilities between women and men in the context of work and family life, including by increasing awareness of the benefits that a full career and economic independence offers for both women and men;
39. ensure the implementation of the Guidelines for the Employment Policies of the Member States, which are a part of the Europe 2020 Integrated Guidelines and are monitored within the joint assessment framework, and which affirm that a visible gender equality perspective, integrated into all relevant policy areas, is crucial for the implementation of all aspects of the guidelines in the Member States;

40. reflect the Council's country-specific recommendations in national decisions and strengthen the policy measures aiming to promote gender equality and the reconciliation of work, family and private life in the 2012 National Reform Programmes;
41. ensure the timely transposition and implementation of Directives 2010/18/EU²⁰ and 2010/41/EU;²¹

INVITES THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION TO:

42. further support efforts to achieve the Barcelona childcare targets, the development of care facilities for dependants, and other policies to reconcile work, family and private life, including, where appropriate, through the use of the Structural Funds, and to report regularly on the progress made, as also indicated in the Commission's Strategy for equality between women and men 2010-2015;
43. continue to promote the exchange of best practices between the Member States so as to foster innovative ways to facilitate the reconciliation of work, family and private life, including in the context of the Structural Funds, through the existing programme of exchange of good practices on gender equality and by using existing fora such as the High Level Group on Gender Mainstreaming, the High Level Group on Demography and the European Alliance for Families;
44. guarantee the effective application of existing EU legislation related to every aspect of reconciliation policy, as well as the effective assessment of existing measures, especially with regard to their impact on labour market participation and gender equality;

²⁰ Council Directive 2010/18/EU of 8 March 2010 implementing the revised Framework Agreement on parental leave concluded by BUSINESSEUROPE, UEAPME, CEEP and ETUC and repealing Directive 96/34/EC (OJ L 68, 18.3.2010), p. 13.

²¹ Directive 2010/41/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 7 July 2010 on the application of the principle of equal treatment between men and women engaged in an activity in a self-employed capacity and repealing Council Directive 86/613/EEC (OJ L 180, 15.7.2010), p. 1.

45. continue to use the Annual Report on equality between women and men to track progress towards gender equality in the EU in the context of the Europe 2020 Strategy, the follow-up of the Beijing Platform for Action, the European Pact for Gender Equality (2011-2020) and the Women's Charter (2010) and to provide orientations for gender mainstreaming of policy areas; and to consider focusing on reconciliation policies in one of the future reports;
46. adequately reflect relevant aspects of the reconciliation of work and family life and women's participation in the labour market in the Annual Growth Surveys and in the assessment of National Reform Programmes defined by the Member States within the framework of the European Semester;

INVITES:

47. the Social Protection Committee and the Employment Committee to continue their work in order to monitor progress in the implementation of policies to reconcile work, family and private life that are geared to raising the employment rate and reducing the risk of poverty and social exclusion, particularly that of women;

ENCOURAGES:

48. the European Social Partners, while respecting their autonomy, to take further initiatives to improve the reconciliation of work, family and private life and to mainstream gender equality in social dialogue at all levels.

Indicators regarding "Women and the Economy: Reconciliation of work and family life"

- Indicator 1. Employed men and women on parental leave (paid and unpaid) within the meaning of Directive 96/34/EC on the framework agreement between the social partners on parental leave, as a proportion of all employed parents.
- Indicator 2. Allocation of parental leave between employed men and women as a proportion of all parental leave.
- Indicator 3. Children cared for (other than by the family) as a proportion of all children of the same age group:
 - before entry into the non-compulsory pre-school system (during the day);
 - in the non-compulsory or equivalent pre-school system (outside pre-school hours);
 - in compulsory primary education (outside school hours).
- Indicator 4. Comprehensive and integrated policies, particularly employment policies, aimed at promoting a balance between working and family life.
- Indicator 5. Dependent elderly men and women (unable to look after themselves on a daily basis) over 75:
 - living in specialised institutions;
 - who have help (other than the family) at home;
 - looked after by the family;
 - as a proportion of men and women over 75.

- Indicator 6. Total “tied” time per day for each employed parent living with a partner, having one or more children under 12 years old or a dependant:
 - paid working time;
 - travelling time;
 - basic time spent on domestic work;
 - other time devoted to the family (upbringing and care of children and care of dependent adults).

 - Indicator 7. Total “tied” time per day for each employed parent living alone, having one or more children under 12 years old or a dependant as 6 above.
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