



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL JUSTICE AND CONSUMERS

Directorate D: Equality
Unit D.2: Gender equality

Meeting of the Advisory Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men

27 November 2014

Draft Minutes

Welcome and introduction

The chair, Ms **Tanja Olsson Blandy**/SW, opened the meeting and welcomed the participants. The chair informed the audience that the relevant documents for the meeting were available in the handed-out compendium.

1. Adoption of the draft agenda

The draft agenda was adopted.

2. Adoption of the draft minutes of the meeting of 22 May 2014

The draft minutes were adopted.

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

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

The Commission emphasized that for the first time an EU Commissioner (Vera Jourová) has gender equality explicitly mentioned in her portfolio and informed the AC about the preparations for a new Strategy on equality between w/m that is to be adopted at the end of 2015. In this context, an extensive consultation and a forum on the future of gender equality will take place in order to gather input from a vast array of stakeholders.

Additional information was provided on the following subjects:

1. New Strategy on equality between w/m
2. State-of-play maternity leave
3. Women on boards (WOB)
4. Equal Pay
5. Violence against women (VAW)
6. Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)
7. Exchange of good practices
8. Calls for proposal: state-of-play

ETUC expressed the need to involve social partners in the process of developing a new Strategy and reiterated the need to revitalize the maternity leave proposal, saying that the proposal of the European Parliament is reasonable and that compromises should be made not only on economic, but also on social issues.

PL asked whether the WOB proposal was to be included in REFIT. The Commission noted that the WOB proposal was not part of REFIT; the maternity leave proposal was discussed in this context instead, due to the current deadlock between the EP and the Council.

The **CoE** presented the state-of-play on the ratification process of the Istanbul Convention and asked for an update on whether the EU is planning to sign it: the Commission replied that possibilities for an EU accession to the Convention are being explored. The CoE also provided details on the set up of the monitoring body of the Istanbul Convention (a first meeting is in principle to be held in the spring of 2015) and informed the audience about a FGM study that it had recently released and that is available on the CoE's website.

The **Commission** went on to inform the Advisory Committee about the preparations for the CSW (to be held in New York at the beginning of March 2015). **UN Women** also took the floor to give a short presentation on UN's works on Beijing+20.

ETUC addressed the importance of involving social partners in the EU preparations for the CSW. In this context, it was clarified that the EU delegation for the CSW mainly gathers representatives of the Commission, the EEAS and sometimes of the EP. The Commission and EEAS intend to extensively gather input from both social partners and NGOs though. The Commission also advises social partners and NGOs to strongly network with their member state representatives and to seek strengthening contacts at national level.

Following the **Commission's** presentation on the 2015 exchanges of good practices, **ETUC** took the floor to ask if social partners could play an active role in these exchanges. The Commission confirmed that it is willing to take on board relevant experiences from social partners in the upcoming exchanges of good practices.

LU announced a study carried out with the University of Luxembourg on gender stereotypes in video games/song lyrics and added that this study provides an interesting basis for upcoming exchanges of good practices. The study touches upon new forms of VAW as a consequence of digitalization. In this context, **UN Women** added that the Beijing +20 report provided additional information on new forms of VAW and it also addressed stereotypes in the film industry.

CEC noted that lately there were fewer projects on women in the media. The **Commission** reaffirmed that 'women in media' is indeed an important issue which was addressed by both

the Irish Presidency and the CoE/EU's recent MEDIANE project (Media in Europe for Diversity Inclusiveness 2013-14). This joint programme aims at strengthening and enriching the capacities of media outlets and professionals by including diversity in all media content:

http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/cultureheritage/mars/mediane/default_en.asp

The **Commission** additionally pointed out that media's freedom should by no means be questioned, yet emphasized the importance of awareness-raising on gender equality among journalists and media specialists.

4. Information from current and future Presidencies

Ms Elena Falcomatà informed the AC on **IT Presidency** activities organised so far and planned until the end of December in the area of gender equality:

- 9 July 2014: European Conference “Promoting Gender Balance in Decision Making” in Rome.
- 18 and 19 September 2014: meeting of the High Level group on gender mainstreaming in Rome.
- 23 and 24 October 2014: High Level EU Presidency Conference on the Beijing Platform for Action. “Gender Equality in Europe: Unfinished Business? – Taking Stock 20 Years after the Beijing Platform for Action” in Rome.
- 11 December 2014: planned adoption by EPSCO of the Council Conclusions on the review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action by the Member States and the EU Institutions. “Gender equality in the EU: the way forward after 2015. Taking stock of 20 years of implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action”.
- Negotiation on the Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on improving gender balance among directors of companies listed on stock exchanges and related measures.
- 16 December 2014: European Conference on “Violence against women - Good Practices on Communication Campaigns”, to be held in Rome.

Ms Raffaella Gallini complemented Ms Falcomatà's presentation by providing a quick overview of other events organised by both the Italian Ministry of Labour and the National Equality Counsellor.

Mr Ingus Alliks of the future **Latvian Presidency** gave a general outline of upcoming activities:

- 22-23 January 2015: High Level group on gender mainstreaming to take place in Riga.
- Beginning of March 2015 (59th CSW): LV Presidency is planning two side events.
- March 2015: High level international conference on women's empowerment will be organised in Riga.
- May 2015: Latvia will host the World Press Freedom Day where a side event on 'women and media' will be organised in cooperation with UNESCO and UN Women.
- June 2015: Foreseen adoption of Council Conclusions on gender gap in pensions.

- June 2015: European Institute for Gender Equality in collaboration with the Latvian Presidency will present the second edition of the Gender Equality Index in Brussels.

Ms Isabelle Wickler explained that the priority of the future **Luxembourgish Presidency** is the balanced representation between women and men in the power-sharing and decision-making area. This entails an active support of the proposed EU directive on improving gender balance among directors of companies listed on stock exchanges. LU also provided a general outline of its planned activities:

- July 2015: include point on gender equality in the agenda of the informal EPSCO.
- September 2015: High Level group on gender mainstreaming.
- Autumn 2015: International Conference on the topic "Women and decision-making" (organised in cooperation with the National Council of Women, CNFL).
- November 2015: Conference on the individuation of taxes and fiscal rights.
- December 2015: Foreseen adoption of Council Conclusions on women and decision-making.

5. Presentation of the opinions of the Advisory Committee

5.1. Opinion on "Gender Equality in the 21st Century: remaining challenges & priorities"

Presentation of the Advisory Committee opinion on "Gender Equality in the European Union in the 21st century: remaining challenges and priorities" by **Ms Pauline Moreau**, chair of the Working Group (WG) and until recently Director of the Irish Department of Justice and Equality. The opinion was very well received by the members of the Advisory Committee.

Several members/observers openly expressed their gratitude to the quality work carried by the WG chaired by Ms Moreau.

FI raised the issue of SRHR, pointing out that the opinion should include sexual rights and that the EU should have a stronger position when it comes to SRHR. Ms Moreau explained that the language used in the current draft is the same as the language used in UN-settings and that wording proposed reflects a compromise that can be agreed by everyone. Opinion was adopted based on this compromise.

5.2. Opinion on "How to improve quantitative data collection at national/European level on Violence against Women (VAW)?"

The Commission reminded the audience that the opinion on "How to improve quantitative data collection at national/European level on Violence against Women (VAW)?" had been previously adopted. The Advisory Committee had endorsed this opinion by written procedure two weeks before the meeting. **Ms Inga Rudecka/PL** gave a short presentation of the opinion that provides valid and insightful recommendations on how to improve VAW data collection.

Within this context, **EIGE** informed the audience about events being organised on administrative data sources and on a strategic framework against VAW. EIGE will also launch an updated version of the data integrated index on VAW in June 2015.

FR emphasised the importance of defining legal concepts related to VAW, such as 'harassment' and 'rape'. EIGE pointed out that this has already been done and that the legal concepts related with these phenomena were available on EIGE's website.

5.3. Ad-hoc opinion on "The review of Europe 2020"

The Commission informed the Advisory Committee of the previous adoption by written procedure of the ad-hoc opinion "*The review of Europe 2020*". This opinion was submitted to the Commission's Secretariat-General at the end of October 2014.

Ms **Geneviève Zdrojewski** /FR gave a short presentation of the ad-hoc opinion and explained that this contribution focusses on gender related aspects that are to be considered in Europe 2020's review process.

The Commission thanked FR for having held the pen for this ad-hoc opinion.

6. Presentation of the "Toolkit for Gender Equality in Practice"

The **European social partners** presented their "Toolkit for Gender Equality in Practice". ETUC, Business Europe, UEAPME and CEEP jointly developed a toolkit that is meant to serve as a catalyst for the design, negotiation and dissemination of effective GE measures in different enterprises and working environments. The toolkit was released in May 2014 and contains 100 best practices for gender equality at work from across 25 European countries.

Daniela Bankier thanked the social partners for their work, yet pointed out that European social partners can play a greater role in supporting the Commission in (hard) policy and law-making. Business Europe added that negotiations on binding legal obligations are often very complex.

7. Discussion and adoption of the 2015 Work Programme

Daniela Bankier presented the proposed themes for opinions to be prepared in 2015.

The Advisory Committee agreed to prepare two opinions in 2015:

- 'Digital Europe and gender equality: risks and opportunities'
- 'How to overcome occupational segregation in European labour markets'

LU, NL, SI, CoE and **ETUC** have volunteered to take part in the working group for 'Digital Europe and gender equality: risks and opportunities'. **PT** and **Business Europe** have volunteered to take part in the working group 'How to overcome occupational segregation in European labour markets'. Additional volunteers are expected to enrol in the course of December/January, once the Advisory Committee members have had the time to liaise with their own internal hierarchies.

Business Europe suggested including the gender pay gap in the opinion on how to overcome occupational segregation in European labour markets. A mandate is to follow in the 1st quarter of 2015 and, at that stage, details will be provided on which issues is the opinion to focus on.

SI queried about the possibility of inviting external experts to contribute to the opinions. The Commission is positive about it, but it stressed that such contributions are to be endorsed by the Member States' services before being sent to the Commission.

8. Any other business (AOB)

The **Commission** briefly presented some informative Advisory Committee's 'historic' facts and figures. This presentation also listed some of the opinions prepared by the AC in the past.

According to Article 6 of the Commission Decision of 16 June 2008 relating to the setting-up of the Advisory Committee (AC), a chair and two vice-chairs have to be confirmed/elected for 2015.

Waltraud Dahs/DE (1st vice-chair in 2014) is to become chair of the AC in 2015. Marusa Gortnar/SI is to become 1st vice-chair. The AC also decided to elect Jacqueline Niavarani/AT as 2nd vice-chair for 2015. These decisions were warmly welcomed by the members of the Committee.

The chair thanked the Committee for the constructive meeting. AC members sincerely thanked Tanja Olsson Blandy/SW and the chairs of the three 2014 Working Groups for all the work accomplished during the year.

The next AC meeting is in principle to take place on 21 May 2015.