



MINISTRY OF LABOUR  
AND SOCIAL JUSTICE



MINISTRY OF  
SOCIAL AFFAIRS AND HEALTH  
Finland



Ministry for Demography,  
Family, Youth and Social Policy

## TRIO PRESIDENCY DECLARATION ON GENDER EQUALITY

Romania, Finland and Croatia, the Member States holding the Presidency of the Council of the European Union during the 18-month period from January 2019 to June 2020, hereby present this joint trio declaration on gender equality of 15<sup>TH</sup> of March 2019.

### WHEREAS

Equality between women and men is a fundamental value of the European Union enshrined in the Treaty on European Union, the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union and Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. Achieving gender equality is one of the objectives of the EU and mainstreaming gender equality in all its activities is a general task of the Union. In the context of the new term of the European Parliament and the European Commission as well as the preparations for the post 2020 EU policies, it is crucial that EU reaffirms its commitment to promoting gender equality and gender mainstreaming.

Ensuring equal opportunities for women and men in practice is an urgent priority in all policy areas. A dual approach is needed that combines the inclusion of a gender perspective in all EU policies and activities (gender mainstreaming) with specific targeted actions.

Gender equality and women's economic independence are key to sustainable economic growth and a prerequisite for meeting broader long-term policy goals such as the headline targets of the Europe 2020 Strategy, especially in the areas of employment and reduction of poverty and social exclusion.

### RECALLING

The European Pact for Gender Equality (2011–2020), in which the Council of the European Union emphasized that a new impetus was needed to reaffirm and support the close link between the Commission's Strategy for equality between women and men and the Europe 2020 Strategy and reaffirmed its commitment to reinforce governance through gender mainstreaming by integrating the gender perspective into all policy areas and by ensuring that gender equality effects are taken into account in impact assessments of new EU policies.

The Strategic Engagement for Gender Equality (2016–2019) of the European Commission which underlines the need for increased efforts to promote gender equality, especially in five priority areas: equal economic independence of women and men; reducing the gender pay, earnings and pension gaps; equality in decision-making; ending gender-based violence; and the promotion of gender equality beyond the EU; as well as through integrating a gender equality perspective into all EU activities and EU funded programmes.

The European Pillar of Social Rights, proclaimed on 17 November 2017, which calls for fair and well-functioning economies and welfare systems as well as for more equitable and resilient societies, reaffirms gender equality as one of the EU's key principles and underlines that equality of treatment and opportunities



between women and men must be ensured and fostered in all areas and that women and men have the right to equal pay for work of equal value.

**The EU Action Plan 2017–2019: Tackling the gender pay gap**, which analyses the causes of the gender pay gap from various angles and outlines a broad set of mutually complementary activities designed to tackle the gender pay gap and to ensure the full application of the principle of equal pay between women and men.

**The joint Commission-EEAS "GAP II" Review of the Gender Equality Action Plan (2016–2020)<sup>1</sup>**, and the **Resolution<sup>2</sup> of the European Parliament on its implementation**, which welcomes the promotion of gender equality across the entire EU foreign policy agenda.

The 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the **UN Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action**, which offers a timely opportunity to review the progress made in the implementation of measures in the twelve critical areas of concern defined therein and on this basis, to identify key challenges and discuss future priorities and actions in the context of EU gender equality policies.

**The Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention)** which provides a coherent legal framework for combating violence against women and for addressing holistically the prevention of violence, the protection of victims and the prosecution of perpetrators.

**The UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)** which seeks to ensure the elimination of all acts of discrimination against women, as well as the recognition, enjoyment and exercise by women of their human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field.

The **UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**, adopted in September 2015, which outlines a set of 17 universal and transformative goals, and envisages a world in which legal, social or economic barriers have been removed, allowing women and girls to enjoy equal rights and treatment with men and boys.

**The Joint declaration – Gender Equality as a Priority of the European Union** – proposed by the Presidency Trio of Estonia, Bulgaria and Austria in Vienna on 12 October 2018, and signed by twenty-seven Gender Equality Ministers, which calls for a high-level and stand-alone EU Gender Equality Strategy and a full realization of the dual approach combining gender mainstreaming and specific actions in all policy areas, as well as for strong networks and continuous dialogue between all relevant actors.

## **STRESSING THAT**

**Progress towards gender equality has been uneven**, and in some areas, there have been serious setbacks. Gender equality needs to be established as a political priority of the European Union and the effective implementation of gender equality policies and legislation needs to be ensured.

**In order to tackle the multifaceted challenges in the area of gender equality**, the dual approach needs to be strengthened in all policy areas. The implementation of gender mainstreaming in different policy areas,

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<sup>1</sup> Produced in the form of the European Commission's and 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).

<sup>2</sup> Resolution of the European Parliament on its implementation of the Joint Staff Working Document (SWD(2015)0182).



including the use of gender impact assessment and gender budgeting, is still not systematic in the EU or its Member States.

**In the context of the fourth Review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action<sup>3</sup> in the EU and Member States** (Beijing +20) in 2014, the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) identified three particular areas that need to be addressed in EU gender equality policies: 1) strengthening the visibility and importance of gender equality; 2) tackling gender stereotypes and engaging men; and 3) effective implementation of gender mainstreaming into EU policies and the monitoring of progress.

Several studies have shown that **gender equality is a crucial prerequisite of inclusive and sustainable growth**. Fostering the economic activity of women and their participation in the labour market is important for both economic and social development: it can help to increase the overall employment and productivity rates, and to reduce the risk of poverty and social exclusion. On the other hand, economic and budgetary policies may have different, gendered effects on women and men that need to be systematically assessed from the perspective of gender equality.

The **employment rate of women** is still eleven percentage points lower than that of men in the EU and has stagnated in the past years. **Women across the EU are at a higher risk of poverty**, primarily due to gender inequalities in the labour market. There is therefore a need for a stronger gender perspective, especially when designing, implementing and monitoring EU measures to increase employment and reduce poverty.

Increasing women's participation in the labour market is a common objective of all EU Member States. It is very important to understand **the impact and structural causes of women's lower participation on the labour market**, including the lack of affordable and accessible child care and flexible working arrangements, the gender pay gap, horizontal and vertical segregation at work, low employability caused by occupational choices and skills that do not match the demands of the labour market as well as traditional cultural and social norms.

**In the changing world of work**, women face numerous obstacles in trying to obtain secure jobs and fair working conditions. Women make up the majority among workers with fixed-term employment contracts.

Despite years of policy actions to ensure equal pay as well as equal opportunities and equal treatment of men and women in matters of employment and occupation, **an average gender pay gap of 16% persists in the EU**. This is socially unfair as well as economically inefficient, equal pay being an obvious prerequisite for equal participation in the labour market.

**The gender pay gap is the result of several causes**: women's work is less valued than men's work; gender stereotypes and structural factors influence both women's and men's study and career choices, leading to a gender segregated labour market; inadequate work-life balance policies, leading to women's career interruptions; and the pervasiveness of pay discrimination, made possible by the lack of pay transparency.

**Gender stereotypes and social norms** remain one of the underlying causes of persisting gender segregation in occupational choices, in the labour market, and in political leadership. In the private sphere, gender stereotypes help to perpetuate the unequal sharing of unpaid care and household work by women and men.

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<sup>3</sup> The UN Agenda for gender equality and women's empowerment.



**Gender-based violence** is a serious human rights violation and a form of discrimination. Effective measures to protect and guarantee all fundamental rights and freedoms are vital. These rights can only be achieved if there are effective and adequate protection services for victims of gender-based violence.

## **THE TRIO PRESIDENCY UNDERLINES**

**The need to make gender equality a priority on the EU's agenda.** This concerns especially the key discussions and processes shaping the future of the EU, the post-Europe 2020 programmes and strategies and the new multiannual financial framework (MFF).

**The need to ensure regular high-level political debates on gender equality and stronger cooperation** between all relevant actors in the field of gender equality, including civil society and academia: More systematic and effective cross-sectoral coordination and cooperation is also crucial in order to implement gender mainstreaming in all policy-making.

**That the implementation of the dual approach to promoting gender equality** needs to be continued and strengthened.

**The need for a stand-alone, high-level Gender Equality Strategy after 2019,** to follow the current Commission's Strategic Engagement for Gender Equality, in order to enhance the political commitment to achieve gender equality as one of the priorities and objectives of the EU. The strategy is also necessary for ensuring accountability and long-term coordination, as well as for the effective implementation and monitoring of gender equality policies in the EU.

**That the five thematic priority areas of the Strategic Engagement for Gender Equality remain valid today** and require determined action in the coming years. However, **new challenges** have also emerged, including digitalisation and its gendered effects on all areas of life, as well as inequalities related to migration. Furthermore, the EU is committed to the full and effective implementation of its international obligations and commitments to promote women's and girl's rights in all its external activities.

**The need to integrate a gender perspective more effectively into all EU policies,** by developing and implementing tools such as gender impact assessment and gender budgeting and by strengthening the expertise at both the EU and Member States level. This work is especially important in economic and budgetary policies, including the structural funds.

**That gender equality is an integral part of the strengthening of the social dimension of the EU,** including in the context of the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights. **Gender equality needs to be included in the implementation of long-term policies, including the Europe 2020 Strategy,** especially in the measures to increase employment and to reduce poverty. A stronger gender perspective is needed in all phases of **the European Semester,** including the use of the Social Scoreboard.

**The need to follow-up the EU Action Plan on Tackling the Gender Pay Gap (2017-2019)** and to ensure the effective implementation of the proposed measures.

**The need to strengthen women's labour market participation in quality jobs, to ensure predictable working conditions, and to combat gender discrimination in the labour market,** so as to strengthen women's economic independence, which will allow them to contribute fully to economic progress and sustainable development.



**The need to reaffirm the elimination of gender based violence as a priority of the European Union and the importance of the implementation of emergency protection measures by the Member States, as required by EU law and the provisions of the Istanbul Convention.**

That the link between the review and follow-up frameworks, including indicators, and the monitoring and evaluation of EU gender equality policies should be strengthened, with a view to the effective and comprehensive implementation of the **Beijing Platform for Action and the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.**

**The importance of the work of the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE)** that has significantly contributed to strengthening the knowledge underpinning gender equality policies in the EU and in the Member States, including through high quality research, the development of indicators, methods and tools and the collection and dissemination of data.

### **ACTIVITIES TO BE CARRIED OUT DURING THE PRESIDENCIES OF ROMANIA, FINLAND AND CROATIA**

Building on the work programmes and initiatives developed by the preceding Presidencies, the Trio Presidency will continue vigorously to promote gender equality. It will encourage discussion, action as well as the exchange of good practice, including in the areas identified in this Declaration and within the framework of the upcoming term of the European Parliament and the European Commission.

#### **The Presidency Trio commits to the following common goals:**

- **Making gender equality a priority on the EU's agenda**, especially by strengthening high-level political discussions on gender equality in different fora, including the EPSCO Council. In this context, the Presidency Trio emphasizes the importance of a **stand-alone, high-level Gender Equality Strategy after 2019.**
- **Supporting cooperation between the European Commission and Member States as well as cross-sectoral cooperation on gender equality at both the EU and Member States levels**, especially by hosting meetings of the High Level Group on Gender Mainstreaming, organizing Presidency events and presenting draft conclusions on gender equality for adoption by the Council.
- **Strengthening gender mainstreaming and its effective implementation in all policy areas**, including the key discussions and processes shaping the future of the EU, especially by including gender equality in high-level discussions and policy documents in different areas and emphasizing the interlinkage between gender equality, inclusive economic growth and sustainable development within the post-2020 framework.
- **Boosting women's labour market participation**, including by facilitating the re-entry into the labour market of women of all ages, with special emphasis on actions aiming at identifying and removing obstacles to their activity, such as the gender pay gap, the lack of affordable childcare and care for other dependants, traditional occupational choices, and slow career advancement.
- **Strengthening efforts to create an environment conducive to women's entrepreneurship.**
- **Taking measures to improve the situation of women in vulnerable situations and women from disadvantaged backgrounds**, including members of ethnic minorities such as Roma, women with a migrant background and women with disabilities.



## ROMANIA

### **1. Increasing the economic independence of women and men by reducing gender discrimination in business and reducing the gender gap in labour market participation.**

1. Improve the occupational structure of labour market participation among rural women and vulnerable groups. 2. Support the start-up and development of private economic structures by women in rural areas. 3. Reduce gender discrimination in business.

### **2. Preventing and combating gender-based violence, and strengthening emergency protection and support measures for victims.**

The implementation by the Member States of EU law on emergency protection measures, as well as the relevant provisions of the Istanbul Convention.

### **3. Combating the gender pay gap (with particular emphasis on the Commission's Action Plan 2017- 2019 on tackling the Gender Pay Gap).**

The Romanian Presidency will prepare draft Council Conclusions on the gender pay gap, specifically on policies and measures that Member States may apply in order to reduce the gap. The Conclusions are to be adopted by the EPSCO Council in June 2019. Romania intends to continue to support the call for an EU strategy on gender equality.

**During the Romanian Presidency, the following events are planned:**

- A High Level International Conference on "The Situation of Women in Modern Society: between empowerment, leadership and gender discrimination", 29–30 May 2019, Bucharest.
- A High Level International Conference "Perspectives of the Istanbul Convention: New Horizon - a paradigm change for all stakeholders", 4–6 June 2019, Bucharest. Romania will organise this event in partnership with Norway through a bilateral cooperation project.
- The High Level Group Meeting on Gender Mainstreaming, 18–19 February 2019, Bucharest.

Romania will also organize an EU-Presidency event / campaign with a specific focus on policies and measures that EU Member States apply in order to reduce the gender pay gap.

## FINLAND

### **1. Promoting Gender Equal Economies**

Gender equality is a crucial part of strengthening the social dimension of the EU. Gender equality and social and economic policies are closely intertwined and mutually reinforcing. Finland aims to promote a dual perspective regarding the relationship between gender equality and the economy: 1) Promotion of gender equality as a driver of sustainable growth, and 2) Strengthening links between economic and budgetary policies and the promotion of gender equality. Firstly, gender equality and better employment opportunities for women are important parts of inclusive and sustainable economic growth in the EU. Secondly, analysing the impacts of economic and budgetary policies on gender equality should be an integral part of future EU policies including the successor to the Europe 2020 Strategy and the European Semester. A strong political commitment as well as concrete measures and tools are needed to advance gender mainstreaming and gender budgeting in EU policies.



## 2. Review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in the EU – Beijing +25

The 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action provides an opportunity to assess progress made in the area of gender equality and discuss future actions and orientations at the beginning of a new term of the European Parliament and the European Commission. The fifth review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform of Action in the EU will be based on a report prepared by EIGE. The report will assess the implementation of the objectives included in all 12 critical areas of concern set out in the Beijing Platform for Action in the context of EU policy priorities and targets. The dual perspective regarding the relationship between the economy and gender equality serves as an important analytical lens for the review. The Finnish Presidency will table draft Council Conclusions on the Beijing +25 Review for adoption by the EPSCO Council meeting in December 2019.

**During the Finnish Presidency, the following events are planned:**

- A High Level Conference “Europe for Gender Equality? Taking Stock – Taking Action”, 30 September and 1 October 2019, Helsinki. The conference will focus on the results of the Beijing +25 Review and the future priorities and directions of EU gender equality policies. Specific attention will be given to the relationship between gender equality and the economy.
- The High Level Group on Gender Mainstreaming, 2 and 3 September 2019, Helsinki. Finland plans to continue the discussion initiated by Austria on restoring the political attention given to gender equality in the EU, in particular from the perspective of gender mainstreaming.
- A High Level Conference on the Economy of Wellbeing 18 and 19 September, Helsinki. The conference will address the interlinkage between wellbeing and economic policies. The gender equality perspective will be included on the agenda.
- The High Level Conference on Gender Equality in R&I, 23 and 24 October 2019, Helsinki. A stocktaking conference on 20 years of advancement of gender equality in research and innovation in Europe. Finland also plans to host a discussion on future focus areas of gender equality in R&I areas in light of recent developments in innovation systems.

## CROATIA

### 1. Increasing female labour market participation through the development of a stimulating framework

Croatia will address various factors that have influence on women’s employment and activity rates, by defining their significance and substance, including analysis of the effectiveness of the variety of measures to tackle them. Therefore, the main goal during the Croatian presidency will be to **identify obstacles to the access of women to the labour market and measures to overcome them**. This will contribute to the joint effort at the EU level to increase the participation of women in the labour market.

### 2. A dignified working environment adapted to the professional and personal needs of women

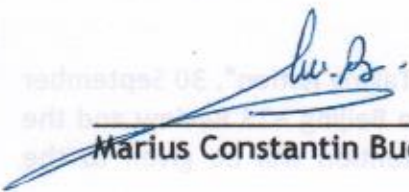
The working environment and working conditions are among the most important influencing factors and have an impact on women’s activity rates. As the ILO concluded in its report on “Ending violence and harassment in the world of work”, violence and harassment affect workplace relations, worker engagement, health, productivity, the quality of public and private services, and the reputations of enterprises. They also affect labour market participation and, in particular, may prevent women from entering and remaining in the labour market, especially in male-dominated sectors and jobs.



Given that women across EU are often victims of different types of discrimination and harassment (including sexual) at the workplace, and face numerous obstacles in their career development, the Croatian Presidency wants to strengthen dialogue and action at the EU level to ensure a dignified working environment for women.

**During the Croatian Presidency, the following events are planned:**

- A High Level Conference "Equal access of women to the labour market," which will focus on the relationship between female labour inactivity and the variety of obstacles that women face when entering or re-entering the labour market. The Conference will most likely take place in January 2020, in Zagreb. The outcome of the Conference can be used as input for the Council Conclusions.
- The High Level Group on Gender Mainstreaming will be organized in January 2020, in Zagreb.



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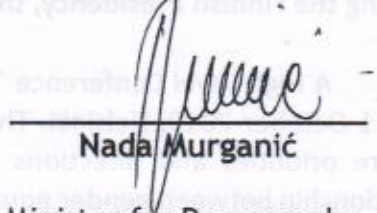
**Romania**



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