



Koninkrijk der Nederlanden



MINISTRY FOR SOCIAL DIALOGUE,
CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND CIVIL LIBERTIES

Trio Presidency Declaration

The Netherlands, Slovakia and Malta, the Member States holding the Presidency during the 18 - month period from January 2016 to July 2017, hereby present this joint gender equality trio declaration of 7 December 2015.

Whereas

- Equality between women and men is a fundamental value of the European Union enshrined in the Treaties and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. Achieving gender equality is one of the objectives and tasks of the European Union, and mainstreaming equality between women and men in all its activities represents a general aim of the Union.
- Ensuring full equal opportunities for women and men in practice is an urgent priority in a broad range of policy areas. Gender equality needs to be effectively mainstreamed, and targeted actions should be taken where appropriate.
- Equality between women and men is a prerequisite for ensuring growth, prosperity and welfare; in particular, gender equality is a prerequisite for meeting the headline targets of the Europe 2020 Strategy, especially in the fields of employment and the reduction of poverty or social exclusion.
- Enabling women and men to make full use of their abilities and qualifications is of crucial importance for the effective use of the EU's human capital.
- The contributions of all women and men in the EU are needed, and all citizens have the right to social inclusion, regardless of their racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, social or marital status, age, sexual orientation or gender identity, or any disability.
- Making further progress on gender equality and the bridging of the gender gap, including by ensuring equal access to the labour market, equal pay and quality jobs for all, is needed to break down gender stereotypes that lead to horizontal and vertical segregation in education and the labour market.

Recalling

- The Beijing declaration and Platform for Action and the twelve critical areas of concern identified therein, and the Cairo Programme of Action, and the outcomes of their subsequent review conferences.

- The European Pact for Gender Equality (2011-2020) in which the Council acknowledged that “equality between women and men is a fundamental value of the European Union and that gender equality policies are vital to economic growth, prosperity and competitiveness”. The Council also stated that five years after the adoption of the first European Pact for Gender Equality, a new impetus was needed, particularly in order to reaffirm and support the close link between the Commission’s Strategy for equality between women and men 2010-2015 and the Europe 2020 Strategy.
- The Commission’s Strategy for equality between women and men 2010-2015, which suggests a wide range of activities to promote gender equality with regard to equal economic independence; equal pay for equal work and work of equal value; equality in decision-making; dignity, integrity and an end to gender-based violence; and gender equality in external relations; and which highlights horizontal issues such as the importance of gender mainstreaming and the role of men in the promotion of gender equality.
- The Commission’s and the EEAS Joint Staff Working Document on Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment: Transforming the Lives of Girls and Women through EU External Relations 2016-2020, in which the said institutions jointly commit to promoting gender equality and women’s empowerment in EU’s external relations.

Stressing that

- A gender perspective is needed in the Europe 2020 Strategy. In order to maximise competitiveness, innovation and growth, we must allow both women and men, to fulfil their potential. To reach the ambitious headline target of a 75% employment rate of women and men aged 20-64, boosting women’s participation in the labour market is crucial.
- Empowering women is also a prerequisite for strengthening social cohesion, including in the context of the Europe 2020 Strategy.
- Over the last decade, studies have shown the positive impact of gender equality on economic development.
- Promoting innovative work-life balance policies and flexible working arrangements is essential for facilitating the reconciliation of work, family and private life for both women and men, as well as for reducing labour market segregation.
- Boosting the economic activity of women and their participation in the labour market is beneficial for both economic and social development: it can help to increase employment, and to reduce the risk of poverty and social exclusion of people with caring responsibilities, the majority of whom are women. Consequently, there is a strong economic case for supporting the participation of women carers in the labour market. Conversely, the care economy is a sector with a high potential for employment growth.
- We have recently witnessed *a rise* in poverty in the EU, despite the fact that the EU Heads of State and Government committed themselves in June 2010 to the

ambitious target of *reducing* poverty and social exclusion in the EU by 20 million people by 2020 as part of the Europe 2020 Strategy.

- The European Parliament has repeatedly called for action to eradicate poverty and to tackle the higher risk of poverty that women face, also highlighting the impact of the current economic, financial and social crisis, which is having a detrimental effect on women's living and working conditions and their place in society in general.
- The rise in poverty and social exclusion in the aftermath of the crisis has affected both men and women. However, in general, women face a much higher risk of social exclusion and poverty than men. Accordingly, it is essential to work systematically towards ensuring their economic independence throughout their life cycle.

The Trio Presidency

Underlines

- The need to pursue equal opportunities and gender equality including an effective implementation of existing directives on equal treatment in order to ensure economic independence for both women and men.
- The need to implement a dual approach: gender mainstreaming by integrating the gender perspective into all policy areas, and specific measures.
- The need to combat gender stereotypes which still unduly influence the individual choices of women and men in the European Union, as evidenced by the low participation of women in the labour market and their relative economic independence in many Member States.
- The need to facilitate the reconciliation of work, family and private life in order to allow both women and men to participate in the labour market as well as in all other spheres of life and at all levels of society, including decision-making positions. To this end, action should be taken to support a better sharing of care responsibilities and the development of child care services.
- That the strong correlation between gender equality and economic competitiveness should be brought to the attention of policy-makers, the social partners, EU institutions, decision-makers and civil society organisations, with a view to encouraging them to incorporate gender equality into their local, regional, national and EU priorities.
- The feminisation of poverty, and women's higher risk of social exclusion, especially when they belong to vulnerable groups. A focused effort is therefore needed to reduce the risk of poverty which is often closely associated with racial or ethnic discrimination, or discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity, higher or younger age, disability or lone parenting. These factors can increase the risk of poverty, marginalisation and social and economic exclusion. Women often suffer from double discrimination, a problem that needs to be considered in all policies and strategies addressing social inclusion.

- The need for a new Commission initiative setting out a Strategy for equality between women and men 2016-2020, which should be closely linked to the Europe 2020 Strategy and which should also take into account the United Nations Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development.

Activities to be carried out during The Netherlands, Slovak and Maltese Presidencies

The Trio Presidency will encourage discussion and ensure the exchange of good practice in the above-described areas.

New knowledge and new indicators for monitoring progress will be presented at the EU level, and political discussions on the way forward will take place in all appropriate fora, including the EPSCO Council.

The Netherlands

- Best practices on how to increase labour participation and to offer more employment opportunities to women and men will be developed and shared with partners.
- To ensure the continued cooperation between the Member States and the Commission, the Netherlands will host a meeting of the High Level Group on Gender Mainstreaming in Amsterdam on 21-22 January 2016.
- Working in close coordination with all Member States, the Netherlands Presidency will support the High Representative/Vice President (HR/VP) in delivering a strong EU commitment at the 60th Session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women.
- Based on the presentation of a strategic initiative on gender equality by the Commission, the Netherlands Presidency will propose draft council conclusions to the EPSCO Council.
- Based on the presentation of a Commission initiative on LGBT(I), the Netherlands Presidency will explore the possibilities of a political response by the EPSCO Council.
- Working in close coordination with all Member States, the Netherlands Presidency will support the HR/VP in ensuring a strong EU commitment on the implementation of UNSC Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security.

Slovakia

- The Slovak Presidency will continue the work and negotiations begun by the preceding Presidencies and will encourage discussions, actions, and the exchange of good practice related to gender equality and gender mainstreaming.
- In cooperation with EIGE, the Slovak Presidency will undertake a review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action by the EU Member States in the area of "Women and Poverty". This work will focus on a range of negative factors

that influence women's lives, their working conditions, and their place in the society. Emphasis will be given to the monitoring of the situation of the most disadvantaged groups among women and to identifying the multidimensional problem and causes of female poverty (e.g. age, immigration status, single parenthood, disability, ethnicity including Roma, etc.); including the evaluation of the possible impact of economic crisis on women's poverty, particularly in the most disadvantaged groups in the EU.

- A meeting of the High Level Group on Gender Mainstreaming will be hosted in Bratislava on 7th and 8th September 2016, with the aim of ensuring effective cooperation between Member States and the European Commission in the area of gender equality and gender mainstreaming in the EU.
- Balancing work, family and private life is a prerequisite for the higher participation of women in the labour market and their economic independence; with this in mind, a conference held in Bratislava will be dedicated to the reconciliation of work, family and private life in a changing society.
- Based on the possible presentation of a Commission initiative within the framework of the "New start to address the challenges of work-life balance faced by working families", the Slovak Presidency will ensure effective negotiations within the Council.
- Equality between women and men is crucial for securing a more equal and fair society that is capable of increasing growth and reducing poverty; Slovakia will therefore strongly support the European Commission in continuing to address some of the remaining gender gaps as defined in the Strategy for equality between women and men as well as to meet the gender equality objectives after the 2015.
- The Slovak presidency will cooperate with the European External Action Service with a view to ensuring the coordinated presence of the EU at the 61st Session of the UN Commission of the Status of Women in March 2017.

Malta

- With the objective of addressing the lower participation of women in the labour market, Malta will support discussions on measures aiming to eliminate current challenges hindering women's economic independence.
- In its Strategy for equality between women and men 2010-2015, the Commission identified gender based violence as one of the key problems to be addressed in order to achieve genuine gender equality. In its Roadmap of October 2015, the Commission expressed interest in the European Union's intention to accede to the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention). The fight against violence against women and girls will be given prominence under Malta's Presidency. An event will be hosted as a platform for the sharing of best practices, and to exchange information on existing legislation, policies and strategies, as well as statistical data and studies on this topic.
- In the European Pact for Gender Equality, the Council emphasised the promotion of "the equal participation of women and men in decision-making at all levels and

in all fields, in order to make full use of all talents." If necessary, Malta will undertake further discussions with Member States, the European Commission and the European Parliament with a view to advancing the work on *the proposal for a Directive on improving gender balance among directors of companies listed on stock exchanges and related measures*.

- The Commission's list of actions on LGBTI will also be explored further under Malta's Presidency.
- Malta will strive to ensure continued cooperation between the Member States and the Commission in driving forward gender equality and within this context will take into account the new Commission initiative setting out the Strategy for gender equality post-2015.
- In collaboration with the European Commission, Malta will host a meeting of the High Level Group on Gender Mainstreaming in Valletta.
- The Maltese Presidency will facilitate the coordination of an EU position and presence at the UN Commission on the Status of Women



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