

TOWARDS A NEW GENDER EQUALITY STRATEGY

Report on a Deliberation

Brussels 3 October 2019



This report was financed by, and prepared for the use of the European Commission, Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers, Unit D2 'Equality between men and women', in the framework of a contract managed by Fondazione Giacomo Brodolini (FGB). It does not necessarily reflect the opinion or position of the European Commission or of the Directorate-General for Justice, nor may any person acting on their behalf be held responsible for the use which may be made of the information contained in this publication.



CONTENT

Content.....	1
1. Introduction	2
2. Deliberations on Content	2
2.1 Introducing New Thematic Areas	2
• Stereotyping and cultural change:	2
• Involvement of men:	3
• Gender equality and health:.....	3
• Sustainable development:.....	3
• Organisational change:.....	4
2.2 Expanding Current Thematic Areas.....	4
• In the area of equal economic independence for women and men:	4
• In the area of equal pay for work of equal value.....	5
• In the area of equality in decision-making:	5
• In the area of dignity, integrity and ending gender-based violence:.....	5
• In the area of promoting gender equality beyond the EU:.....	5
2.3 Expanding Current Transversal Areas	6
• Intersectionality:.....	6
• Territorial:.....	6
3. Deliberations on Process.....	6
• Structures and links	6
• Resources and budgets	7
• Capacity.....	7
• Data	7
• Other issues.....	7
Appendix: Seminar Speakers	8

1. INTRODUCTION

This seminar was organised as a deliberation among Commission policy officers on a future gender equality strategy, alongside the engagement of academics from the SAAGE network. The Strategic Engagement for Gender Equality 2016-2019 is coming to an end, the Commission's President-elect has announced a Gender Equality Strategy, a Task Force on Equality, and an integration of the Sustainable Development Goals within the work of the European Commission. After the seminar, preparations for the next strategy will continue at service level and will be formalised once the new Commission is in place.

This report of the deliberation seeks to capture the ideas that emerged in the discussions. It does not purport to point to any conclusions, merely to capture the suggestions and proposals that came up in the discussion groups. It first identifies new thematic areas suggested for a future gender equality strategy, before setting out the suggestions made for continuing and expanding both the thematic areas and the transversal themes in the current Strategic Engagement for Gender Equality. It concludes with the ideas presented for enhancing the process of implementation of a future gender equality strategy.

2. DELIBERATIONS ON CONTENT

2.1 INTRODUCING NEW THEMATIC AREAS

New thematic areas for a future gender equality strategy were suggested. There was particular reference to addressing: gender stereotyping, the involvement of men, gender equality in health, climate change and its impact on women, perpetrators of violence against women, and organisational change.

- ***Stereotyping and cultural change:***

Gender stereotypes need to be combatted. Men and women should be able to make choices free from stereotypes. Stereotypes of motherhood, for example, limit expectations for and aspirations of women. There should be no barriers to finding different ways to be women, or to be mothers.

Education from an early age on gender equality and on combating stereotypes has an important role to play. This focus on combating stereotypes could usefully be included in educational curricula. Masculinities and gender stereotyping could be promoted as a curricular topic for educational establishments.

Communication strategies on gender equality need new creativity if they are to have an impact on a wide audience. Good role models could be used, social media influencers and gender equality

ambassadors could be involved, and innovative messaging could be created to make EU reports on gender equality more accessible to and impactful on the wider public.

Societal culture and norms impact more generally on the potential for progress on gender equality. The context of backlash to gender equality and the current societal polarisation around such issues need further analysis. Communication strategies are needed that impact on the way we feel about and look at gender equality and the values that get prioritised in the public and private spheres.

- ***Involvement of men:***

The involvement of men in gender equality initiatives needs to be further promoted and supported. There is a need to build an understanding among men of the gains from gender equality. The contribution of men to, and their role in, gender equality strategies need to be teased out and realised, both in terms of the workplace and of the home.

- ***Gender equality and health:***

The physical and mental health of women and men and gaps in this regard need to be a focus for action on gender equality. Gender perspectives in this area require analysis and action. Research on the impact of gender differences of biology is well developed and needs to be taken into account in health policy and service provision. This work is relevant to such as testing medicines and medical diagnoses. There remain data and knowledge gaps that need to be addressed in this field.

- ***Sustainable development:***

Societal crises have a history of placing greater burdens on women and children and climate change is likely to be no different in this regard without action. One of the principles to underpin a future gender equality strategy should be its relationship with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The integration of gender equality in all aspects of such a multi-dimensional development paradigm would be important. This would need a reinforcing of links across the DGs.

Mutual learning processes could engage with such large-scale issues that impact on gender. Climate change and gender, addressing the implications for women and gender equality of the impacts of climate change on economies, not just in the developing countries but also the EU economy, would be an example.

- ***Organisational change:***

Gendered assumptions and gender stereotypes can be embedded in organisational cultures, shaping organisational systems. Concepts of the ideal unencumbered worker, stereotypical thinking about what makes for successful human resource policies and successful workers, and broader gender stereotypes influencing organisational decision-making need to be identified and addressed.

Action on organisational change and gender equality needs to include a focus on systems as well as culture. Internal human resource processes and management training, for example, should enable enhanced gender equality outcomes. Gender sensitive organisational systems can combat segregation, inequality, and stereotyping. Organisations need assistance to put new systems in place. The EU institutions could also take on to lead by example through their internal policies.

2.2 EXPANDING CURRENT THEMATIC AREAS

Policies pursued under the current Strategic Engagement for Gender Equality should continue. The work done provides foundations that should be built on.

- ***In the area of equal economic independence for women and men:***

Men need to be aware of their rights to flexibility. Flexibility in work organisation available to all needs to be promoted and secured as the norm. It should not be based solely on parenthood, as this leads to stigma and stereotyping. In advancing such a shift, there is a need to take specific sectors into account, address issues of productivity and flexibility, and ensure no reduction of rights such as social security.

There could be a focus on the quality of jobs. Employment precariousness and the gender dimensions of this issue need to be addressed. Working hours and digitalisation both need to be a further focus. Migration is an important factor as migrant women face particular barriers in securing quality employment.

There is concern to address the performance of boys in education and the impact on them and implications for society of their current lower levels of performance.

Progress has been made on a gender perspective in the European Semester and its Country Specific Recommendations. However, the integration of gender equality in the European Semester continues to be a challenge. Robust analysis is required with data to justify references to gender equality. The integration of gender equality into the Pillar of Social Rights is another ongoing challenge. Links between the relevant DGs could track and inform work on such as labour market change, platform work, and minimum wage from a gender equality perspective.

- *In the area of equal pay for work of equal value*

The level of the minimum wage is important for gender equality and could valuably be progressed to the level of a living wage. There is a particular challenge to focus on women's wages in rural areas and the situation of women in family run businesses. Further action is needed to deepen action on the gender pensions gap.

- *In the area of equality in decision-making:*

Migrant integration and participation of migrant women in decision-making could be a specific focus. Public debate could be a further arena for attention, addressing the barriers preventing women from participating in public debate.

- *In the area of dignity, integrity and ending gender-based violence:*

The issue of sexual harassment should be given some priority, with a particular focus on areas such as the transport sector. Harassment needs to be built into the concept of violence against women. The ILO Convention could assist in this. The manner in which online violence silences women needs to be included in this work.

Overall, a focus on perpetrators is necessary. An intersectional angle is required to address the particular experiences of violence in public places of different groups of women, including migrants and refugees. The focus on sexism needs to be sustained. Adequate data continues to be needed to monitor and enable further demands to be made in work on violence against women.

- *In the area of promoting gender equality beyond the EU:*

Coherence between internal and external policies and practices should be a principle underpinning a future gender equality strategy. All external policies need to be in focus for gender equality, including trade and development. The development of Gender Action Plan III for external relations offers opportunities to maintain and expand achievements and results in this area.

2.3 EXPANDING CURRENT TRANSVERSAL AREAS

The transversal area of gender mainstreaming in the Strategic Engagement for Gender Equality needs to be reinforced in terms clarity of definition and of implementation systems. Additional transversal areas are required.

- ***Intersectionality:***

Intersectionality is an important additional transversal area for the strategy to be inclusive and ambitious. Action on intersectional groups of women, whose particular situation and experience requires specific attention, is needed.

- ***Territorial:***

Gender equality in rural areas is another important transversal area, if the particular issues for women in these areas are to be effectively addressed. This context poses specific challenges and is missing from current targets and indicators. A stronger gender perspective is needed in rural development policies.

3. DELIBERATIONS ON PROCESS

The political guidelines of the President-elect demonstrate a strong political will for gender equality and there is significant motivation evident across the DGs in this regard. It will be important to sustain this and to evolve implementation processes for a future gender equality strategy to be effective.

The case made for gender equality could be a focus for consideration. There is a case to be made that it is the *right* thing to do, based on EU values of equality, human dignity and human rights, just as there is a case to be made that it is the *smart* thing to do, enhancing outcomes for all. The challenge is to effectively communicate both of these perspectives. The evidence base for these needs to be communicated more effectively, as only some groups are aware of the evidence supporting action on gender equality.

- ***Structures and links***

Commissioner Dalli's Task Force on Equality will have a remit broader than gender equality. Its positioning vis-à-vis the Inter-Service Group on gender equality needs attention. The Task Force needs to be sufficiently high level to bring added value.

The strategy needs to be supported with appropriate structures in the Commission for effective implementation and monitoring. The focus will need to be on actions that are strategic and that are feasible. The links across the DGs need to be sustained. Opportunities for informal networking, on

gender equality, across DGs and beyond the Inter-Service Group should be fostered. A Council Working Group on Gender was mooted.

- ***Resources and budgets***

Additional resources for work on gender equality across the DGs and in the JUST Gender Equality Unit was emphasised. The model of a senior person with responsibility for gender equality in each DG with a full-time person working for them on the issue was suggested. Acknowledging people interested in focusing on gender equality and ensuring they are afforded the time for this work was identified as important.

Tracking of gender financing through the Multi-Annual Financial Framework could go further. There could be funding for associations to work on issues where the EC cannot intervene directly. A cost-benefit analysis for investing in gender equality could be done.

- ***Capacity***

The value of training within the Commission was emphasised. General gender equality training that is compulsory for all was suggested. Mandatory training on gender leadership for management personnel was emphasised. Specific training modules could be developed for each DG. Training on gender mainstreaming and gender budgeting is needed. The capacity to implement gender impact assessments needs reinforcing so that it is not a tick box exercise.

- ***Data***

There are actions that could usefully be taken by Eurostat. Currently, it has no unit promoting the collection and analysis of gender data across the whole organisation. All large-scale surveys of Eurostat could usefully include gender-based questions. Work to examine which data are already collected and how they are used could be developed.

- ***Other issues***

More specifically, a gender lens should be applied to research across all fields including fields such as climate change, agriculture, transport, Artificial Intelligence, and cyber security. A shared platform portal for all gender related research could be developed. Public procurement by the Commission, and by national and local authorities, could be used to stimulate action on gender equality by companies.

APPENDIX: SEMINAR SPEAKERS

- Elvira González Gago, SAAGE network, presented on the assessment report she prepared on the Strategic Engagement for Gender Equality 2016-2019.
- Yasmine Ergas (Columbia University) presented from her essay on 'Arguing for equality: between pragmatism and principle'.
- Suzan Lewis (Middlesex University London) presented from her essay on 'Can flexibility in the workplace enable men and women to adapt working time to private time needs throughout their working lives?'
- Jill Rubery (University of Manchester) presented from her essay on 'How to combat segregation in the labour market for both low and high-qualified women'.
- Francesca Bettio (University of Siena) presented from her essay on 'On prevalence, frequency and seriousness of sexual harassment and violence against women'.