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**BPW INTERNATIONAL**  
Business & Professional Women

***Objet: Consultation on follow-up strategy to the Roadmap for equality between women and men***

In the consultation process started by the European Commission for "the follow up strategy on the Roadmap for equality between women and men," BPW Europe,<sup>1</sup> the European Region of BPW International,<sup>2</sup> has engaged an internal consultation regarding the Roadmap and its current impact in Member States. Affiliate clubs and federations in 13 countries,<sup>3</sup> including 1 candidate country and 1 EFTA country took part in the process.

Their replies show that the BPW affiliates are aware of the European Commission Roadmap for equality between women and men and consider it an important tool for achieving economic and societal independence of women in Europe.

BPW Europe believes that achieving professional and financial independence is a prerequisite to full equality. Therefore BPW Europe strongly supports the work-related focus of the Roadmap. It is important to keep this focus in view as BPW Europe notes that many men and women now believe that economic and financial equality has been achieved, even though statistics show that the situation has not improved much in the past ten years.

An evaluation of the effects of the current Roadmap at national and local level shows differences in implementation.

All participants consider that, in the past four years, the reconciliation of private and professional life has been present in the media and some remedial action has been taken at national level. However, the situation is not so clear-cut regarding elimination of gender stereotypes. FR, IT and ES consider that the situation has not improved in their country and NL affirms that the issue has not been addressed in a substantive way.

This demonstrates the need to include specific objectives in the future Roadmap, with quantitative and qualitative targets through which European and national achievements can be evaluated more clearly.

1 [www.bpw-europe.org](http://www.bpw-europe.org)

2 [www.bpw-international.org](http://www.bpw-international.org)

3 AT, BE, CH, CY, DE, ES, FR, IT, NL, PL, SK, TR, UK



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## **1 The gender equality framework has to be strengthened**

In general, all European policies need to better integrate gender perspectives through the widespread use of gender mainstreaming tools such as gender budgeting and gender impact assessment.

EU texts, and not only the Roadmap on gender equality, have to be drafted in such a way that they build on a common framework of objectives and detailed gender-based statistics to integrate the gender perspective in all actions, policies and legal instruments. In that respect, there is still room for improvement with regard to the legislative process.

### **1.1 Methodology and assessment tools for EU legislation**

Whatever the methods used to achieve gender quality - new legal instruments, benchmarking or peer-to-peer evaluation, BPW Europe requests that the future roadmap contains specific objectives with precise achievement targets. This will reinforce the impact of the future roadmap by facilitating evaluation of results and enabling civil society organisations to play their role in demanding full reports of actions and achievements at national and local level. In this regard, we can only draw your attention to the way the CEDAW regularly asks for more gender-based statistics and encourages feedback from civil society organisations.

The roadmap should include not only qualitative and quantitative objectives for actions in Member States, but also improvement targets for the EU legislative and decisional process to make it more compatible with gender issues.

It is important to improve the integration of gender perspective in new EU legislation. All legislative proposals should clearly show their proposed impact on women and men, on the basis of gender-based statistics.

All EU institutions should be involved in this process.

- Thus, the European Parliament's FEMM committee should have the possibility and human resources needed to integrate gender perspective in discussions related to issues other than family concerns or employment conditions (for example, sustainable development, monitoring of banks, etc.)
- When legal instruments are under discussion in the Council, it is important that amendments and texts proposed by Member States include, in their argumentation, a clear analysis of the impact of the proposed legislation or amendment on women and men.



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- When EU directives are undergoing a revision process, effort should also be made to use this opportunity to develop or improve the gender perspective.

To improve the revision process, continuous consultation with stakeholders should be implemented to assess the revision needs of current legislation. It could be accessible to everyone, for example through "[your voice in Europe](#)".

All online questionnaires concerning legislative proposals, whatever their subject, have to include several questions on the possible impact of the proposal on men and women. These questions should be drafted by the Directorate General at the origin of the proposal in cooperation with the gender equality unit of DG EMPL.

One objective of the future Roadmap could be that all statistics relative to human beings, whether national or European, be gender-specific.

Gender impact assessment and gender budgeting are mentioned as important tools in the current Roadmap. However, since no specific targets for their use by Member States, civil society organisations or European institutions are present, such a mention has limited effects. The future Roadmap should determine a general framework for the compulsory use of these tools as selection and evaluation criteria in all European financial programmes.

### **1.1 International cooperation for a coherent action**

It is important to reinforce cooperation with all international bodies and structures, either to benefit from the work already done on gender issues, but also to make sure that gender perspectives are integrated in all contexts, such as discussions on economic choices or banking where professionals too often still consider gender mainstreaming as irrelevant to their work. Objectives and assessment tools adopted by different European or International structures have to be coherent to avoid contradictions, redundancies and additional administrative burdens.

As the European Union prides itself on integrating gender perspectives in external relations, it follows that the European Union should be an active player in UN negotiations and discussions to ensure the creation of gender-based statistics in all fields of UN activities, but also to advise Member States and to prod them into providing the gender-based statistics requested by the CEDAW.



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Two fields of activities illustrate the difficulties in obtaining, at international level, gender-based statistics: in the agricultural sector, it is often difficult to have gender-based statistics of land ownership, while in the transport and forestry sectors, statistics<sup>4</sup> mainly concern production levels rather than the workforce, its components and evolution.

Cooperation with European and international structures is also important to obtain cross-cutting methodologies and to implement major awareness campaigns. For instance, the Council of Europe has been developing methodological tools regarding gender mainstreaming since 1998 which should be used in the European Union while the International Labour Office started a campaign regarding the Gender Pay Gap in 2009, which ran in parallel to, but was not integrated with the European Commission Gender Pay Gap initiative.

In the current economic context, the European Union should also ensure the development of gender perspectives in the discussions and decision-making process in international structures such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. It is crucial that important publications regarding the business world, such as the annual [Doing Business report](#), not only take administrative burden issues into account, but also human resources issues, including gender perspective.

## **2 Actions for gender equality**

BPW Europe wishes to highlight some of the actions which could improve the integration and promotion of women in the workplace, and enable them to play their full role as citizens and decision-makers. These proposals complement and reinforce the actions included in the current Roadmap.

### **1.2 Integration of civil society organisations actions in an overall strategy**

The priorities listed in the European gender equality Roadmap need to be the framework for cooperation with and between civil society organisations. This implies taking into consideration the ways and means available to these organisations to implement the priorities and supporting them. It also implies including these priorities in the European Commission's financial programmes to avoid supporting such diversified actions that their overall impact cannot be assessed.

<sup>4</sup> <http://w3.unece.org/pxweb/Dialog/>



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BPW Europe considers that civil society organisations are indispensable to achieve the necessary changes in mentalities and behaviours. Specific support to actions common to trade-unions, employers organisations and civil society organisations specialising in gender issues is necessary.

Actions such as the organisation of “role model” activities and the development of informal and formal mentoring are needed over the long-term. As working women may be unaware of underlying gender issues, awareness-raising and training activities to propagate gender-based knowledge to a wider context than the gender research institutes and transform it into a useful tool for all women are also essential.

### **1.3 Better access to all professional fields**

In its campaign to decrease the income gender gap, BPW Europe and its affiliates have been looking at possible actions to improve the employability of women.

We consider that in many European countries, the career advice system for young girls and students could be improved.

While career advisers are now more aware of the existence of horizontal segregation in the job market, a career advisory system based on one or two meetings with pupils or students will not help change the present situation. It is important to have a long-term advisory strategy for pupils and students, with careers advisers fully trained in gender issues and with good, up-to-date knowledge of the business world. As it is impossible to have exhaustive knowledge of all professional sectors, and as the professions are changing rapidly due to scientific and societal evolution, this strategy needs to include built-in interaction with the business world and the active participation of professionals presenting their professional field and expertise.

To fully integrate the gender perspective in a new advisory system, compulsory training of career advisers on gender issues should be supplemented by the intervention of women working in male-dominated fields, as role models. The European Commission’s lifelong learning funding programmes should cover the training needs of career advisers and make it a priority.

### **1.4 Supporting career changes**

In the course of their professional life, women often have to adapt to new job market realities. As figures indicate that women enter the workplace via a limited number of professions, with often higher risks of unemployment and lower pay, it is important to empower them to change professional fields and make them employable in other, so-called male-dominated professions.



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This encompasses:

- providing funding support for gap years (continuous training, transition period from one profession to another)
- encouraging women still engaged in another job to open a start-up business (in many Member States, financial support is limited to unemployed individuals)
- improving access to new professions, in keeping with scientific and societal evolutions, especially in fields where women are little represented
- helping women re-enter professional life after being carers, as many issues related to adaptation then arise
- raising awareness regarding the importance of professional networks for career development, whether face-to-face or virtual

## **1.5 Part-time work**

The current Roadmap already includes proposals regarding the reduction of non-chosen part-time work. BPW Europe would like to highlight the need for additional EU legislation enabling workers to combine two separate part-time positions (by avoiding too many breaks during working hours and by forbidding constantly changing work timetables). At the moment, these factors often prevent workers from taking another position to supplement their income.

## **1.6 Enabling women to access ‘top jobs’ and decision-making positions**

### *2.1.1 Women as managers*

Actions to improve women's positions as entrepreneurs should include:

- raising awareness and creating training programmes to develop their businesses beyond micro-enterprise level
- developing training opportunities to increase confidence in their ability to manage staff
- developing opportunities to buy into existing businesses (in addition to possibilities to start their own business)

### *1.6.1 Women in decision-making positions*

Additional EU legislation is needed to support women's access to decision-making positions through the following measures:

- compulsory publication of gender statistics relative to members of the Board of Directors for companies with around 50 employees, public-sector related companies and semi-private management structures (for example, water or transport management bodies), in all their publications and websites
- gender equality on boards of directors as an eligibility criteria to participate in European Public Tenders and calls for proposals
- Same obligation for all firms where public authorities have a controlling interest



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- In certain professional fields, work pattern realities necessitate specific measures. In the health sector, for instance, specific attention should be paid to giving women access to top-level health careers, medical facility boards and decision-making structures. In the context of a proper balance between private and professional life, the health sector requires specific measures as workloads and working hours are often barriers to top-level positions for women.

#### *1.6.2 Top jobs in the European Union*

The current Roadmap includes a strategy to decrease vertical segregation, but notably this does not yet apply to top EU jobs. Since the European Union has campaigned for many years to increase the number of women in the field of politics and includes this issue in its external relations policy, it is paradoxical that top European Union jobs are currently considered to be unavailable for women. The future Roadmap should present precise objectives and remedial procedures regarding this situation.

### **1.7 Elimination of gender stereotypes**

Elimination of gender stereotypes still has a long way to go.

Gender stereotypes can be seen in the toys generally available to children – the mass production of sexually-biased toys effectively reinforces gender stereotypes. They can also be seen in schools books - even though long-term campaigns have tried to address this problem. The European Union should disseminate best practices and methodologies more widely to avoid gender stereotypes in school books.

Gender stereotypes in the workplace mean that ‘masculine’ values and behaviours are over-valued. In today’s society, where the importance of cooperation and a balanced approach to risk is demonstrated, the promotion of ‘female’ skills and values in the workplace is crucial. Breaking gender stereotypes would have the added value of lowering the extent of compulsory behavioural adaptation by career women. Promoting women to decision-making positions should not mean asking women to adopt ‘masculine’ behaviours before being able to obtain such positions.

Gender stereotypes inform how women are seen as public speakers, as banking customers, or as patients. In the health system, effort should be made to:

- integrate gender perspectives and differences in the initial and continuous training of doctors and nurses (e.g., description of different symptoms for men and women in certain illnesses should be part of doctors' initial training)
- Encourage doctors to de-construct their inbuilt gender stereotypes which can lead them to order examinations for a man at an earlier stage than for a woman. Gender-based statistics are needed on this matter.



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- train doctors on gender-specific listening techniques as women may describe their symptoms in a different way to men
  - Ensure that all drug companies fully test their products on men and women before they are put on the market.

In the media sector, gender analysis indicates a lack of visibility of women and their achievements in general, except for specific activities (actresses and singers), almost no place for concerns relative to working women and even some negative comments on gender perspective issues. Of course, this is a general statement which does not present the widely different situations between Member States. However, some specific lobbying actions such as Equal Pay Day or Campaigns against domestic violence have been presented, and lessons should be drawn from these as best practice in communicating gender perspectives in the media.

Analyses and reports by national gender institutes regarding the way women are presented in national media should be collected and integrated in a European-wide database.

A specific field of action needs to be chosen regarding the raising of media awareness about the lack of information regarding women's activities. The field of sport could be a good starting point, as many women are active in sport activities at a high level, but less than 10% of press articles are dedicated to their achievements, and even those seem to avoid showing them as athletes.

### **1.8 Introducing the concept of shared responsibility**

BPW Europe fully supports the objective of balance between professional and private life. Unfortunately, at the moment, any changes introduced in the professional world to achieve this balance are mostly considered as beneficial for women - that is to say, enabling them to achieve better conditions for their double work-day (for example: no meetings after 5 or 6 pm to enable them to care for children).

We consider that more emphasis should be put on the benefits to both sexes and to society as a whole. Otherwise it would have the contrary effect of blocking changes to gender balance in home and care activities. Campaigns should encourage men to request more kindergartens near their workplace

We want this objective to be included under the umbrella of "equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men in professional and private life."



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This change in wording would have several advantages:

- put European policies in synch with the UN thematic discussions on "equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men"<sup>5</sup>
- show that European gender policies are also positive for men, as currently many young men who would like to be more involved in the everyday care and management of their family do not find support in the workplace for such a life choice
- stress that gender-based policies encourage both men and women to evaluate their life situation and seek change
- potentially promote work on equal rights to parental leave, which is not included in the current Roadmap

## **1.9 Mitigating action to avoid the poverty trap**

### *2.1.2 Gender perspectives and pension schemes*

In many member states, pension schemes are now under reform to deal with the changing demographic situation. This should be taken as an opportunity to reassess the gender impact of the way pensions are calculated. In all Member States, women over 65 form a large part of the population "at risk of poverty."

The pensions they receive are usually smaller than those of their male counterparts, as they are more likely to be part-time workers or to temporarily stop working to care for their families.

In some Member states, it appears that the hourly rate for part-time jobs is lower than the hourly rate for full-time jobs. This has a direct impact on the person's pension.

In an ageing population, improvement of carers' allowances and the integration of a carer's time in the calculation of pensions has become an important issue.

### *2.1.3 Development of knowledge regarding long-term personal finances*

While looking at the remedial actions regarding the gender income gap, several affiliates of BPW Europe have pointed to the need to make women more aware of personal financial matters.

Women are generally very good at managing family finances, but do not have a personal finance strategy. This means they are more at risk of falling into poverty if events such as divorce, unemployment, death or illness occur, either to them or to their partner. While aware that this is not the case for every woman, BPW believes that specific attention should be paid to training young girls and women to know more about investments, legal contracts, etc.



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#### *2.1.4 Analysis of impact of life accidents*

Life accidents (divorce, unemployment, death...) have a different impact on men and women. For example

- Access to transport - women who lose their partner, for one reason or another, often become less mobile, and this has an impact on their employability. Analyses show that women between the ages of 21 and 65 walk and use buses significantly more frequently than men, and are less likely to drive cars and slightly more likely to be a passenger. Even if this situation could change in the next few years, current concerns for sustainable development should be an incentive for developing better access to public transport.
- Access to legal information: many European countries have introduced legal advice services for women. This is especially useful in the context of domestic violence, but women should be encouraged to obtain preventative legal advice rather than reparative legal advice.



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## **Political will and transparency of actions**

Even if women have obtained *de jure* equal rights and equal status with men in Europe, they are still discriminated against in many areas of life. Progress towards gender equality has encountered a number of blockages.

There is a need to (re)organise, improve, develop and evaluate policy processes to reduce the structural character of gender inequality and achieve a more balanced society.

Gender equality must be constantly fought for, protected and promoted. The gender equality targets on our agenda will only be reached when the actions are achieved both externally and internally at local, regional, national and European level, illustrated by concrete changes.

This involves key prerequisites or facilitating conditions:

- the strengthening of political will
- reinforcing the existing gender equality policy
- increasing and diversifying statistics on disparities between men and women
- taking into account and making available all gender studies which enhance knowledge of gender relations;
- advocating more financial (often involving reallocation of funds) and human resources (i.e. training for policy-makers)
- prioritising the full participation of women in political and public life and in decision-making processes
- improving the image of women in society as disseminated by the media

BPW Europe considers consultation and communication with all the stakeholders, as well as with citizens, a key aspect for successfully achieving the current Roadmap goals and for drafting a stronger Roadmap for the upcoming years.