



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL JUSTICE

Directorate D: Equality
Unit D.2: Gender equality

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

28 November 2013

Draft Minutes

Welcome and introduction

The chair, Ms Monika Ksieniewicz (PL), opened the meeting and welcomed the participants.

1. Adoption of the draft agenda

The draft agenda was adopted.

2. Adoption of the draft minutes of the meeting of 23 May 2013

The draft minutes were adopted.

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

The chair invited Mr Aurel Ciobanu-Dordea, Ms Daniela Bankier and Mr Renatas Mazeika (as well as various colleagues from the Gender Equality Unit) to give information on recent developments in the area of Gender Equality and the new Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme.

The following subjects were addressed:

- Women on boards' proposal for a Directive and the recently published progress report on W/M in leadership positions (presented by Aurel Ciobanu-Dordea)
- Europe 2020 and preparation of the future 2014-2020 European Structural Funds (Gesa Böckermann)
- Violence against women (Anne Galand)
- Equal Pay (Aurel Ciobanu-Dordea)
- Commission on the Status of Women (Maria Tomassetti)
- Exchange of good practices (Daniela Bankier)
- Mid-term review of the Strategy for equality between W/M (Daniela Bankier)
- Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme (Renatas Mazeika)

Comments and questions were received from EWL, SE, IE, ETUC, FR, CoE, UN Women and DE. These include:

- Request for more emphasis on gender equality aspects in official EU 2020 Commission documents

The Equality Directorate of DG JUST will continue its work on Europe 2020 in order to ensure the inclusion of gender equality aspects in official documents related to this process. It is important to note that there was already a strong emphasis on gender equality in the issued 2013 Country Specific Recommendations (CSR). These constituted important social and economic policy contributions and should not be underestimated. DG JUST will also provide substantial input for the upcoming mid-term review of Europe 2020.

- Increased visibility for gender equality subjects in DG EMPL website

DG JUST will transmit this request to DG EMPL.

- Possible revision of 'Equal Pay' Directive (2006/54/EC)

DG JUST's Equality Director, Mr. Aurel Ciobanu-Dordea, explained that there are two main reasons for not opening up this Directive: i) realities on the ground; ii) it would be risky to revise the 'Equal Pay' Directive in the current political context, as many Member States may not agree with it. Effective application of the existing EU legal framework on equal pay is indispensable for tackling the gender pay gap and, in that vein, the Commission's focus for the coming years will be to monitor the correct application and enforcement of the equal pay provisions at national level and to support Member States and other stakeholders with these tasks.

- Comment from CoE on the state-of-play of the Istanbul Convention's ratification process
- Comment from UN Women expressing its willingness to keep collaborating with the EU on preparations for the next Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) and on post-Millennium Development Goals.
- Question on how to ensure fair allocation of funding for gender equality and VAW under the new Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme

Mr. Renatas Mazeika, Head of DG JUST's Programme Management Unit, explained that the funds allocated to the REC Programme (2014-2020) amount to around EUR 440 million and that in the implementation of the Programme, appropriate and fair distribution of funds between different specific objectives is to be ensured. Ensuring continuity of actions and predictability of funding in all areas covered by the REC Programme are also Commission priorities. DG JUST's Programme Management Unit is currently preparing the 2014 Annual Work Programme in close collaboration with DG JUST's policy units (including Gender Equality Unit). It will be up to the future

REC Committee –where Member States will be represented- to eventually endorse the 2014 Work Programme.

4. Information from current and forthcoming Presidencies

Ms Justina Puodžiūtė – the representative from the current Lithuanian Presidency - informed the Committee on the events and activities in the area of gender equality, which include, among others:

- TRIO declaration signed by Ministers responsible for gender equality on 30 April during the Irish presidency conference. This document established priorities and activities of TRIO partners – Ireland, Lithuania and Greece.
- The Lithuanian Presidency is focusing on de facto equality between women and men. Therefore it is paying particular attention to taking the Beijing Platform for Action area of concern - Institutional mechanisms.
- Lithuania has developed Council Conclusions reviewing indicators on institutional mechanisms.
- Building on the existing indicators in this area of concern adopted in the Finnish Presidency and the related study on the situation at that point in the Member States, Lithuania has cooperated with the European Institute for Gender Equality on the preparation of a comparative study to look at the subsequent changes in institutional mechanisms in the Member States and the impact of these changes on the effectiveness of the institutional mechanisms for gender equality.
- To ensure continued co-operation between Member States and the European Commission, Lithuania hosted a meeting of the High Level Group on Gender Mainstreaming on 11th and 12th September 2013 in Vilnius.
- Lithuania also organised a Presidency conference entitled 'Gender Equality de facto as a Contribution to Reaching Europe 2020 Targets: the Effectiveness of Institutional Mechanisms'. This event was held in Vilnius on September 13 in conjunction with the HLG meeting. The conclusions of different sessions of the conference fed the Draft Council Conclusions.
- And finally Lithuania continued the work started by the first TRIO member, the Irish Presidency, with the Proposal for a Directive on improving gender balance among non-executive directors of companies listed on stock exchanges and related measures. While all delegations are in principle in favour of improving gender balance on company boards, a number of delegations strongly prefer national measures (or non-binding measures at the EU level) whereas others support EU-wide legislation. Substantial technical work has been done at Working Party level. However further work and political reflection will be required before a compromise can be reached. Significant progress has nevertheless been made under the Lithuanian Presidency in clarifying the provisions of the draft Directive with the aim of achieving a broader agreement on this Proposal. The progress report will be on the agenda of EPSCO Council on 9 December 2013.

Mr Dimosthenis Tremos – of the forthcoming Greek Presidency of the Council of the European Union (starting in January 2014) - gave a detailed overview of the planned activities in the field of gender equality:

Follow-up of the Beijing Platform for Action

- Greece is focusing on the Critical Area “Women and the Economy” and its Strategic Objective “Promote women’s economic rights and independence, including access to employment, appropriate working conditions and control over economic resources”.
- A Report will be prepared in cooperation with the European Institute for Gender Equality – EIGE – and the European Commission, aiming at the development of new indicators in relation to women’s employment, building on work undertaken by previous Presidencies. The exercise will be framed around the Europe 2020 Strategy and be in line as much as possible with the on-going work in the Employment Committee (EMCO) sub-indicators group. The intention is to link the economic independence of women to the quantity and quality of work and to develop/propose new indicators for the follow-up of the BPfA in this area focusing on the following five issues:
 - Full Time Equivalent employment rate (FTE), which highlights the quantity of work and better highlights gender inequalities;
 - an analysis of part-time work, with a distinction between (very) short and long part-time work in order to highlight more the linkages with economic independence and also the sustainability of the social protection systems;
 - a distinction between voluntary and involuntary part-time work, important in a time of crisis;
 - the use of temporary and fixed-term contracts and the transitions between these forms of contracts to more stable contracts;
 - an analysis of the self-employed and gender differences.This work could also be complemented by the parallel and independent work that the EIGE is doing on collecting good practices on entrepreneurship.
- On the basis of the Report, Greece will prepare Council Conclusions on women’s employment and on the promotion of women’s economic rights and independence, including access to employment, appropriate working conditions and control over economic resources, and these will be presented to the EPSCO Council in June 2014.

Gender Mainstreaming

- To ensure continued cooperation between Member States and the European Commission, Greece will host a meeting of the High Level Group on Gender Mainstreaming (Athens, 6-7/2/2014).
- Gender equality will be mainstreamed in different Council formations.

Events on gender equality

- European Conference on women and e-skills, organized by the General Secretariat for Gender Equality of Greece (Athens, 4-4-2014).
- Youth Event, “Thessaloniki, European Youth Capital City 2014”, gender perspective through the participation of the General Secretariat for Gender Equality of Greece and the European Institute for Gender Equality (Thessaloniki, 10-13/3/2014).

- Event on the FRA Survey on violence against women, organized jointly by the European Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) and the General Secretariat for Gender Equality of Greece (Brussels, March 2014).
- Support of the organization of the European Conference on the reconciliation of family and working life by the “Confederation of Family Organizations in the European Union- COFACE” during the Greek Presidency of the Council of the European Union (Athens, spring 2014).
- European Conference on combating poverty through regional and local development in the E.U. (Athens, proposed period May 2014), organized by the Greek Ministry of Labour, Social Security & Welfare and supported by the General Secretariat for Gender Equality of Greece (financed by the European Commission/DG Employment & Social Affairs).

U.N. Commission on the Status of Women

- Greece will cooperate with the European External Action Service (EEAS) and the European Commission with the aim of having a coordinated presence of the European Union at the 58th Session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW, New York, 10-21/3/2014).

Mr Michele Palma – of the forthcoming Italian Presidency of the Council of the European Union (starting in July 2014) – explained that Italy will organise the following activities:

- **Equality Summit “*Non discrimination and vulnerable groups*”**
17-19 October 2014 in Bari or Palermo (tbc)
- **Meeting of the High Level Group on Gender Mainstreaming** 18 and 19 September 2014
- **EU Roma Network Meeting on “*Best practices for the use of Structural Funds for Roma people inclusion policies*”**
November 2014
- **Special section on Diversity Management during the Employment Week** 21-28 November 2014
- **European Conference on “*Promoting gender balance in economic decision-making*”**
8 and 9 July 2014
- **Conference on the Beijing Platform for Action** 23 and 24 October 2014
- **Informal Meeting of Gender Equality Ministers** 24 October 2014
- Within the framework of the Italian Presidency of the Council of the EU, Italy will host the **COST policy-driven network GenderSTE Conference “Gender Cities. Designing sustainable Urban Environment for All”** on 25 and 26 September 2014.

5. Presentation of 2013 Advisory Committee's opinions

5.1 Opinion on Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and presentation of European Commission's FGM Communication adopted on 25/11/2013

The chair reminded the audience that the FGM opinion was adopted by written procedure in early September 2013 and invited Ms Anne Galand, Policy Officer, Gender Equality Unit / DG JUST, to give a presentation on the content of the recently released FGM Communication (this document is included in the compendium handed out to participants).

At the end of the discussion, the chair thanked working group members for their valuable contributions and asked AC members if they wished to make any final comments. The Council of Europe informed the audience that it will soon release a handbook on FGM (to become available around February 2014). EIGE also informed the audience that it is planning a follow-up study on FGM in 2014.

5.2 Opinion on reducing the gender gap in pensions

The chair recalled participants that the Advisory Committee decided in its meeting of 29 November 2012 to set up a working group to prepare this opinion and asked the chair of the working group, Ms Geneviève Zdrojewski, to briefly introduce the opinion.

The chair then invited Ms Nuria Diez Guardia, Policy Officer, Gender Equality Unit /DG JUST, to further detail the content of the draft opinion on reducing the gender gap in pensions. AC members were requested to send written comments on the draft opinion until 06/12/2013. The Belgian delegation asked for an extension until 17/12/2013, which was granted. Consequently, formal adoption of the opinion on reducing the gender gap in pensions will be carried out by written procedure in the beginning of 2014.

6. Outline of the Commission's Annual Report on equality between W/M

A first outline (detailing main sections) of the Commission's 2013 Annual Report on Equality between W/M was presented to the Committee by Ms Lucie Davoine, Policy Officer, Gender Equality Unit /DG JUST.

The Annual Report is widely disseminated and extensively used by stakeholders in the field of gender equality. It provides them with:

- a summary of main EU policy and legal developments on gender equality in 2013;
- examples of good practices;
- an analysis of major trends, on the basis of recent scientific evidence and key indicators;
- a statistical annex, which can be useful when national stakeholders want to situate national performances in the European context.

ES, DE, EWL, Business Europe and UN Women all provided comments on the outline and on the key themes that are to be highlighted in the Annual Report.

The Commission will -as far as possible- duly take into account comments and suggestions and prepare the 2013 Annual Report, which should be adopted around mid-April 2014.

7. Discussion and adoption of the 2014 Work Programme

The chair reminded the Committee that two information notes were sent to AC members on 19/11/2013 on point 7 of the agenda and that both documents were included in the compendium handed out to participants.

The first note addressed the possibility of preparing 2014 ad-hoc opinions, while the other note focused on the possible themes for standard opinions to be prepared during 2014.

Ms Daniela Bankier, Head of the Gender Equality Unit/DG Justice, presented a possible framework to prepare ad-hoc opinions. There was general agreement on the suggested proceedings. Germany explicitly asked to limit the number of possible ad-hoc opinions to maximum 2 per year and to give sufficient time to delegations to come up with the first written inputs: 3 weeks instead of the 2 initially suggested.

Ms. Bankier went on to explain the proposed themes for standard opinions to be prepared in 2014. The Advisory Committee agreed to prepare 2014 standard opinions on the following issues:

- Gender Equality in the European Union in the 21st century: remaining challenges and priorities
- How to improve quantitative data collection at national/European level on Violence against Women (VAW)

The 2014 Work Programme was adopted. Several delegations stepped forward and volunteered to actively participate in one (or sometimes both) working group(s). It was agreed that following the meeting, an e-mail would be sent to all members and observers with a request to formally appoint participants to the working groups.

8. Election of the chair and vice-chair persons for 2014

According to Article 6 of the Commission Decision of 16 June 2008 relating to the setting-up of the Advisory Committee, a chair and vice-chairs had to be confirmed/elected for 2014.

It was agreed that T. Olsson Blandy/SE (former 1st vice-chair) become the 2014 AC chair. P. Moreau/IE (2nd vice-chair in 2013) informed the audience that she will not be able to take on the role of 1st vice-chair in 2014. The AC decided to elect Waltraud Dahs/DE as 1st vice-chair and to elect Marusa Gortnar/SL as 2nd vice-chair for 2014. Both vice-chairs were warmly welcomed by the members of the Advisory Committee.

9. Any other business

Mr Michele Palma/IT presented the recently launched – on 25/11/2013- Italian national campaign on violence against women (entitled “Riconosci la violenza” - Recognize Violence) to the members of the Committee. This campaign will be running until Autumn 2014:
<http://www.pariopportunita.gov.it/index.php/primo-piano/2406-qriconosci-la-violenzaq>

Ms Cécile Gréboval, European Women's Lobby Secretary General, gave a short presentation on EWL's 50/50 Campaign for Parity Democracy. For additional details, please consult:
<http://www.womenlobby.org/get-involved/ewl-campaigns-actions/50-50-campaign-for-democracy/50-50-campaign-2012-2014/>

Ms Monika Ksieniewicz informed the Committee that the provisional dates (to be confirmed in April and October 2014) for next year's meetings are **22/05/2014** and **27/11/2014**.

The chair thanked the Committee for the constructive meeting. AC members thanked the chair for the work accomplished in 2013.