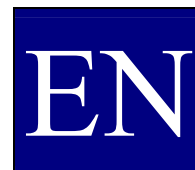




COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION



Council Conclusions on review of the progress of the implementation by the Member States and the EU institutions of the Beijing Platform for Action

WOMEN IN POLITICAL DECISION-MAKING

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

Luxembourg, 9 June 2008

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

"THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

1. RECOGNISING that gender equality is a fundamental principle of the European Union enshrined in the EC Treaty and one of the objectives and tasks of the Community and that mainstreaming equality between women and men in all its activities represents a specific mission for the Community.
2. CONSIDERING that:
 - (a) following the UN's Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995, the Madrid European Council (15-16 December 1995) requested an annual review of the implementation in the Member States of the Beijing Platform for Action;
 - (b) in 1996 the Council adopted a Recommendation to Member States on the Balanced participation of women and men in the decision-making process¹;

¹ Council Recommendation No. 96/694/EC of 2 December 1996. OJ L 319 of 10.12.1996.

P R E S S

- (c) on 2 December 1998, the Council agreed that the annual assessment of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action would include a proposal on a set of quantitative and qualitative indicators and benchmarks;
- (d) on 15 October 1999, the Council adopted a set of quantitative and qualitative indicators developed by the Finnish Presidency on "Women in the decision-making process", addressing one of the critical areas of concern in the Beijing Platform for Action, namely "inequality between men and women in the sharing of power and decision-making at all levels";
- (e) on 1-2 December 2003, the Council adopted a set of nine indicators proposed by the Italian Presidency regarding the representation of women and men in economic decision-making centres in the European Union;
- (f) on 2-3 June 2005, the Council invited the Member States and the Commission to strengthen institutional mechanisms for promoting gender equality and to create a framework to assess the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, in order to create a more consistent and systematic monitoring of progress, and invited the Commission to include the assessment of relevant indicators, developed for the follow-up of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, in its annual report to the Spring European Council.

Building on the Council Conclusions adopted in 1999 during the Finnish Presidency², the Slovenian Presidency of the EU has prepared a review report on women in political decision-making, with a focus on the following nine indicators:

1. The proportion of women in the single/lower houses of the national/federal Parliaments of the Member States and in the European Parliament;
2. The proportion of women in the regional Parliaments of the Member States, where appropriate;
3. The proportion of women in the local assemblies in the Member States;
4. Policies to promote a balanced participation in political elections;
5. The proportion of women among the members of the national/federal governments and the proportion of women among members of the European Commission;
6. The number of women and men among senior/junior ministers in the different fields of action (portfolios/ministries) of the national/federal governments of the Member States;
7. The proportion of the highest ranking civil servants who are women;
8. The distribution of the highest ranking women civil servants in different fields of action; and

² See doc. 11862/99.

9. The proportion of women among the members of the Supreme Courts of the Member States and the proportion of women among the members of the European Court of Justice and the Court of First Instance.
3. RECALLING:
 - (a) the commitment of the Member States to achieve equal participation of women and men at all levels of power and decision-making, as stated in the Beijing Platform for Action;
 - (b) that the European Council, when adopting the European Pact for Gender Equality on 23-24 March 2006, encouraged actions at the Member State and EU level to promote women's empowerment in political and economic life;
 - (c) that the promotion of equal participation of women and men in political and economic decision-making is a priority area of action set out in the Commission's Roadmap for Equality between Women and Men 2006 – 2010³.
 4. TAKES NOTE of the review report on women in political decision-making presented by the Slovenian EU Presidency for the future follow-up of the Beijing Platform for Action regarding the critical area in question.
 5. WELCOMES the Commission's activities regarding the promotion of the balanced participation of women and men in political decision-making, including the establishment of the database on women and men in decision-making in 2004, the 2007 report "Women and men in decision-making: Analysis of the situation and trends"⁴, and the establishment of an EU network of women in economic and political decision-making positions in 2008.
 6. STRESSES that the equal participation of women and men in decision-making processes is a precondition for the advancement of women and the achievement of substantive gender equality, and is also recognised as a necessary basis for democracy.
 7. STRESSES that despite the progress made in promoting gender-balanced participation in political decision-making at the European, national, regional and local levels, women are still underrepresented in political decision-making in most Member States.
 8. ENCOURAGES the Member States and the Commission to launch quantitative and qualitative studies on the outcome of positive measures, including quotas, for increasing women's access to and participation in power and decision-making, and to promote the exchange and dissemination of good practices.
 9. URGES the Member States to adopt appropriate policies to reconcile work, family and private life, and to facilitate women's participation in political decision-making, and to accelerate progress towards the achievement of the 2002 Barcelona targets in the field of childcare facilities⁵, as well as to take appropriate measures to encourage men to share parenting and other care responsibilities equally with women.

³ See doc. 7034/06

⁴ http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/publications/2008/ke8108186_en.pdf

⁵ The provision of childcare by 2010 to at least 90 % of children between 3 years old and the mandatory school age and at least 33 % of children under 3 years of age

10. ENCOURAGES governments, political parties and the social partners to further develop and implement effective measures for increasing women's engagement and participation in decision-making and leadership, including training and mentoring schemes and other initiatives for encouraging women to participate in political processes.
11. ENCOURAGES political parties to improve the balanced representation of women and men in party lists or nominations for elected office, as well as to pay attention, where applicable, to the positioning of women's candidates on party lists.
12. ENCOURAGES the Member States and the Commission to further improve the collection, analysis and dissemination of accurate, pertinent and comparable European data broken down by sex for monitoring gender equality in political decision-making, in particular through the involvement of the European and National Statistical Institutes.
13. ENCOURAGES the Member States and the Commission, including through the involvement of the European Institute for Gender Equality, to carry out research and studies to analyse how women influence political agendas, particularly in regard to the promotion of good governance, accountability and the rule of law.
14. RECALLS the commitment of the Member States to promote the balanced participation of women and men, including by adopting positive measures and strategies such as equality plans aimed at reaching the goal of equal participation at all levels of political decision-making; URGES the Governments and ENCOURAGES all political parties and the European and National Parliaments, according to their own responsibilities, to strengthen these activities and to promote more women as candidates, paying attention, where applicable, to their positioning on party lists, particularly with a view to the European Parliament elections in 2009, the nomination of a new European Commission in 2009 and nominations to other high-level positions in the EU Institutions.
15. ENCOURAGES the review process of the indicators on "Women in the Economy (reconciliation of work and family life)", as well as of the other indicators already developed in the follow-up to the Beijing Platform for Action."
