



MORE ACTION FOR MORE GENDER EQUALITY!

Briefing on the implementation of the Europe 2020 Strategy¹ from a gender equality perspective for EWL members and proposed actions for 2012

February 2012

Summary: Why must the EWL get involved at the European and national level and how?

Why?

The EU2020 Strategy is guiding economic and social policies in all European countries. Gender equality is not an explicit objective of the EU2020 Strategy but can be found in some of the subsections, primarily with regards to employment (one of the objectives is to increase the employment rate of both women and men to 75%), equal pay, childcare provision, work-life balance and increasing employment in the care sector. Women and men have been put on an equal footing with regards to employment, which results in occulting women's unequal starting position on the labour-market in comparison to men and also makes invisible particular groups of women (heads of households, lone parents, women with disabilities, older women, Roma, etc). In addition, the real obstacles to women's full participation in the labour-market are unacknowledged. Therefore, extensive pressure needs to be put on Member States as well as the European Commission to incorporate a gender dimension throughout the whole of the EU2020 Strategy and corresponding processes.

How?

The EU2020 Strategy comprises a complex web of processes. The main instrument are the **National Reform Programmes (NRPs)** that each Member State develop with the input of a broad partnership including regional/local authorities, social partners and other stakeholders, which include non-governmental organisations. It is **crucial that EWL member organisations engage in this process at national level** to put pressure on their governments to include gender equality objectives and policy actions in the respective NRPs. EWL Members can do the following at national level:

1. **Now- until mid-April 2012: Get involved in the drafting of National Reform Programmes.** Member States have been encouraged to consult stakeholders, including NGOs. Please check websites of ministries (often Economic and Financial affairs) to find contact persons in your country.
2. **Now: Send the enclosed model letter as soon as possible** (annex 1) to the Minister or to the exact person in the ministry responsible for the implementation of the 2020 Strategy to demand that a women's rights and gender equality perspective is included in the National Reform Programme. Also alert ministries in charge of women's rights and gender equality (send them a copy of the letter).
3. **End of April: Find the National Reform Programme of your country** (check the website of ministries, call and ask for it, it is a public document) to help the EWL to monitor the situation. Inform us about what is happening: Are there measures targeted at women or measures that can advance women (gender pay gap, childcare services, feminisation of poverty)? Are there measures that are counterproductive to gender equality (for example, pension reforms that do not take the patterns of women's working lives into account)? Has the Programme been gender mainstreamed?

¹ See separate Briefing "EU2020 Strategy in a snapshot: Frequently Asked Questions"



1. Annual implementation process of the 2020 Strategy and possibilities of EWL action

The EU 2020 Strategy is implemented through an annual process of economic policy coordination between the Commission and the Member States called “European Semester.” The purpose of this process is to allow the Commission to provide more focused input to macro-economic and structural reforms that Member States are undertaking reach the EU 2020 targets. This new coordinated process² is dominated by macro-economic and fiscal concerns and it is difficult to raise issues related to gender equality and social inclusion and in this process, although the Annual Growth Survey (AGS) 2012 does contain recommendations to Member States to tackle unemployment and the social consequences of the crisis. Nevertheless, the macroeconomic guidance given, for example, to cut public expenditure will undoubtedly impact on gender equality policies with the obvious danger of a backlash.

In order to mobilise around this, here is an overview of the timescale of the process in 2012:

Annual Calendar	Activity*	Opportunity for EWL action
November	The Commission publishes “Annual Growth Survey” (AGS) that analyses the economic situation and the progress on Europe 2020 Strategy and that sets the main priorities for Member States’ national strategies for the year to come.	In 2011, the EWL sent a letter to Commission President prior to the adoption of the AGS which was adopted without adequate notification in November. Each year, EWL can address the Commission before the ASG is adopted and becomes public to make proposals regarding gender equality. Subsequently, the EWL Secretariat can assess the AGS from a gender equality perspective.
February-March	Different Council formations discuss the Annual Growth Survey. In early March, the Spring European Council gives strategic advice to Member States based on the AGS.	EWL can use the gender assessment of the ASG as its main tool in influencing the discussions in the EPSCO Council, ECOFIN Council, and finally in the European Council, to ensure that guidance to be given by the European Council has a gender equality perspective EWL Members should write to their governments calling for a strong gender dimension in forthcoming national reform programmes (see model letter enclosed)
March-April	Member States draft National Reform Programmes and Stability and Convergence Programmes based on the guidance of the European Council. (It should be noted that since 2011 the number of European summits are multiplying adding ‘layers’ to the process as recommendations (conclusions) are made at each one, more often regarding	EWL Members should get involved in the drafting of the NRPs to ensure that gender equality perspective is included. The EWL can provide advocacy materials. Ideally, these materials should be tailored to the situation in each country and take into account the national situation regarding gender equality and the assessment of the NRP from the previous year from gender

² Until now Member States defined their policies related to social protection and social inclusion in National Action Plans, and their progress was monitored by the Commission. At the moment it is not clear whether social inclusion policies will only be discussed in a few pages within the NRPs or whether there is a separate process (through a report by the Social Protection to complement the employment report carried out by the Employment Committee: process known as the Joint Assessment Framework).



	the deficits/euro crisis, etc)	equality perspective. The EU Expert Group on Gender and Employment (EGGE) has carried out more in depth analysis which the EWL can use.
June	The European Commission analyses the national Programmes and assesses whether the recommendations given in the previous year have been taken into account. Based on the assessment, the Commission makes proposals for new Country-Specific Recommendations or reinforces the recommendations from the previous year. The European Council endorses the recommendations in late June.	EWL Secretariat can analyse the country-specific recommendations proposed by the Commission and address the EPSCO Council and the European Council prior to their adoption, drawing attention to the gaps in them.
Autumn	Member States will make their budgets for the following year based on the NRPs and the Country-Specific Recommendations	EWL Members and Secretariat can monitor the finalised NRPs and analyse them in order to prepare for the following year and advocacy.

*See also: Briefing EU2020 Strategy: Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

2. Monitor existing commitments to integrate a gender equality perspective into the implementation of the 2020 Strategy

There are some commitments to promote equality between women and men in the implementation of the Europe 2020 Strategy at European and at national level. It is crucial that the EWL and its members monitor that the Commission, the Council, and the Member States follow these commitments and recommendations and take action, when necessary, to remind them of these commitments.

- The [European Pact for Gender Equality 2011-2020](#), adopted by the Council on 7 March 2011, requires the Commission, the Council, and the Member States to take the gender perspective into account in the mechanisms of the Europe 2020 Strategy. Specifically, the Pact states:
 - **‘When developing and implementing their National Reform Programmes, the Member States are encouraged to apply a gender equality perspective** and to promote gender equality policies, especially concerning the Employment Guidelines, and invited to make appropriate use of agreed gender equality indicators developed within the Joint Assessment Framework and within the follow-up of the Beijing Platform for Action in all relevant policy areas and processes.
 - **The Commission and the Council are also invited to incorporate a gender equality perspective into the Annual Growth Survey, the Country Opinions and the Country Specific Recommendations.’**
- The [2020 Employment Guidelines](#) that Member States must take these into account when they define and implement their National Reform Programmes and provide the basis for the Council’s country-specific recommendations mention some gender equality issues. In terms of employment (Guideline 7): this covers general promotion of gender equality including closing the gender pay gap, work-life balance policies including provision of care and working-time arrangements, and job creation in the field of care. In terms of poverty/social exclusion (Guideline 10): request that all measures to tackle poverty should aim at promoting gender equality and focus on one-parent families.



- The [Strategy for Equality between women and men 2010-2015](#), adopted by the European Commission in September 2010, requires the Commission to “support the promotion of gender equality in the implementation of all aspects and flagship initiatives of the Europe 2020 Strategy, especially as regards definition and implementation of relevant national measures.”

3. Actions to date

1. European level

To ensure coherence across the different processes and actors (national/European) the EWL sent a **letter to the Social Affairs Attachés** (with copy to the gender equality and employment attachés where they exist) based on the recommendations to member States in the Annual Growth Survey 2012, in particular under section 4: *Tackling unemployment and the social consequences of the crisis*. The purpose of the letter is to provide input prior to the EPSCO (Employment, social and consumer affairs) Council meeting which will take place on 17 February in Brussels.

The EWL **Statement to the Spring Council** (1-2 March 2012) will be drafted and sent for input by the EWL members based on a gender analysis of the Annual Growth Survey and the different proposals and processes that are leading to the realisation of the Europe 2020 Strategy. Members can expect the draft in mid February.

2. National action

A **model lobby letter** is proposed for national action (Annex 1). Please adapt to your own national situation. The EU Expert Group on Gender and Employment (EGGE) has carried out more in depth analysis of the NRPs 2011 from a gender perspective which the EWL can use once it is made available by the European Commission. You can use the information provided in the forthcoming publication, which will be sent to members as soon as it is available.

NB: at the most recent summit of heads of states (30 January 2012), addressing youth unemployment and the development of Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs) were identified as policy action priorities for the Member States in 2012.



Annex 1: Model lobbying letter

Attn: Minister and officials responsible for the implementation of the Europe 2020 Strategy

RE: Integrate a women's rights and gender equality perspective in forthcoming National Reform Programme

(date)

Dear Minister,

As a member of the European Women's Lobby (EWL), the largest coalition of women's non-governmental organisations in the European Union (EU), the (name of national co-ordination) follows closely the implementation of the Europe 2020 Strategy at national level. We believe that the priorities developed in the coming weeks will set the pace for the years to come. Therefore, we would like to highlight some issues to make sure that the 2020 Strategy is implemented from the very beginning in a way that has a positive impact on women and that advances equality between women and men.

First, **we urge you to ensure that the National Reform Programme of (name of the country) has a strong women's rights and gender equality perspective.** As you probably are aware, on 7th March 2011 the Employment, Social, Health, and Consumer Affairs Council adopted the European Pact for Gender Equality 2011-2020 that encourages the Member States to "*apply a gender equality perspective and to promote gender equality policies especially concerning the Employment Guidelines in developing and implementing their National Reform Programmes.*" The Pact also renews the commitment to Barcelona childcare targets.

Second, while we acknowledge that the European Commission's Annual Growth Survey 2012 contains specific recommendations to tackle unemployment and the social consequences of the crisis, **we urge you to ensure that the National Reform Programme (NRP) are ambitious and build on these recommendations by applying a gender equality perspective** to deliver for those women and men who have been worst hit by the crisis. To this end the Programme should include long-term investments in social infrastructure, including adequate social benefits and pensions, and public services such as care for children and other dependants.

This means that the National Reform Programmes must include a detailed plan to increase the provision of care services for children and other dependents; include specific measures to tackle the gender pay gap and its causes; and take women specifically into account in measures to tackle poverty such as national targets broken down by gender, active inclusion policies and renewal of social protection systems. We also believe that more attention to the quality of women's work is needed and to ensure policy coherence, the whole NRP, including its macro-economic elements, must be gender mainstreamed.

We hope that these considerations will be taken into account and (country) will have a forward-looking National Reform Programme that includes concrete measures to promote gender equality in all areas of life, to tackle women's poverty, and to remove long-standing gender inequalities in paid and unpaid work.

(Name of the national co-ordination) is available to co-operate in the drafting of the National Reform Programme.

Yours sincerely,