Equality between women and men: roadmap 2006-2010

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Following the Presidency conference on men and gender equality in Helsinki on 5 and 6 October 2006, the Council adopted the following conclusions. In particular, it:

- notes that, in order to improve the status of women and promote gender equality, more attention should be paid to how men are involved in the achievement of gender equality, as well as to the positive impact of gender equality for men and for the well-being of society as a whole;

- notes that gender inequalities and imbalances between men and women still exist;

- stresses that the participation of men and boys in achieving gender equality must be consistent with the empowerment of women and girls, and that resources for gender equality initiatives for men and boys should not compromise equal opportunity initiatives and resources for women and girls;

- confirms the importance of the effective and overall implementation of the gender mainstreaming strategy, which implies that the interests and needs of both men and women are taken into account in order to enhance the appropriateness, quality and effectiveness of policies and measures to achieve gender equality;

- recognises that issues related to men and gender equality have not yet been looked at as an entirety, and that the question of men and gender equality should go beyond the reconciliation of professional and private life;

- acknowledges the need to tailor measures to the specific situations experienced by men and women in different groups or in different life situations, depending on their family situation, age, health, ethnicity, social background, sexual orientation, disability etc;

- encourages the future European Institute for Gender Equality and the different national gender equality bodies to investigate how various circumstances, opportunities, structures and policies affect both men and women, boys and girls;

- encourages the development, from early childcare and education, of pedagogic practices aimed at eliminating gender stereotypes, also paying attention to educational methods and tools that improve the capacity and potential of boys and men to care for themselves and others as a means of contributing to a gender-balanced participation in society;

- encourages the Member States to pay attention to the promotion of gender equality, as well as how men relate to it, through debate and information on gender stereotypes and the relations between men and women, especially with regard to young people;

- urges the Member States to reinforce institutional structures for the promotion of gender equality, both in the public and private sectors, and to also support men’s involvement in promoting and achieving gender equality;

- urges the Commission and Member States to ensure equal career opportunities for both sexes, taking into account the dominance of men in decision-making positions, and to take measures aimed at encouraging boys and men to choose education and employment in female-dominated fields and vice-versa with a view to dismantling gender segregation in the labour market; in this context, invites Member States and the Commission to take concrete actions towards eliminating the gender pay gap;

- stresses that the recognition of the gender dimension in health is an essential part of EU health policies and that health promotion projects and services should be tailored, as appropriate, to women's or men's needs;

- acknowledges that the vast majority of gender-based acts of violence are perpetrated by men and urges the Member States and the Commission to combine punitive measures against the perpetrators with preventive measures targeted especially at young men and boys and to set up specific programmes for victims as well as for offenders, in particular in the case of domestic violence;

- recognises the importance of providing a wide range of policies to reconcile professional and private life for both men and women at all levels of employment, taking into account the great variety of family types in today's society and the child's best interests, in order to support an equal sharing of domestic and caring responsibilities and tasks between women and men;

- urges the Member States to accelerate progress towards the achievement of the Barcelona targets on childcare facilities by 2010 and to take concrete measures to encourage men to share with women parenting and other care responsibilities, by encouraging them to take up their family leave entitlements, including through the development of parental leave entitlements for fathers, financial incentives as well as information and awareness-raising initiatives;

- recognises the crucial role that the social partners and companies play in reconciliation policies, in promoting awareness-raising schemes in companies and the take-up of flexible work options, especially by men, including in male-dominated professions.

Lastly, the Council invites the Member States to pay attention, when undertaking measures and projects to promote gender equality, to taking both genders into account. The Member States and the Commission are invited to identify which issues and challenges relate to men and gender equality by further developing gender-related research and the exchange of good practices, in particular with a view to enhancing the active participation of men in, and commitment to, policies aimed at achieving gender equality at national and EU level, and also with a view to developing greater understanding of the processes that lead to an uneven distribution of power in decision-making.