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## CEEP OPINION ON GENDER EQUALITY "PROGRESSING TO 2020"

### Executive summary

- CEEP and its members are committed to promoting gender equality both in their role as employers and as service providers.
- CEEP emphasizes how important it is for the Commission to acknowledge the role of CEEP and the social partners' and their work on gender equality. We also stress the importance of safeguarding and strengthening our autonomy at both European and national level.
- A balanced way forward to meet the gender equality challenges would be to take a holistic approach and focus on supportive and encouraging measures.
- To achieve gender equality in the labour market there must be a range of effective and well-funded public services in place such as child- and elderly care, transport, education etc.
- The interconnection between work-life conditions greatly influence women's and men's situation at the labour market as well as their private life.
- CEEP wants to stress the important role played by social partners in tackling the gender pay gap and promoting equal pay through collective bargaining.
- The need for increased awareness of the consequences that different kinds of leave and flexible working have on income and subsequently pensions
- The business case for gender equality needs to be developed and shared widely.
- The current European legislative framework on gender equality is robust and provides protection. There is no need, therefore, to amend the current European legislation or to introduce new instruments. It is better to focus on the implementation on existing regulations.
- CEEP believes that it is important to have a multiannual European strategy for Gender Equality in place in order to keep these issues high on the European agenda.

## INTRODUCTION

Gender equality covers numerous issues such as equal pay, work-life balance, representativeness at senior organisation level, education and skills development. This paper dated 8 June 2016 sets out CEEP's position on gender equality and forms the basis of its work in this area to 2020 including its response to any consultations and involvement in any negotiations that may emerge.

## The political context in Europe

There are many different challenges, economic, political and social challenges facing the EU and its member states. These challenges also have a strong impact on gender equality and women and men's opportunities for equal participation in the labour market.

### Economic and social crisis

- Europe still suffers from the effects of the economic and social crisis that started in 2007 with high unemployment rates and stagnated or very slow growth in GDP. Europe cannot afford an underutilization of the educated work force. A higher female participation in the work force could contribute to an increase in economic recovery and European competitiveness.
- The economic downturn has led many member states to reduce level of public services, which in turn hinders female labour market participation.
- The current refugee crisis will create pressures in labour markets and on public services across Europe and actions will need to be taken to ensure that gender inequality does not impact upon already disadvantaged groups.

### Demography

- The member states are facing exceptional demographic changes (an ageing population, low birth rates and migration). Current demographic trends also mean that women and men increasingly have to care for dependents other than children.

### Employment rate

- The Europe 2020 target of the employment rate for both women and men is 75%. Increasing the labour-force participation and raising the employment rate of women, which is now at 63, 5%<sup>1</sup>, is essential to meet the Europe 2020 target.

### Pensions

- Women's pensions are in average 38%<sup>2</sup> lower than the pensions of men. Pension systems accumulates and enhances inequalities that occur over a person's lifetime. Pension systems are inherent rigid which means that today pensions reflect yesterday's employment as well as social norms and praxis.

**Women face a higher poverty risk, particularly elderly women, when the pay gap becomes a 'pension gap'.**

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<sup>1</sup> <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/2995521/6823708/3-07052015-AP-EN.pdf/7e507ea0-43c7-452f-8e6a-b479c89d2bd6>

<sup>2</sup> [http://eige.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/MH0415087ENN\\_Web.pdf](http://eige.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/MH0415087ENN_Web.pdf)

It is also important to acknowledge that the above mentioned challenges are interconnected, hence might influence gender equality in different ways. CEEP would here like to point out the important and unique role that CEEP and its members play as both public employers and providers of public services in managing and addressing these challenges, and in furthering gender equality, in the labour market as well as in society in large. In order to address these challenges while promoting gender equality it is important to have a gender perspective in all areas where CEEP and its members are active.

Gender inequality has multifaceted underlying causes which must be addressed simultaneously.

To promote gender equality in the labour market there must be public services in place, such as affordable and accessible child and elderly care, other care services, public transport etc. to enable both women and men to participate in the work force on equal conditions.

As a general remark CEEP would also like to stress the importance of being vigilant on the impact of the crisis to gender equality but also not adding to the financial and administrative burden for employers.

CEEP and its members' are committed to gender equality but want to stress that this is not enough. To achieve true gender equality all stakeholders in society must commit and contribute to the work; EU institutions, Member States, Governments and Authorities, Citizens, the Education System etc.

## **CEEP POSITION ON GENDER EQUALITY**

### **Dual approach – Gender Mainstreaming and specific actions**

CEEP's strategy to promote gender equality and tackle the structural gap between women and men is through a dual approach – using gender mainstreaming by integrating a gender perspective into all policy areas and all activities, and through specific actions. For example, as a public service provider it is important to promote gender mainstreaming of services and make an impact analysis on how the design of the service influence women and men respectively.

CEEP aims to encourage gender equality in all areas where it is active in order to further gender equality in the EU as well as among its members.

Sex disaggregated statistics is a necessary tool to discover inequalities and to monitor progress. CEEP promotes exchanges of good practices and peer-learning between its members as well as together with the other European social partners.

### **Equal economic independence for women and men – contributing to employment, economic growth and social inclusion**

Economic independence is a prerequisite for enabling both women and men to exercise control over their lives and to make genuine choices. To increase female labour market participation has a significant potential in terms of employment, economic growth and social inclusion. The skills and competences that women acquire through education is not sufficiently used and consequently a waste of resources for EU as a whole. Women's economic engagement is central to their personal financial independence and protection from the risk of poverty, in particular for ensuring an adequate old-age pension. Thus there is a strong economic case for supporting women's careers in the labour market.

### **The business case for gender equality needs to be developed and shared widely**

In addition to gender equality being a fundamental right, there is a clear business case for gender equality at work. –In order to thrive and succeed, all organisations and businesses need to be able to attract and retain the best employees. Employers who are known to offer equal opportunities for all – and what that means in terms of, inter alia, pay, career development, work-life balance – will be the 'employers of choice' and successful in these terms. Best management practice is also to support employees to make informed decisions, aware of the effect that their work-life balance decisions will have on their income and pension.

This paper specifically addresses gender equality but CEEP recognises that equality of opportunities should be afforded to all persons, irrespective of their personal characteristics including ethnicity, religion and belief, sexual orientation, age and disability. We know that the actions suggested in this paper to address gender equality can have positive cross-cutting outcomes for the diversity of the public sector as a whole. We would therefore encourage a similar approach across all personal characteristics for the benefit of all.

Equality also leads to an improvement in employment opportunities for all those who wish to work in the public sector thus enhancing the ability of public services to deliver content of quality and diversity.

## **Horizontal and vertical segregation and addressing gender norms**

Horizontal and vertical segregation, and sectorial and occupational segregation of the labour market has a big impact on gender equality. Traditional gender norms and stereotypes continue to have a strong influence in the division of labour between women and men, at home, at work and in society at large. Actions should therefore be taken to address stereotype gender norms in education and career choices, prejudices in the workplace as well as in the labour market in large.

CEEP and its members want to address gender norms through exchange of best practices, in cooperation with social partners on the European and national level.

CEEP and its members are committed to work towards a gender neutral labour market where women and men have the same opportunities for career development, in all sectors. A workplace where women and men have the same opportunities to advancement and to reach managerial positions is an important part of being able to recruit and retain employees with the right skills and competences and to be an attractive employer.

CEEP submitted last 27 May 2016 a project proposal under DG Justice call “Action grants to support transnational projects to promote good practices on gender roles and to overcome gender stereotypes in education, training and in the workplace”, on “Gender equality in top management positions in public services”. The project aims at assessing the level of access of women to leadership positions in public services, and to exchange best practices that have been put in place in the 5 targeted Countries (AT, IT, BG, UK and SW) to balance men and women’s presence at the top management positions in public services. A research will be carried out in the framework of the project by Fondazione Giacomo Brodolini, to further explore the issue bringing concrete figures to the table to enhance the discussions.

## **Supporting work-life balance – reconciliation**

There is an interconnection between working conditions and living conditions; work-life balance, opportunities for full and part-time work, parental leave and the sharing of unpaid domestic work. These different aspects greatly influence gender equality and women’s and men’s situation in the labour market and in their private life.

Promoting innovative work-life balance policies and flexible working arrangements is essential for facilitating the reconciliation of work, family and private life for both women and men, as well as for reducing labour market segregation.

CEEP and its members will work together with the European social partners on Reconciliation and work life balance-issues as a part of the joint Social partner Work Programme 2015-2017.

CEEP will continue to work with and to disseminate the joint European social partner Tool Kit for Gender Equality where many best practices of innovative work-life balances policies from the national, local and work place level can be found.

### **The key role for Public services**

To promote gender equality in the labour market there must be public services in place, e.g. affordable and accessible child and elderly care, other care services, public transport, city planning and housing, to enable both women and men to participate in the work force on equal conditions. There is a direct link between childcare provisions and access for parents to paid employment! This would also benefit society as a whole and stimulate economic growth and jobs.

It is important to be vigilant on the impact of the economic and social crisis on gender equality, especially since the economic downturn has led many member states to reduce level of public services, which in turn hinders female labour market participation.

### **Tackling the gender pay gap**

There is a strong European legal framework providing women and men with the right to equal pay for equal work and work of equal value. But the differences in pay persists and progress has been made slowly. There is a need to focus on the full and comprehensive implementation of existing legal framework at national level.

Collective bargaining, gender disaggregated statistics and practical tools such as guidelines and information are ways to tackle the gap. CEEP emphasizes the importance of safeguarding and strengthening the autonomy of the national social partners. In order to tackle the gender pay gap one must also look further than just wage setting and acknowledge the interconnection between working and living conditions.

### **Tackling the gender income and pension gap**

Absence from the labour market, whether part-time or full time, affects income in both the short and long term. As women still take parental leave, other forms of family related leave, and work part time to a greater extent than men, this has major implications for gender pay, income and pensions.

The awareness of the consequences that different kinds of leave and flexible working have on income and pensions needs to increase. It is important for employees to have early information about long term effects on income and pensions; this is a responsibility for all stakeholders.

It is important that employees who work flexibly to support their work life balance also have equal access to education and training to support career development and promotion opportunities.

## **European legislative framework**

CEEP deems that the current European legislative framework on gender equality is robust and provides strong protection. It is implemented at national and local level through legislation and/or collective and individual agreements which suits local labour market circumstances and requirements. There is, therefore, no need to amend the current European legislation on gender equality or to introduce new instruments. It is better to focus on the full and comprehensive implementation of existing regulation at national level, including social partner involvement in strengthening protection where appropriate and affordable for the benefit of both employers and employees. Any potential review must be accompanied by a robust assessment of the costs and benefits of any suggested changes. In conclusion: more legislation is not the solution to addressing the challenges of gender equality.

## **A balanced way forward with a holistic approach**

A balanced way forward to meet the gender equality challenges would be to take a holistic approach and focus on supportive and encouraging measures: changing of mindsets, tackling gender norms, gender stereotypes, educational, professional and career choices, encouraging equal sharing of caring and unpaid domestic activities, access to childcare and other care services and promoting good examples, foremost at the national and work place levels.

## **A multiannual European strategy for Gender Equality– an important political sign**

CEEP believes that it is important to have a multiannual European strategy for Gender Equality in place in order to keep these issues high on the European agenda.

In conclusion CEEP emphasizes how important it is for the Commission to acknowledge the role of the social partners and the importance of safeguarding and strengthening their autonomy at both European and national level.

In view of the renewed cooperation European social partners enjoy with the European Commission, it appears as important that there is proper mutual understanding and communication in relation to the development of new initiatives. As mentioned above both the EC and the EU Social Partners intend in their work-programmes to address reconciliation issues. To devise mutually reinforcing strategies and reinforce synergies, a proper consultation of Social Partners in the framework of the new Commission's roadmap for gender equality and other initiatives appears necessary in order to avoid duplication at European level.

## **CEEP ACTIONS ON GENDER EQUALITY – UNILATERALLY AND TOGETHER WITH THE OTHER SOCIAL PARTNERS**

CEEP and its members are committed to promoting gender equality both in their role as employers and service providers, and agree that further progress and work with work-life balance measures are needed as specified in the social partner's work programme 2015-2017. As a socially responsible employer organisation and social partner CEEP will continue to work with these issues, both unilaterally and together with the other European and national social partners. A lot of work is done at the national, local and in particular work-place levels.

Social partners at European level have a long track record of working on equality issues and examples include:

- The framework agreements on parental leave, fixed term and part time contracts and on telework;
- The revised framework agreement on parental leave;
- The framework of actions on gender equality;
- The web based toolkit for gender equality in practice;
- Equally diverse good practices' compendium;
- The EQ pay project run by CEEP UK supported by CEEP.

CEEP, BusinessEurope, UEAPME and ETUC are committed to gender equality. We will work actively with “Promoting better reconciliation of work, private and family life and gender equality to reduce the gender pay gap”, as part of our work programme 2015-2017. We want to work jointly on these issues and explore possibilities for progress further before looking into further legislation.