



EUROPEAN WOMEN'S
LOBBY
EUROPEEN DES FEMMES

CONSULTATION

Brussels, 15 December 2009

European Women's Lobby contribution to the Commission Working Document Consultation on the future "EU 2020" Strategy, COM(2009) 647/3

Introduction

The European Women's Lobby (EWL), the largest coalition of women's non-governmental organisations in the European Union (EU) comprising of members from the 27 EU Member States and the three accession countries, as well as 21 European-wide women's non-governmental organisations, welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the debate on the post-Lisbon Strategy towards a forward looking vision for the EU in the next decade.

At the same time, the EWL regrets that the consultation is being carried out in such a tight time span and cautions against a hasty strategy that could be counter-productive in the long term, particularly as the EU 2020 strategy aims to steer the EU in the next ten years. Given that the current Lisbon Strategy on Growth and Jobs is scheduled to include 2010, the EWL calls for a **reflection period** throughout the first semester of 2010 with the aim of adopting the EU 2020 Strategy in the latter part of 2010 under the Belgian Presidency.

General comments on the Commission's Working Document: A Gender Contract for the future of the EU 2020 Strategy

The EWL acknowledges that the current recession is unprecedented in that it is not the result of the evolutionary economic cycles but a systemic consequence of implosion.

- *The EWL firmly believes that the moment is ripe to take stock of the crisis with the view to setting in place another model for the whole of society in which equality between women and men must be the corner stone.*

Globalisation, unregulated financial markets, putting capital before people, growing inequalities in terms of income and in access to social and human rights, the absence of women from economic decision-making and sidelining equality between women and men have all led to the collapse of the system with serious repercussions on the real lives of women, men, girls and boys both in the EU and worldwide.

- *The EU 2020 strategy provides a new momentum for a vision for the next decade and beyond.*

Within this context, the EWL **questions the Commission's Working Document** underlying message that puts emphasis on the 2020 vision as an 'exit strategy' to the current socio-economic turmoil. This, together with the reductionist 'worker-consumer' image contained in the document must be challenged.

- *The EU 2020 Strategy must be a socio-economic strategy that seeks to render the necessary conditions for gender equality, a dignified life for all, decent wages and income, quality work and that meets the needs required for the sustainability of humanity as a whole in the form of human production and reproduction.*

There is, and can be, no return to the situation pre-crisis as it is precisely in this period that the conditions were created which led to the collapse of the system as a whole.



2010 is an important milestone for equality between women and men. It marks the end of a number of political commitments, strategies and processes of the past years. These include: the current Lisbon Strategy employment target of 60% for women, the Roadmap on Equality between Women and Men (2006-2010), the Barcelona Targets on Childcare (2002-2010) and it also marks the 15th anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action which all of the (then – 1995) Member States committed to implementing and was subsequently monitored by the EPSCO Council and the **development of specific targets** in a number of the critical areas of concern.

It is crucial that an overall coherent framework is now developed¹; the EU 2020 strategy is a key way forward as a response to the challenge of ensuring a **far reaching and long term vision for equality between women and men** that is firmly anchored in the overall EU policy framework the next decade with the political commitment of all involved, i.e. European and national decision institutions and policy makers, social partners, civil society and the private sector. The absence of policy coherence has hampered the achievement of equality between women and men in the past.

EU 2020 Strategy – the European Women's Lobby's proposals for the future

1) Equality between women and men as the cornerstone, objective and outcome of the EU2020 Strategy

Current situation:

- Over the past few decades, women have contributed more to the expansion of the world economy than either new technologies or the emerging markets of China and India. The Lisbon employment target rate for women – 60% - is on course to being achieved, even in the mist of economic downturn, with varying degrees in different countries. Lower levels of women's employment rate remain in some countries, notably in Malta and for women in rural areas.
- Women occupied 60.5% of all the new jobs created from 2000 to 2007, obtaining 82.5% of the new jobs in health and social services.² The share of employment in health and social services grew from 8.7% to 9.6% between 2000 and 2007. Women's share of employment in this sector grew from 8.4% to 9.8% in comparison to men: 2.4% to 2.7%. For women, and older workers, job growth in this sector accounts for 1.4% of the rise in the employment rate in the EU (27). These sectors are also characterised by high levels of part time work and temporary contracts and most worryingly wage levels have declined relatively and are now below the EU economic average and well below other non-market services.
- Not surprisingly, the value attached to jobs seen as 'female' is still low as witnessed by low wages. On the other hand, more men than women work in computing jobs across the EU and the gender gap between women and men's employment in computing jobs has tended to widen rather than narrow over time.³ This is a worrying trend particularly as the Commission's working document places one of its priorities on the development of a knowledge based society.

¹ See, EPSCO Council Conclusions, 298th meeting Brussels 30 November 2009, stressing that, 3 b) "it is important to consider how these different processes interact and how they can be used to create synergies."

² Data taken from *How Social Services help mobilising the workforce and strengthening social cohesion, Background information*, European Commission, Brussels 15 April 2009 EMPL/E-4 D (2009)

³ Eurostat, *Statistical portrait of women and men in the European Union*, 2008



- While women's employment participation rate increased, the quality of women's employment remains within a gender segregated framework coupled with low pay, a persistent gender pay gap, high levels of part time work and limited labour-related social protection rights.
- The removal of the targeted equal opportunities guideline following the revision of the Lisbon Strategy in 2005 played a role in diluting the goal of equality between women and men with the result that reporting on gender equality was not systematically carried out by the Member States in their National Reform Programmes on gender mainstreaming and the absence of any focus on gender mainstreaming by the European Commission and Council in the Annual Progress Report and in the Joint Employment Report.⁴
- The European Pact for Gender Equality commitments to "*close the gender gaps in employment and social protection*" and to ensure that "*gender equality effects are taken into account in impact assessments of new EU policies*" have not been met.
- Therefore, the goal of equality between women and men has not been met and this must be placed at the core of the future EU 2020 Strategy.

Recommendations:

- 1) Reinstate and strengthen **equality between women and men** as inherent pillar of the EU 2020 Strategy accompanied by new targets and monitoring mechanisms
- 2) **Ensure a coherent strategy across all policy areas**, one which is backed by all the political actors both from the European and national level, and processed through the different mechanisms to guide and report on the EU 2020 Strategy: integrated guidelines, national reporting mechanisms, Commission Annual Report on Equality between women and men, European Parliament reporting, peer groups and review mechanisms.
- 3) Ensure a strong institutional **link between commitments at the European and national level**.
- 4) Ensure a **better monitoring system and systematic gender impact assessment in all policies, targets, benchmarks and measures** of the future EU 2020 Strategy through the meaningful involvement of gender equality experts at all levels.
- 5) **Ensure more consistency in the implementation of a gender mainstreaming** -including gender budgeting- strategy: more consistency is needed between specific strong commitments / policy work on gender equality and the future EU 2020 Strategy, including macroeconomic policies. The impact on the situation of women and men of all new legislative proposals adopted by the European Commission should be systematically and a priori screened.
- 6) Set up a **permanent gender impact assessment procedure** for all **European Structural Funds, Cohesion Funds and funds related to the implementation of the EU 2020 Strategy**. Include a **gender clause** as part of the specifications in all agreements between the Commission and external contractors, whereby the contractor is

⁴ See *Opinion on the revision of the integrated guidelines for growth and jobs*, Advisory Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, May 2007



obliged to mainstream gender in the tasks assigned (impact assessment, studies etc.) with the support of an expert.

2) Specific targets to ensure women's right to equality with men

Building on the success of the existing targets on women's employment rates, the EWL stresses that specific targets are urgently required to ensure women's equal right to equality with men, particularly in relation to women's economic independence.

Current situation:

- The current **average gender pay gap** in the EU remains at 17% with large differences between countries, ranging from 4.4% in Italy to 30.3% in Estonia. The legal situation is very clear in the European Union; the principle of equal pay for equal work and for work of equal value is strongly established in European law and should be implemented and enforced throughout the EU. However, this right is in many cases not respected and the existing legislation proves insufficient to tackle this issue, which requires a multifaceted policy approach.

Recommendations in relation the specific target to close the gender pay gap:

- 1) A European **equal pay target** over 5 years (which could be a target in terms of reducing the pay gap of 10 percentage points in each Member State) and systematic monitoring in the EU 2020 Strategy
- 2) Improve statistical data on the gender pay gap, including comparability of data and data on the part time pay gap and the pension gap.
- 3) Address the gender pay gap, including full pay for women during statutory maternity leave and gaps in pension rights.
- 4) All recovery measures and packages should integrate a gender equality perspective and ensure that they don't deepen the gender pay gap as there is a real risk that the crisis increases the gap and the vulnerability of women on the labour market.

Current situation:

- The EWL points to the fact that more than 99% of all European businesses are Small and Medium sized Entreprises (SMEs), nine out of ten SMEs are micro enterprises with less than 10 employees and women's entrepreneurship has remained stagnant at 30% for the last decade, there is an urgency to rectify this gap. It is urgent to create **guarantee funds** and encourage take-up by women. For reasons of the gender pay gap, women earn less but are also likely to have fewer saving than men.
- The financial-economic crisis can provide a new impetus as the recent public bailouts of the banks as one of the obstacle women face is their difficulty to access to credit. Loan guarantee funds for women entrepreneurs should be made more readily available, given that public authorities are part of bank governance structures/decision-making shareholders, they are in a better position to facilitate women's access to credit to develop women's entrepreneurship ventures.



EUROPEAN WOMEN'S
LOBBY
EUROPEEN DES FEMMES

CONSULTATION

- The Small Business Act does not explicitly refer to the goal of equality between and men as one of the 10 key principles, particularly in light of the huge gender gap in this area.
- In terms of economic decision-making, the top 300 European companies have 9.7% of women on their boards (2008) and the economic crisis has shown the urgency for new models of leadership and financial management.

Recommendations in relation the specific target to boost women's entrepreneurship:

- 1) Introduce a new target in relation to women's entrepreneurship to raise the stagnant 30% level of the past decade.
- 2) Facilitate **access to credit** for female headed companies through generalised institutional guaranteed funding mechanisms and micro credit mechanisms.
- 3) Support **information and training of women** to ensure the long term viability of their companies over and above the start-up phase.
- 4) Introduce a target of **40% women on the Boards of enterprises**
- 5) Provide a mandate to the Gender Institute to compile good practices from all the Member States in terms legislation, matrimonial regimes and their impact on equality between women and men especially in family businesses, taxation, as well as facts and figures, gender disaggregated statistics in collaboration with Eurostat and to develop indicators from the statistical data.

Current situation:

- The EU's internal socio-economic policies cannot be dissociated with its **external policies**, particularly with regards to trade in the context of globalisation. Therefore, the 2020 Strategy should encompass the external dimension and in particular the gender dimension therein. The issue of care, highlighted below (see point 4) is also very relevant to the external dimension particularly the potential *care drain* in the absence of a holistic approach that links internal and external socio-economic and macro-economic policies.
- **The priority area of EU External Relations needs an increase of resources to be implemented.** The funding made available to support the integration of gender equality issues into development cooperation is insignificant when compared with the resources earmarked for other horizontal measures. Only 5% of the DCI funds for the thematic programme 'Investing in People' (2007-2013) are allocated to gender equality 57 million out of 1 billion) and regional and country strategy papers do not give an overview of budget allocation to gender equality since gender is only mentioned as a cross-cutting issue and thus no financial details are provided⁵. The EU provides over half of global aid it therefore has a responsibility to take a leadership role by radically improving the quantity and quality of its aid.

⁵ EU Parliament Resolution of 13 March 2008 on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Development Cooperation.



Recommendations in relation the specific target for Gender Equality in External and Development Policies:

- 1) In the area of **Gender Equality in EU Development and External Relations policies**, develop gender-sensitive indicators, tools and methodologies for the evaluation of the quality and development effectiveness of aid, in support of mutual responsibility and accountability for gender equality on the part of both donors and recipients; with resources being allocated to enable women's rights advocates meaningfully participate in national, regional and international processes.
- 2) In order to assure women's economic and social empowerment and sustainable development it is important to address the **relationship between gender and trade and to link the macro-economic** perspective to the micro and meso level perspective⁶ in developing countries.

General recommendation to implement indicators adopted at EU level for the follow-up of the Beijing Platform for Action.

3) Reforming the male-bread-winner model as the dominant reference model which defines a 'worker' as a means to ensure inclusive societies

Current situation:

- Working culture and practices continue to be based on the 'male bread-winner' model, i.e. full-time, 40-45 year uninterrupted career, upon which social protection benefits are based, particularly pension rights. However, the crisis started to bring a shift in this pattern particularly in the male-dominated sectors of the economy (car and construction industries) where men were offered part-time work to avoid becoming unemployed.
- Part-time work is a characteristic of women's employment patterns with four times more women working part-time than men. However, their access to social benefits and particularly pension rights are severely hampered, exposing them to a higher risk of poverty throughout their lives and particularly in old age. While the male-breadwinner-model has for some time not reflected the reality of many women's lives, because of the crisis, many women are now also the prime and sole breadwinners, both in single headed households and in what once were dual earning households.
- Men will also face similar trends in light of transformations in male-dominated sectors brought about by the financial and economic crisis. Therefore, the time is ripe to review with the aim of reforming the dominant male-breadwinner model by ensuring that alternative funding mechanisms are secured to maintain social security systems and ensuring that there are individualised rights to social security and pension rights based on working, caring, life-long-learning experiences and other community activities accumulated throughout the life-cycle. Reform of the male-breadwinner-model is also crucial in ensuring cohesive societies in recognising the life experiences of both women and men, but also different groups of women who are at a greater disadvantage than men in terms of paid and unpaid work.

⁶ Enterprise, communities, local authorities, etc.



Recommendations:

- 1) Guarantee the **individualisation** of social protection rights.
- 2) Close the **gender pay gap** (see above, under point 2, for proposed targets)
- 3) Guarantee **pension rights** and cost-of-living indexes to ensure that these pensions and other social benefits are sufficient to lead a dignified life.
- 4) Explore new possibilities with the view to guaranteeing **alternative funding sources for social protection systems**, based on productivity gains in the knowledge-based society. Maintaining social protection systems, based on equality, solidarity and redistribution of wealth, must remain a key priority.
- 5) Ensure access to both women and men, particularly women who have additional caring responsibilities, to **life-long learning measures**. **Skills** acquired in **informal settings** (such as care) should be recognised as labour-market skills through validation systems based on experience. Similarly, **pre-employability skills** - reading, writing, basic digital skills, languages - should also be recognised as essential in order to guarantee an **inclusive social and economic cohesion strategy** by investing in human sources and potential.
- 6) Take measures to recognise the **qualifications of migrant workers** obtained in third countries. This is particularly important for **women** as a means of removing the multiple barriers (because of their gender and their ethnicity) to their access to the labour market, to value their skills and contribution to the economy and to prevent them being regulated to sectors of the informal economy and/or low skilled, low paid jobs.
- 7) Make visible the contribution of women's unpaid work to the economy (in the home and in family businesses), by exploring mechanisms at EU level similar to national **satellite accounts** which provide additional information extending the coverage of costs and benefits of human activities and linking with monetary data.⁷
- 8) Introduce a new European target in relation to the **share of part time work done by men**.

4) Developing an economy of care

The EWL welcomes the inclusion in the Commission's document of the priority relating to the green economy and proposes to add an additional priority relating to the care economy. This complements our shared responsibility towards the environment with our shared responsibility towards each other.

Current situation:

- Past commitments relating to child care services notably the Barcelona targets, which have yet to be met in many Member States, brings to the forefront the importance of care for sustainable human reproduction. While

⁷ For further information see United Nations Statistical Division: <http://data.un.org/Glossary.aspx?q=satellite+account>



the numbers of women on the labour market today are unprecedented, they also continue to be the **main care givers/providers** to dependent family member including children, elderly and other dependents, and have more than ever before become dual actors both on the labour-market and in the home. The gender roles and relationships that structure paid and unpaid work have a direct impact on inequalities between women and men in the labour-market. Similarly, countries that have integrated care structures and family leave measures, including paid maternity leave, women's employment rates are also highest.

- In the next decade, that is, the period covered by the EU 2020 Strategy, the numbers of older women and men will increase substantially: the proportion of the population over the age of 65 in the EU27 will almost double in the next 40 years, and the proportion of those over the age of 80 is expected to more than triple by 2050. Demographic changes with low replacement rates and increasing dependency rates require a holistic approach to care which encompasses care needs throughout the life-cycle.⁸
- One of the impacts of the financial/economic crisis is the reduction in public spending in areas such as social and health services, which will in the long term shift the burden of care from the community to individual households, i.e. mainly women.
- Similar to the environment where it has become apparent over the last decade that concerted EU action is necessary, the care economy should also be seen as a growth sector, particularly as all Member States are facing similar demographic challenges which, if ignored, will become more acute over the period of the EU 2020 Strategy. Therefore, the recommendations hereunder are addressed within an EU framework, while the implementation will be effective within Member States.

Recommendations:

- 1) Develop an **economy of care** for job creation and a potential growth sector.
- 2) Introduce a new target in relation to **care services for dependants other than children** and renew commitments for the realisation of the Barcelona targets.
- 3) Address the gender pay gap by valuing the care sector in terms of pay and recognition.
- 4) Integrate the care economy into **educational and professional career** and training options, to break the gender stereotypes by offering care as a career option for women and men.
- 5) Create new **employment opportunities** in the area of care, covering the spectrum of care throughout the life cycle, in particular for those on the two poles of the life-cycle: child and elderly care.

⁸ We must also be vigilant with regards to *care drain* in migration. Currently, in the world it is estimated that four million medical care professionals are needed to meet global care needs. If this tendency continues, by 2020 half of the doctors in the United States will have been trained in developing countries, exacerbating the care gap in these countries. For example, Africa disposes of 3% of the total world medical/care professionals, but 24% are required to meet medical and health care. See: Pascale Molinier, Sandra Laugier, Patricia Paperman, *Qu'est-ce que le care? Souci des autres, sensibilité, responsabilité*, Editions Petite Bibliothèque Payot, 2009



EUROPEAN WOMEN'S
LOBBY
EUROPEEN DES FEMMES

CONSULTATION

- 6) Develop **job creation** through **infrastructures** to boost care facilities for the elderly, including **social housing** schemes, **community development services** (home help, carers), accompanying services to enable **independent living**, intergenerational solidarity schemes, respite care facilities, etc.
- 7) Introduce a new target in relation to the **share of parental leave taken by men**.
- 8) Develop **European legislative measures on other types of leave** as part of measures to reconcile professional and private life, such as: leave for care for an elderly parent, or other dependants such as a family member with a disability or terminal illness; education leave to facilitate life-long learning.