



Meeting of the Advisory Committee on Equal Opportunities for W/M 26 May 2016

Draft Minutes

Welcome and introduction

The chair, Ms **Marusa Gortnar (SL)**, opened the meeting and welcomed the participants.

The chair informed the committee that the meeting documents were available in the "compendium". Copies of the 2015 European Commission's annual report on equality between women and men and of the 2016-2019 Strategic engagement for gender equality were also made available to the participants.

1. Adoption of the draft agenda

The draft agenda was adopted.

2. Adoption of the draft minutes of the meeting of 26 November 2015

The draft minutes were adopted.

3. Information on recent developments in gender equality in the EU

The chair welcomed the European Commission's Equality Director, Salla Saastamoinen, and the Head of the Gender Equality Unit in DG JUST, Daniela Bankier, and invited them as well as other colleagues from the Gender Equality Unit to provide information on the recent developments in the area of gender equality.

Information was provided on the following subjects:

1. Strategic engagement for gender equality (2016-2019)
2. Annual report on equality between women and men
3. EU-2020
4. Work-life balance
5. Women on boards
6. Violence against women (VAW)
7. Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)
8. Mutual learning programme and state-of-play of the calls for proposal

Questions and comments followed:

ETUC enquired about the state-of-play of the follow-up to the 2014 European Commission's recommendation on pay transparency. Salla Saastamoinen explained that an assessment is on-going and that a report is foreseen for the second half of 2016. The report will look in detail at what Member States have done in order to implement the recommendation and what the impact has been in order to improve pay transparency.

Concerning the 2016-2019 Strategic engagement (point 1), **FR** praised the quality of the document but voiced concerns about the high number of indicators and asked for further information on how these indicators will be used. The European Commission clarified that there are around 30 indicators being used, with a selected number

of indicators for each priority area. Eurostat is the main data source unless otherwise indicated in the Strategic engagement. Many of these indicators are also used in the joint assessment framework. Some indicators used in the 2015 annual report (prepared in parallel to the Strategic engagement) will be updated, and others will be added for monitoring progress in the next annual report.

The European Commission then presented its plans for a new initiative on work-life balance (point 4). **ETUC** was pleased with the way its views had been presented in the 1st consultation stage; ETUC is of the opinion that it was high time for the EU to take both legal and non-legal action due to the major gaps and discrepancies for women and men at work in the various Member States. Although legislation is not needed on everything, there should be more consistency amongst the Member States on family-related leaves. Regarding non-legislative actions, ETUC proposes benchmarks for childcare and elderly care provisions to make a better link between the EU2020 agenda, CSRs and gender equality. Regarding flexible working time, ETUC wishes to better understand what the Commission proposes to improve the situation of both women and men in the labour market, in particular regarding the overrepresentation of women in flexible work.

Business Europe stated that it would like to see more progress on work-life balance and on increasing female employment rates. However, European employers would like to see a different approach when it comes to the instruments used. The proposal for a maternity leave directive was too broad and too complex, hence stayed blocked; proposed instruments should thus be more realistic if they are to be successful. Business Europe finds it important to build on existing instruments and is of the opinion that it is imperative to check what already works at national level; promotion of best practices should also be encouraged.

Eurocadres deems that agreements and a possible legislative framework must be developed 'close to the ground', at company level, where management can become more actively involved in combatting discrimination.

FR supports greater attention being given to increased fathers' leave and is also of the opinion that the Barcelona targets must be reactivated and that Member States must be pushed to reach the set targets. More could be done on this in the context of the European Semester.

The European Commission restated that its plans are to present a comprehensive proposal and that the role of fathers is certainly to be given due attention. At present, the European Commission is assessing the impact such a proposal could have. It added that the Barcelona targets only concern the availability of childcare facilities, not the number of hours that childcare is available. Regarding the CSRs issued in the context of the European Semester, only a limited number of CSRs can be issued and a thorough and detailed assessment is carried out each year by different Commission services/Directorates-General before getting to a final proposal.

DE described its own landscape regarding parental leave (including, under certain conditions, a bonus in the shape of additional time awarded to parents). The intention is to get more fathers involved in childcare and child education, while leaving more time for mothers to work. These policies have led to 40% of German fathers taking leave for as much as 3 months on average. German authorities conducted a study which shows that fathers who have taken parental leave spend more time with their children afterwards than those who have not – again freeing up time for mothers. Having models based on shared partnership in care thus enables mothers to work more - an important factor for economic growth. In this way, Germany strongly encouraged the European Commission to take a shared partnership approach into account.

Business Europe wanted to know more about the profile of fathers who take leave, and in response **DE** offered to provide information on its own data. In Germany, fathers taking leave come from a variety of backgrounds, including graduates, middle and upper income jobs. It is certainly more common for fathers working in the public sector to take longer leaves than those working in the private sector, although companies are increasingly using parental leave as a competitive advantage to attract more competent young men. According to a recent survey, 70% of fathers in Germany would like to have access to parental leave.

The **chair** concluded that some national work-life balance related initiatives could not only inform the debate but also provide more data on the uses and needs of paternity leave which will inform businesses.

On the status of women in decision-making (point 5), Salla Saastamoinen stated that the current European Commission's legislative proposal remains a priority and that where Member States have passed legislation, more changes occur. **Eurocadres** shares this line and is satisfied with the progress achieved in Member States where legislation was passed (French case was cited).

The discussions then moved on to violence against women (point 6), including advancements on the EU accession to the Istanbul Convention. Regarding the 2017 VAW year of focused actions, a restricted call addressed to Member States is to be published during the summer.

On the Istanbul Convention, **PL** asked for clarification on who is specifically meant by "official bodies responsible for the co-ordination, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and measures to prevent and combat all forms of violence covered by this Convention" in Article 10 of the Convention, as there is some confusion in Poland. The **Council of Europe** (CoE) said that it provides support for Member States in order to help them understand the articles.

The **CoE's** GREVIO published a questionnaire (available on the CoE website) in March 2016 to monitor the implementation of the convention by State Parties. The detailed questions are meant to establish a baseline evaluation of how the Convention is implemented by State Parties. There is also an indicative calendar for reporting on the GREVIO website. Information on the implementing bodies is also available on the COE website, under the meeting report of the second meeting of the Committee of the Parties – Appendix 3 (includes a list of bodies appointed by the State Parties).

The **CoE** also noted that 13 of the 22 ratifying parties to the Istanbul Convention are EU Member States (all EU Member States have now signed the Convention). The COE also thanked the European Commission for recently having come to Strasbourg to present its 2016-2019 Strategic engagement for gender equality.

FR (both the Ministry and the High Council for equality representatives) praised the latest developments towards EU accession to the Istanbul Convention. **FR** and the **European Women's Lobby (EWL)** held that regarding the Convention, NGOs should be increasingly mobilised concerning implementation and information sharing. EWL offered to provide information on violence against female asylum seekers and refugees based on a study it is currently conducting. Both France and the EWL also suggested the creation of an EU Observatory on VAW.

The **FR Haut Conseil à l'égalité** made the point that only a small number of EU Member States prosecutes perpetrators of violence against women. The High Council wanted to know more about the latest trends relating to the prosecution of perpetrators. **UK** reacted by saying that it is willing to share more detailed information on its current policy on prosecution of perpetrators of violence against women.

EWL added that it is very important and timely for the EU to sign, ratify and implement the Istanbul Convention and invites all State Parties to use the resources and information on violence against women available on EWL's website (section 'EWL Observatory on VAW'). EWL also asked if civil society would be involved in the 2017 year of focused actions on VAW.

Salla Saastamoinen confirmed that civil society will be actively involved in the 2017 year of focused actions and recalled that a few different calls for proposals on VAW (with substantial funding attached) will be launched throughout 2016 for projects to be implemented from 2017 onwards. The European Commission also reiterated that the Istanbul Convention is in itself a coherent and comprehensive instrument for combatting violence against women and emphasised EIGE's important role in collecting data in this area.

In reaction to the European Commission's presentation on CSW (point 7), **UN Women** expressed their satisfaction that Commissioner Jourova joined the CSW in New York and noted that the event received record (social and print) media attention. It was important to highlight the link between the Beijing Platform for Action and SDG n° 5 and the urgency and criticality of systematic gender mainstreaming in the implementation of the 2030 agenda.

Both **AT** and **SE** noted the difficulty in obtaining conclusions and in preserving the *acquis*. Austria also emphasised the need to maintain the language of the Beijing Platform for Action in the document as the baseline for reaching consistent outcomes, and it agrees that the EU should include NGOs in its delegation. **EWL** concurred on this.

FR deemed it to have been a positive year for the EU thanks to the clear and inspiring commitment of Commissioner Jourová in coming to New York. **BusinessEurope** added that in 2017 social partners would like to be closely involved in CSW preparations, the 2017 theme being "Women's economic empowerment in the changing world of work".

4. Information from current and future Presidencies

NL Presidency informed the Advisory Committee about the March EPSCO Council, where the NL Presidency presented Council Conclusions (CC) as a response to the Commission's Strategic Engagement for gender

equality 2016-2019 and the Commission's LGBTI Action plan. There was support from 27 MS for CCs (on both gender and LGBTI), but one MS blocked the CCs on LGBTI; the NL Presidency is still hoping a constructive attitude from all Member States will lead to the adoption of Council Conclusions on both topics during the next EPSCO Council of 16-17 June.

SK Presidency will review - in cooperation with EIGE - the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in the EU Member States in the Area of "Women and Poverty". Attention will be given to the negative factors that influence women's lives, their working conditions, and their place in society. The High Level Group Meeting on Gender Mainstreaming is planned to take place 7-8 September 2016 in Bratislava. A high-level expert conference on 'Work-life balance in a changing society' is taking place 20-21 September 2016 in Bratislava.

MT Presidency is to give additional details on its 2017 Presidency activities at a later stage, but it has confirmed that it will be hosting a Presidency conference on violence against women; Malta will also convene the High Level Group on Gender mainstreaming in February 2017 and will actively participate in the preparations of next year's UN Commission on the Status of Women.

5. Opinions to be prepared in 2016

5.a Opinion on gender mainstreaming in refugee's reception and integration measures

The mandate of the opinion on gender mainstreaming in refugee reception and integration measures was presented to the Advisory Committee by **Katarzyna Ptak/JUST D.2** who presented the context of the opinion and explained the different issues addressed. The title was reformulated following comments made by some delegations during the meeting.

The opinion is to be prepared by a dedicated working group, chaired by Mr Alexis Rinckenbach from the French *Ministère des Familles, de l'Enfance et des Droits des femmes*. He stressed the huge humanitarian emergency to be dealt with, which is a delicate matter in the field of justice and home affairs, on which all political leaders have an opinion; it is very relevant that the Advisory Committee quickly develops an opinion.

DE noted that awareness-raising for security personnel must be ensured so that these professionals (first contact points with refugees) understand the importance of having separate sanitary facilities, the importance of integrating protection policies in reception of refugees (including providing advisory services, psychological services, education on refugees' rights) and the translation of support information into refugee languages.

These aspects are to be taken into account in the opinion.

Next steps: The 1st working Group contributions to the draft opinion are expected in June. A draft opinion will be sent to all Advisory Committee members for their own comments and recommendations in the course of September/October. The formal adoption of the opinion is foreseen in November 2016.

5.b Opinion on female genital mutilation (FGM)

The mandate of the opinion on FGM was introduced to the Advisory Committee by **Anne van Nistelrooij/JUST D.2**. The opinion is to be prepared by a working group chaired by Ms Andreia Marques from the Portuguese Commission for Citizenship and Gender Equality.

DE praised the questions in the mandate: this is a good occasion for Germany to present some transferable policies already in place as well as results of on-going studies/surveys on FGM. The German Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth also welcomes ideas for legislative proposals on honour crimes, abduction and forced marriage. The **European Commission** expressed interest in hearing more about the German legislative experience and invited everyone to actively contribute to this opinion.

Next steps: The 1st working group contributions to the draft opinion are expected in June. A draft opinion will be sent to all Advisory Committee members for their own comments and

recommendations in the course of September/October. The formal adoption of the opinion is foreseen in November 2016.

6. Presentation and discussion of the report “Magnitude and impact factors of the GPG in the EU” by the European Network of Experts on Gender Equality (ENEGE)

ENEGE's expert **Christina Boll** undertook a comprehensive analysis of the sources of wage differences between male and female workers in Europe: its main purpose was to shed light on the interplay of explanatory factors as well as to reveal country differences in the roles of these factors.

The presentation of the report contributed to a fact-based and insightful discussion on factors that have an impact on the gender pay gap and on possible ways of addressing it. The full report is available online: http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/files/gender_pay_gap/2016_factors_gpg_en.pdf

ETUC thanked Dr Boll for the inspiring and stimulating research she has carried out. ETUC also gave concrete examples of how the terminology of job titles is sometimes heavily biased: this is certainly an area where further action is also needed. **Eurocadres** concurred that even if today young women are much more highly trained, in many cases this is not recognised in the positions that they will eventually get.

FR's Haut Conseil à l'égalité inquired whether part-time work was framed as voluntary or involuntary work, while **BE** informed the audience of the importance of setting gender-neutral pay systems (Belgium also issued a position paper on this). **BusinessEurope** warned that it is important not to interpret too much, given some of the limitations of the report: these were explained and acknowledged by Dr Boll herself during the presentation.

Commenting on Eurocadres' remark, Dr Boll stated that the fact that women are not able to compete with men despite their equivalent levels of education and training is valid; vertical segregation is certainly contributing to the overall pay gap. Answering the question of the *Haut Conseil à l'égalité*, she explained that the study was structured in a way that does not allow us to know whether part-time work is voluntary or involuntary work.

Equinet took the opportunity to advertise its own handbook on pay transparency and gender-neutral job evaluations: the handbook is currently being drafted and it will be published during the summer.

7. Any other business

NEW provisional date of the next meeting of the Advisory Committee is **08/12/2016**.

The chair thanked the Advisory Committee for the constructive meeting and closed the session.

List of Participants

Albuquerque	Daniel	European Commission
Alliks	Ingus	Ministry of Welfare
Ástgeirsdóttir	Kristín	Icelandic Directorate for Gender Equality
Bagni	Francesca	Consigliera Nazionale di Parità
Bankier	Daniela	European Commission
Batthyány-Schmidt	Margit	COPA
Bellomia	Valeria	Consigliera Nazionale di Parità
Blancard	Patricia	Eurocadres
Boeckermann	Gesa	European Commission
Boll	Christina	ENEGE
Brattberg	Josefin Emanuel	Ministry of Health and Social Affairs
Cozar	Eva	CEC
Cravero	Guillaume	BUSINESSEUROPE
Croitoru	Andra	Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Protection and the Elderly
Dabrowska	Magdalena	Government Plenipotentiary for Equal Treatment
Davoine	Lucie	European Commission
Dutta	Piyali	Hessisches Ministerium für Soziales und Integration
Fernández	Mercedes Alicia	Ministry of Health, Social Services and Equality
Gortnar	Marusa	Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities
Heraclides	Andreas	Government Equalities Office
Hurley	John	Department of Justice & Equality
Ivarsson	Kristin	Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions
Jarrett	Emilie	European Commission
Jeram	Jasna	Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities
Joly	Carine	Institut pour l'égalité des femmes et des hommes
Jonsdottir	Johanna	EFTA Secretariat
Kalnina	Edita	National Equality Council
Katsounari	Evangelia	Ministry of Justice and Public Order

Lasen Diaz	Carolina	Council of Europe
Maycock	Joanna	European Women's Lobby
McAteer	Mari-Elina	MINISTRY OF SOCIAL AFFAIRS AND HEALTH
Mills	Gloria	ETUC
Mondeková	Anna	Department of Gender Equality and Equal Opportunities
Muliulis	Vytis	Office of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsman
Murphy	Therese	EIGE
Niavrani	Jacqueline	
van Nistelrooij	Anne	European Commission
Papageorgiou	Georgia	Ministry of Interior & Administrative Reconstruction
Penev-Ben Shahar	Katharina	Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth
Rinckenbach	Alexis	Ministry of Social Affairs and Health
Ringhofer	Karina	Referat Frauenangelegenheiten, Burgenland Landesregierung
Rosa	Marta	Copa-cogeca
Saastamoinen	Salla	European Commission
Sares	Anita	CITE
Sassian	Linda	Department of Equality Policies
Schumacher	Dagmar	UN Women
Sechi	Cinzia	ETUC
Sorlien	Petter	Norwegian Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion
Steinfeld	Katrine	EQUINET
Šterk	Tamara	Office for gender equality , Republic of Croatia
Tomassetti	Maria	European Commission
Warmedam	Sjoerd	Ministry of Education, Culture & Science
Wickler	Isabelle	Ministère des égalités des chances