



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



**Council Conclusions
in support of the implementation of the European Commission's
Strategy for equality between women and men 2010-2015**

***3053rd EMPLOYMENT, SOCIAL POLICY HEALTH and CONSUMER
AFFAIRS Council meeting
Brussels, 6 December 2010***

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

"The Council of the European Union:

WHEREAS:

1. The Strategy for equality between women and men 2010-2015 adopted by the European Commission on 21 September 2010 identifies five priority areas for action: equal economic independence; equal pay for equal work or work of equal value; equality in decision-making; dignity, integrity and an end to gender-based violence; and gender equality in external actions. A sixth area concerns horizontal issues relating to gender roles, legislation, governance and tools for gender equality, and the Strategy includes key actions of the European Commission for all six areas¹;
2. Equality between women and men is a fundamental principle of the European Union enshrined in the Treaties and is one of the objectives and tasks of the European Union, and mainstreaming the principle of equality between women and men in all its activities represents a specific mission for the Union²;
3. Gender equality is enshrined in Article 23 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union;

¹ 13767/10.

² Articles 2 and 3(3) TEU and Article 8 TFEU.

P R E S S

WHEREAS:

4. The Strategy for equality between women and men 2010-2015 adopted by the European Commission on 21 September 2010 identifies five priority areas for action: equal economic independence; equal pay for equal work or work of equal value; equality in decision-making; dignity, integrity and an end to gender-based violence; and gender equality in external actions. A sixth area concerns horizontal issues relating to gender roles, legislation, governance and tools for gender equality, and the Strategy includes key actions of the European Commission for all six areas³;
5. Equality between women and men is a fundamental principle of the European Union enshrined in the Treaties and is one of the objectives and tasks of the European Union, and mainstreaming the principle of equality between women and men in all its activities represents a specific mission for the Union⁴;
6. Gender equality is enshrined in Article 23 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union;
7. The European Union possesses a significant body of legislation promoting compliance with the principle of equality of treatment for men and women in employment, goods and services⁵;
5. Successive annual reports on "Equality between Women and Men"⁶ adopted by the European Commission demonstrate that progress is slow and that *de facto* gender equality has yet to be attained;
6. The European Commission's Strategy for equality between women and men 2010-2015 follows on from the Commission's Roadmap for equality between women and men (2006-2010)⁷, which was the subject of a mid-term review⁸, and the Women's Charter adopted by the European Commission on 5 March 2010⁹;

³ 13767/10.

⁴ Articles 2 and 3(3) TEU and Article 8 TFEU.

⁵ Council Directive 92/85/EEC of 19 October 1992 on the introduction of measures to encourage improvements in the safety and health at work of pregnant women and workers who have recently given birth or are breastfeeding (OJ L 348, 28.11.1992, p. 1); Council Directive 2004/113/EC of 13 December 2004 implementing the principle of equal treatment between men and women in the access to and supply of goods and services (OJ L 373, 21.12.2004, p. 37); Directive 2006/54/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 July 2006 on the implementation of the principle of equal opportunities and equal treatment of men and women in matters of employment and occupation (OJ L 204, 26.7.2006, p. 23); 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); 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).

⁶ 5056/10.

⁷ 7034/06.

⁸ 17495/08.

⁹ 7370/10.

7. The European Council, meeting on 23 and 24 March 2006, adopted the European Pact for Gender Equality¹⁰, to encourage action at Member State and Union level to support the implementation of the European Commission's Roadmap (2006-2010);
8. In its Conclusions on "'Beijing + 15': A Review of Progress" (2009)¹¹, the Council called on the Commission to prepare a follow-up strategy, building on the six priorities of the Roadmap (2006-2010), taking into account existing tools, and with due regard to current issues and challenges such as the economic and financial crisis, the environment and climate change, sustainable development, the ageing society and increased migration, the situation of women from ethnic minorities, and the role of boys and men in bringing about gender equality;
9. In its opinion¹² adopted on 29 January 2010, the Advisory Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men recommended that work should continue on the priorities set out in the Roadmap 2006-2010, identified new challenges and cross-cutting issues to be taken into consideration, and suggested that the governance mechanisms for any future Commission strategy, as well as the institutional mechanisms promoting women's rights and equality between women and men, should be strengthened;
10. In its Conclusions on "Gender equality: strengthening growth and employment – input to the post-2010 Lisbon Strategy" (2009)¹³, the Council stressed that gender equality was crucial for fulfilling the EU objectives of economic and social cohesion and of a high level of employment, as well as for ensuring sustainable growth and competitiveness, and for tackling the demographic challenge, and called on the European Commission in particular to strengthen the gender dimension when adopting the post-Lisbon strategy in 2010;
11. In the declaration by the Trio adopted in Valencia on 26 March 2010, the Spanish, Belgian and Hungarian Presidencies reaffirmed the need to strengthen gender equality policies within the Europe 2020 Strategy, in the Commission's new Strategy on gender equality, then in preparation, and in the implementation of the European Pact for Gender Equality and the Beijing Platform for Action;
12. On 17 June 2010, the European Council adopted the post-Lisbon strategy known as Europe 2020: A New European Strategy for Jobs and Growth¹⁴, which contains five headline targets, integrated guidelines, seven flagship initiatives and integrated and strengthened governance mechanisms, such as thematic European Council meetings;
13. The European Parliament adopted a resolution on 17 June 2010 on assessment of the results of the 2006-2010 Roadmap for Equality between women and men;
14. At the informal meeting of ministers for gender equality on 26 October 2010, the Belgian Presidency invited the Member States' ministers responsible for gender equality and the European institutions to discuss and propose initiatives and working methods to increase the effectiveness of gender-equality policies in this new policy context and of the mechanisms for following them up;

¹⁰ 7775/1/06 REV 1.

¹¹ 15992/09.

¹² Opinion on the future of gender equality policy after 2010 and on the priorities for a possible future framework for equality between women and men.

¹³ 15488/09.

¹⁴ EUCO 13/1/10 REV 1.

15. At this meeting, all the Member States discussed the five priority areas and the horizontal issues set out in the Commission's new Strategy for Equality between Women and Men (2010-2015), as well as the dual approach and the creation of an annual top-level Gender Equality Dialogue; they also discussed possible follow-up tools and the need to adapt the European Pact for Gender Equality, taking into account the context of the new Europe 2020 Strategy;

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION:

16. WELCOMES the adoption by the European Commission of its new Strategy for equality between women and men 2010-2015;
17. TAKES NOTE of the five priority areas for action and the horizontal issues in that new Strategy;
18. WELCOMES the fact that in its Strategy the European Commission has undertaken to follow a dual approach, combining gender mainstreaming¹⁵ and specific measures;
19. WELCOMES the enhanced collaboration with the different institutions and partners that will be made possible by the creation of the annual top-level Gender Equality Dialogue on the basis of the Commission's annual report on the matter;
20. REAFFIRMS THE IMPORTANCE of establishing and maintaining a close link between the European Commission's Strategy for equality between women and men and the Europe 2020 Strategy, notably with respect to the headline target of aiming to raise to 75% the employment rate for women and men, in the context of the new European Semester;
21. CONSIDERS that, to accelerate progress towards equality between women and men and, in particular, to ensure that the objectives of the European Commission's Strategy for equality between women and men are met, the involvement and cooperation of all the European institutions, the European Institute for Gender Equality, the Member States, the social partners, bodies promoting gender equality, and civil society, according to their respective competences, are crucial;
22. STRONGLY AFFIRMS the need to fully and effectively implement the principle of gender mainstreaming in all its work¹⁶;
23. ENCOURAGES THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL to implement systematic and visible gender mainstreaming in its work and to place the subject of gender equality on its agenda before the expiry of the European Commission's Strategy for equality between women and men;
24. INVITES THE MEMBER STATES, in order to accelerate progress towards equality between women and men and to achieve *de facto* gender equality, taking into account their national circumstances, to:
 - (a) affirm their commitments in the five priority areas for action, including by addressing the horizontal issues set out in the European Commission's Strategy for equality between women and men;

¹⁵ Meaning the integration of the gender dimension into all policy areas.

¹⁶ Articles 2 and 3(3) TEU and Article 8 TFEU.

- (b) ensure that those commitments are effectively followed through in their national policies and, if appropriate, in their National Reform Programmes in the context of the implementation of the Europe 2020 Strategy; and
- (c) improve the follow-up of the European Pact for Gender Equality by making full use of the existing mechanisms, structures and indicators;

and to reflect these commitments in the European Pact for Gender Equality, and to support its revision accordingly;

- 25. INVITES the European Council to adapt and improve the European Pact for Gender Equality in the spring of 2011 in the light of the Commission's new Strategy for equality between women and men (2010-2015), of the Europe 2020 Strategy and of these conclusions;
- 26. INVITES THE INCOMING HUNGARIAN PRESIDENCY to take all necessary steps in order to support this process."
