



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



Council Conclusions on Eliminating Gender Stereotypes in Society

*2876th EMPLOYMENT, SOCIAL POLICY, HEALTH AND
CONSUMER AFFAIRS Council meeting*

Luxembourg, 9 June 2008

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

"WHEREAS:

1. Gender equality is a fundamental principle of the European Union enshrined in the EC Treaty, as well as one of the Community's objectives; equality between women and men is promoted through a dual approach combining gender mainstreaming and specific measures, including positive action;
2. The European Council of 23-24 March 2006 adopted a European Pact for Gender Equality, encouraging action at Member State and Union level, inter alia to combat gender stereotypes in the labour market, in particular those related to the sex-segregated labour market and education;
3. The elimination of gender stereotypes in education, training and culture, on the labour market and in the media is a priority area of the Commission's Roadmap for equality between women and men, 2006-2010¹;

¹ Doc. 7034/06.

P R E S S

4. The Commission's Report on equality between women and men – 2008² identifies the need for the Member States, in collaboration with the social partners and civil society, to strengthen efforts to tackle stereotypes in education, employment and the media and to advance the role of men in promoting gender equality;
5. The stereotyping of women, and inequality in women's access to and participation in all communication systems, especially in the media, is one of the critical areas of concern in the Beijing Platform for Action;
6. Gender-based prejudices and stereotypes help to perpetuate a gender-segregated educational system resulting in a gender-segregated labour market, as well as a gender pay gap and economic inequality between women and men. Persistent gender stereotypes cause human resources to be wasted and thus prevent the EU from achieving its full competitive potential; they therefore represent a serious obstacle to achieving the goals of the Lisbon Strategy for Growth and Jobs;
7. On 15 May 2007, Germany, Portugal and Slovenia signed a Trio Presidency Declaration on the promotion of gender equality in the European Union, identifying the elimination of gender stereotypes as the connecting theme of the gender equality work undertaken by the Trio Presidency;
8. The challenges faced by women and especially by men in response to changing gender role models was one of the key issues addressed at the Informal Meeting of Ministers for Gender Equality and Family Affairs under the German Presidency on 15-16 May 2007;
9. A European expert conference on "Entrepreneurship and Employability - Gender Stereotypes" was organised by the Portuguese Presidency on 3 October 2007;
10. On 30 January 2008, the Slovenian EU Presidency organised a Europe-wide conference entitled "Elimination of Gender Stereotypes – Mission (Im)Possible?".

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RECOGNISES THAT:

1. Gender-stereotyping is one of the most persistent causes of inequality between women and men in all spheres and at all stages of life, influencing their choice of education, training and employment, the sharing of domestic and family responsibilities, participation in public life, and participation and representation in decision-making positions, both in political life and in the economy;
2. Gender roles are taught and encouraged from a very young age and strongly influence the desires, interests and aspirations of girls/women and boys/men in private and public life;

² Doc. 5710/08.

3. In order to improve the status of women and promote gender equality, gender stereotypes that shape the identities of girls and boys have to be tackled from early childhood, paying special attention to the structures and mechanisms that reproduce and reinforce traditional gender roles and stereotypes;
4. The media, including the advertising industry, contributes to the reproduction of culturally transmitted stereotypes and images of women and men. It is therefore necessary to develop critical media education in schools and, while taking into account the freedom of expression of the media, to establish a dialogue with the media about the harmful effects of negative gender stereotypes on the self-perception of young people and on their perception of gender roles and relations in society. However, the media as a whole can also play a crucial role in combating gender stereotypes and in promoting the non-discriminatory and realistic portrayal of girls/women and boys/men in society;
5. Initiatives are urgently needed to encourage young women and men to act independently and without prejudice when choosing between available education and training pathways and to explore non-traditional education fields and occupations;
6. The social partners and enterprises both play an important role in guaranteeing equal opportunities for women and men in recruitment, work, vocational training, promotion and reconciliation policies, and in efforts to eliminate the gender pay gap and to advance the employment of women and men in sectors and occupations where they are under-represented.

ENCOURAGES:

1. The development of policies and programmes for eliminating gender stereotypes and promoting gender equality in education curricula and practices from an early age, including gender-sensitive and gender-reflective awareness-training for teachers and kindergarten teachers, pre-school and school children and students, as well as general awareness-raising, including for parents;
2. The European Institute for Gender Equality and the different national gender equality bodies to promote research, studies and analysis to further examine the effect that gender stereotypes have on efforts to achieve real gender equality, as well as the impact of gender equality, gender inequality and stereotypes on the well-being of society as a whole and on the competitiveness and performance of the economic system;
3. The Member States to promote gender-sensitive, empowering educational and training processes and teaching materials by, inter alia, reviewing and revising, as appropriate, school curricula, formal and informal educational and training materials and teacher-training programmes, including those dealing with career orientation, and to encourage and support girls' and boys' interest and involvement in non-traditional fields and occupations.

CALLS ON THE MEMBER STATES AND THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION:

1. To reinforce the effective implementation and monitoring of their gender mainstreaming strategies and the promotion of specific actions to eliminate gender stereotypes in education and culture, training, vocational guidance, and on the labour market;

2. To strengthen the gender perspective and to promote the elimination of gender stereotypes in youth policies and programmes at all levels, including in the elaboration of a new framework of cooperation in the field of youth at the Community level, in particular, in the context of the Lisbon Strategy for growth and jobs, as well as in connection with the promotion of education, training, mobility, employment, health, sport, the reconciliation of work, family and private life, and active citizenship, including public and political participation;
3. To use fully all appropriate funds, including the Structural Funds and the Progress Programme³, for the promotion of gender equality and gender mainstreaming and for facilitating access by women and men to non-traditional education fields and occupations, as well as to decision-making positions;
4. To continue and strengthen active cooperation with the social partners and other stakeholders in order to reduce gender segregation and gender gaps on the labour market, including by taking concrete actions to eliminate the gender pay gap and improving the recognition of the value of work in jobs and sectors predominantly occupied by women;
5. To promote, through appropriate institutions, awareness-raising campaigns and the exchange of good practices on combating gender stereotypes and the advancement of the realistic and non-discriminatory portrayal of girls/women and boys/men in the media."

³ Decision No 1672/2006/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 October 2006 establishing a Community Programme for Employment and Social Solidarity - Progress (OJ L 315, 15.11.2006, p. 1).