



Brussels, 7<sup>th</sup> November 2012

## European Women's Lobby Priorities for the Irish Presidency of the European Union, January-June 2013

On 01 January 2013, Ireland will take on the Presidency of the Council of the European Union (EU). The European Women's Lobby (EWL), the largest association of women's organisations in Europe with more than 2000 member organisations, **calls on the Irish Presidency to be a driving force for women's rights in Europe especially in the current crisis.** Both at the European and the national level, we witness how the crisis and austerity measures are having detrimental impacts on women and on gender equality. Cuts threaten policies and the very existence of women's organisations. This trend not only risks jeopardising recent progress in the realisation of equality between women and men, it also risks creating serious backlashes regarding the prevalence and prevention of violence against women, the promotion of women's economic independence or the fight against negative gender stereotypes<sup>1</sup>.

The EWL calls on the Irish Presidency to take the lead in ensuring **that further cutbacks which would have a long-term negative impact on gender equality are avoided or reversed** and that emergency funding is allocated to compensate for measures already implemented. We also would like to see progress in the adoption of the European gender-related legislation currently on the table and in the integration of a women's rights perspective in European social and economic policies, notably within the **Europe 2020 Strategy, with** meaningful consultation of women's NGOs. The EWL also would like the Irish Presidency to provide progressive and ambitious leadership to the Council of the European Union in its policy and legislative tasks, in relation to issues related to women's human rights, in particular the fight against all forms of male violence against women and the guarantee of women's sexual and reproductive rights.

The European Women's Lobby calls on the Irish Presidency to:

1. Within the final decisions on the EU Multi-annual Financial Framework 2014-2020, and the sector-specific funding programmes, in particular the Equality, Rights and Citizenship Programme and the Structural Funds, **ensure there is no deterioration in the level and predictability of EU funding for activities on women's rights and gender equality, including combating violence against women.**
2. Take a leadership role in the Council negotiations to advance the adoption of the **revised maternity leave Directive<sup>2</sup>**. This revision should include the **full pay of maternity leave, the increase of leave provisions from 14 weeks to 20 weeks, the protection of women on return to work and the introduction of two weeks' fully paid leave for new fathers**, as provided in the Resolution adopted by the European Parliament in 20 October 2010.
3. **Bring back the issue of violence against women on the political agenda of the EU** by: promoting a strong EU position at the 2013 UN Commission on the Status of Women and developing proactive diplomatic activities to guarantee the best agreed conclusions on violence against women; follow-up on the Council Conclusions of December 2012 on violence against women and act to implement its

<sup>1</sup> See European Women's Lobby, The price of austerity: the impact on women's rights and gender equality in Europe, 2012.

<sup>2</sup> Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Council Directive 92/85/EEC on the introduction of measures to encourage improvements in the safety and health at work of pregnant workers and workers who have recently given birth or are breastfeeding.



provisions, especially the ratification by the EU and member states of the Council of Europe Convention on violence against women and the elaboration of an EU strategy to end violence against women. With regards to the pervasive form of violence against women i.e. prostitution, the Irish Presidency should initiate proposals to address the demand for prostitution which fosters trafficking in human beings for sexual exploitation.

4. Support the **proposal and adoption of efficient binding EU-level legislation to reach parity on company boards**, in order to implement the continuous political expressions of commitment to democracy, justice and equality between women and men of all EU countries.
5. Change its legislation in order to **reach the highest standards of sexual and reproductive health and rights, including sexual education and information for all young people**, and lead an EU policy which ensures the respect of those rights for all women, particularly women from vulnerable groups at risk of discriminatory practices (forced sterilisation, sexual/genital mutilation, lack of access to safe abortion and family planning, discrimination in access to Assisted Reproductive Technologies, etc.).
6. Stress that the **economic independence of women** is a condition for equality between women and men throughout their lives; this includes: quality employment, tackling the gender **pay, pension and poverty** gaps, accessible and affordable care, social and health services, and addressing the gender dimension in targets to lift 20 million people out of poverty<sup>3</sup>. These issues should be **at the core of all mechanisms of the EU 2020 Strategy** and EU economic governance, which should integrate gender impact assessments and gender budgeting mechanisms. Take a leadership role in calling for a **meaningful consultation with civil society, including women's NGOs** prior to the drafting of the national reform programmes, stability and convergence programmes. Ensure that the European Commission's **country-specific recommendations** are assessed from a gender equality perspective, to take into account the disproportionate impact on public spending cuts on women.
7. In the context of the work on social inclusion and the implementation of the forthcoming Social Investment Pack, take a leadership role in developing targets and standards on quality and affordable **care services across the life-cycle** for children, dependent and elderly persons, including a reaffirmation and assessment of the Barcelona targets on childcare.
8. Take a leadership role in the Council negotiations to progress towards the adoption of the draft Directive on combating discrimination on grounds of religion or belief, age, disability or sexual orientation building on the EP Resolution<sup>4</sup> and proposals made by the EWL and anti-discrimination networks including regarding the 'need to **examine the causes of multiple discrimination** and (to) explore effective ways of eliminating it.'<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> See paragraph 6 "poverty reduction should take into account the specific situation of both women and men(..)" of Council Conclusions on the European Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion: A European framework for social and territorial cohesion, 3073th Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council meeting, Brussels, 7 March 2012.

<sup>4</sup> European Parliament legislative Resolution of 02 April 2009 on the proposal for a Council Directive on implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation (COM(2008)0426 – C6-0291/2008 – 2008/0140(CNS)), available at: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P6-TA-2009-0211+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN>

<sup>5</sup> Council of the European Union *Council conclusions on the European Pact for gender equality for the period 2013-2020* 3073th Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council meeting, Brussels, 7 March 2013