

NEWSLETTER

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT COMMITTEE ON WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND GENDER EQUALITY - June 2008 -

June's meeting agenda in brief...

- ✓ Review of the activities of the German, Portuguese and Slovenian Council Presidencies in the field of equality between women and men;
- ✓ Consideration of amendments to the draft report on "Equality between women and men - 2008";
- ✓ Consideration of draft opinions on "Stepping up the fight against undeclared work", "The future of social security systems and pensions: their financing and the trend towards individualisation" and "The White Paper entitled 'Together for Health: A Strategic Approach for the EU 2008-2013'";
- ✓ Exchange of views with the organizations promoting women in Europe;

Details of the meeting:

Tuesday, 24 June 2008; 15:00 - 17:30

Wednesday, 25 June 2008; 9:00 - 12.30

COUNCIL PRESIDENCIES: GERMANY, PORTUGAL, SLOVENIA,

Exchange of views with Mrs Romana Tomc, State Secretary at the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs (Slovenia, Presidency of the Council), Mr Gerd Hoofe, State Secretary at the Federal Ministry of Family, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (Germany) and Mr Jorge Lacão, State Secretary for Equality (Portugal)

In their 18-month Programme, the German, Portuguese and Slovenian Presidencies identified ambitious goals and measures of the EU for the promotion of gender equality.

The three Presidencies agreed to pay particular attention to the following issues: achieving increased participation of men in family life and better participation of women in working life, the latter objective to be fostered by eliminating the gender pay gap, increasing women's employment rates and their participation in top decision-making positions; eliminating gender stereotypes, also in education, training and culture, and promoting girls and young women in society; protecting vulnerable categories such as migrant women and girls against discrimination and enabling them to better participate in social, professional and political life; implementing equality between women and men in all relevant activities.

The exchange of views will offer a possibility to reflect upon the results achieved and the future improvements required.

DRAFT REPORT and AMENDMENTS

Equality between women and men - 2008 (Rapporteur: IRATXE GARCÍA PÉREZ (PSE))

The draft report addresses gender gaps in employment, women participation in decision-making, reconciliation of professional, family and private life. It emphasises the necessity to pay special attention to the needs of vulnerable groups of women, such as disabled women, women with dependants, elderly women, minority and immigrant women. The rapporteur stresses that violence against women is a major obstacle to equality between women and men and calls for a concerted action to combat violence.

There are 73 amendments tabled to the report, mainly proposing adding new text, but also a number of changes and a few deletions are suggested. FEMM awaits opinions of EMPL and CULT on this report.

Adoption in FEMM: 16 July 2008

Plenary: 3 September 2008

DRAFT OPINIONS

Stepping up the fight against undeclared work (Draftsperson: ASTRID LULLING (EPP – ED))

The draft opinion stresses that women are not over-represented where undeclared work is concerned. It points out the generally weaker position of women on the labour market.

It calls on the Commission to develop a pilot tool for the Member States aimed to curb non-declared work by making it less appealing through simplification of administrative requirements for employers, guaranteeing social security cover for workers, attractive tax rates for employers through the deduction of certain charges.

Adoption in FEMM: 16 July 2008

Adoption in EMPL: 10 September 2008

The future of social security systems and pensions: their financing and the trend towards individualisation (Draftsperson: ASTRID LULLING (EPP – ED)) - enhanced cooperation with EMPL committee

The draft opinion focuses on the gender-specific aspects of the trend towards individualisation of the rights in the field

Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality is responsible for:

- Definition, promotion and protection of women's rights in the Union and related Community measures;
- The promotion of women's rights in third countries;
- Equal opportunities policy, including equality between men and women with regard to labour market opportunities and treatment at work;
- The removal of all forms of discrimination based on sex;
- The implementation and further development of gender mainstreaming in all policy sectors;
- The follow-up and implementation of international agreements and conventions involving the rights of women;
- Information policy on women.

of social security. While the individualisation of pension rights is *per se* a recognition of the economic independence of women, the various reforms do not operate in a gender-neutral context: women live longer and work less years than men, they tend to work part-time (voluntarily or not), and are underrepresented in management position. In this context a reform towards individualisation without any corrective measures will put many women at risk of poverty in their old age. Some of the corrective elements that can be taken into account are enumerated in the opinion and they provide a basis for the debate.

Adoption in FEMM: 9 September 2008

Adoption in EMPL: 7 October 2008

The White Paper entitled 'Together for Health: A Strategic Approach for the EU 2008-2013' (Draftsperson: SIIRI OVIIR (ALDE))

The draft opinion calls on the Commission to present a report on the state of women's and children's health in order to enable measures focused on various target groups and analyses to be brought to bear on the accessibility of services and their impact on different social groups in different regions. It stresses the need to improve pre- and postnatal medical care by devising prenatal care indicator. It deplors the fact that the health behaviour of pregnant women (high rates of induced and repeated abortions, smoking during pregnancy) and their educational levels remain closely linked to infant mortality after the 28th day. The draft also underlines that teenage pregnancies and deliveries continue to be a great risk to newborns' health, and that medical conditions among newborns have become more frequent.

Adoption in FEMM: 16 July 2008

Adoption in ENVT: 9 September 2008

ORGANIZATIONS PROMOTING WOMEN IN EUROPE

Exchange of views

FEMM committee will welcome Kirsti Kolthoff, President of the European Women's Lobby, and Andrea Ettl, Vice-President of New Women for Europe to discuss the experiences and future challenges that the organisations fighting for the women's rights advancements in Europe face today.

THE COMMITTEE WILL VOTE ON:

Draft opinion on **Promoting social inclusion and combating poverty, including child poverty, in the EU** (Draftsperson: **ANNA ZÁBORSKÁ (EPP – ED)**) - enhanced cooperation with EMPL committee

HEARING OF VICE-PRESIDENT JACQUES BARROT

On Monday 16 June in Strasbourg, Vice-President Jacques Barrot, who takes over the "Justice, Freedom and Security" portfolio following the resignation of Franco Frattini, was heard by the LIBE, JURI and FEMM committees.

Vice-President emphasized the importance of the contributions from the committee and congratulated Anna Záborská for proposals in the field of violence against women.

The Vice-President assured his determination to implement gender mainstreaming in the policies within his portfolio. The awaited study requested by FEMM since long analysing the links between legislation on prostitution and the scope of trafficking will be available in March 2009.

With a view to combating trafficking for sexual exploitation, Mr Barrot will present Members with a set of proposals to improve the current framework. He was aware of the need to take actions against pornography on Internet which, as Anna Záborská underlined, is an important root of the problems of an increasing number of children and young women forced into prostitution.

DELEGATION TO ROMANIA ON 26 JUNE 2008

FEMM committee will send a delegation of four Members to meet with the Members of the Romanian Parliament and the NGOs working in the field of gender equality. The aim of the delegation is to discuss the implementation of acquis in the field of equal treatment and equal opportunities between women and men, in particular as regards the existing directives.

DELEGATION TO PARIS ON 2-3 JULY 2008

FEMM committee will send a delegation of six Members to Paris to participate in the conference of the Network of Parliamentary Committees for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men in the European Union (NCEO). The issues to be covered during the conference will mainly focus on the professional equality between women and men and women's access to responsibility positions. The conference will be opened by the President of the French Senate Mr Christian Poncelet; Commissioner Vladimír Špidla will intervene as well.

Details of the next meeting:

Tuesday, 16 July 2008; 15:00 - 17:30

Wednesday, 17 July 2008; 9:00 - 12.30

For more information, please contact

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FEMM website: http://www.europarl.europa.eu/committees/femm_home_en.htm

Link to committee meeting documents:

http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2004_2009/organes/femm/femm_meetinglist.htm