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ENTRE LES FEMMES
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DE LA DIVERSITÉ ET DE
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Trio Presidency Declaration on Gender Equality France, the Czech Republic and Sweden 2022-2023

Dignity, Equality, Justice, Freedom, together with Solidarity and Citizen's Rights, are the fundamental values of the European Union. These values define our identity and our common goals, which can only be reached if Gender Equality is effectively ensured and mainstreamed in all areas. Sustainable and durable economic and social progress will only be possible if women and men, boys and girls, in all their diversity, benefit from it equally.

Inclusive and gender equal societies are more diverse and more productive. They are also more resilient and better prepared to respond to the most pressing challenges of our time. The balanced representation of women and men in decision-making leads to better and more efficient policy making.

The COVID-19 crisis has exacerbated inequalities around the world and disproportionately affected women, who had to face cumulative burdens such as over-representation in frontline jobs, unpaid care work in households, negative impacts on mental health, economic insecurity, violence, exploitation, and abuse. These negative consequences must not be allowed to become permanent.

Gender stereotypes are at the root of inequalities that persist in all areas of life, in the private as well as in the public sphere, and must be tackled from early education onwards. From a young age, gender stereotypes shape the way boys and girls are perceived and how they themselves perceive their opportunities and make their choices. Girls are less likely to embrace promising fields of study related to science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), which has traditionally been seen as a male domain, while boys are less likely to enter fields such as care work where the workforce has traditionally been female.

The COVID-19 crisis reinforces the need to recognise the contribution of frontline work, and the importance of promoting equal sharing of care responsibilities, of breaking the glass ceiling and of better valorising women's skills, efforts and responsibilities in undervalued and underpaid sectors by

addressing the pay gap while respecting the autonomy of the social partners.

The inclusion of both women and men in all their diversity in the labour market has a strong, positive impact on the economy, notably in the context of a shrinking workforce and skills shortages. According to a study produced by the European Institute for Gender Equality, improving gender equality in the EU would contribute to an increase in GDP per capita of up to 9.6 % by 2050. Progress towards a gender equal labour market is consequently both a necessity and an opportunity for the EU and for European society as a whole. Increased participation in paid work, especially quality jobs, and challenging gender-based discrimination in employment will benefit individual women, empowering them to shape their own lives, to play an active role in public life and to be economically independent. These objectives are even more crucial as new technologies are expected to transform the future of work and present new risks for both women and men.

We – France, the Czech Republic and Sweden – firmly commit ourselves to promoting gender equality and to fighting against all forms of discrimination against women at all levels. We will do so under the theme of Recovery, with a special focus on “Women’s Economic Empowerment” and “Preventing and combatting gender-based violence”.

Women’s economic empowerment will be our top priority. Economic empowerment is the cornerstone of gender equality, for it underpins women’s independence and their control over their own time, their own resources and, therefore, their own choices. We commit to taking an integrated approach in efforts to close the gender pay gap and to promote gender equality, including by fostering synergies between employment strategies and other economic and social policies concerning youth, education, taxation, family benefits, social protection and health care. Alongside work-life balance measures, the availability of affordable and high-quality early childhood education and care (ECEC) services for children and long-term care for the elderly and for people with a chronic illness or disability are fundamental for women’s participation in the labour market.

Gender-based violence constitute violations of fundamental rights, human dignity and, in the worst cases, the right to life. It is a major barrier in the path towards gender equality and women empowerment. Gender-based violence against women must be eradicated. There are many pressing areas that need to be addressed, such as the low rates of reporting, prosecution and conviction. Moreover, gender-based violence online has emerged as a serious challenge. To definitively eradicate gender-based violence, we call on the Member States to pursue coordinated policies at all levels and to take a comprehensive and interdisciplinary approach, targeting the key issues of prevention, under-reporting, protection, victim support, and the prosecution of perpetrators. We welcome the Commission’s ambition to propose legislative measures to prevent and combat violence against women and girls, as a complement or as an alternative to the EU accession to the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention). We call on member states to implement the Istanbul Convention that is the most comprehensive legal and policy framework to end gender-based violence in Europe. We also call on those member states where ratification of the Istanbul Convention was not successful yet to increase the knowledge about the importance of the Convention in order to end misconceptions so that the process can be completed.

As an essential strategic tool for advancing gender equality, gender mainstreaming means, *inter alia*, supporting a gender equal redistribution of power, influence and resources, and ensuring equal opportunities for women and men, and girls and boys, in all their diversity. Gender budgeting, gender impact assessment and the collection of statistics disaggregated by sex are indispensable tools for realising the strategy of gender mainstreaming and to support the establishment of an equal and fair environment in which women’s careers, entrepreneurial spirit, work-life balance and personal welfare will thrive. We commit ourselves to taking into account the personal characteristics of various groups of

women and men and the risk of multiple discrimination.

Achieving the ambitious goals of the European Green Deal will require the talents and involvement of all Europeans, both women and men.

We welcome the Commission's Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025, and we call for a strong commitment of all EU Member States to support its implementation. We will follow up the work already done by the previous Trio Presidency and continue to strive to implement gender equality as an integral and fundamental part of all social and economic recovery measures.

The Trio Presidency, together with all Member States will work hand in hand to strengthen the European Union as a prosperous civilisation, and one that is truly inclusive and sustainable.

Activities to be carried out during the presidencies of France, the Czech Republic and Sweden

France

For two years, Europe has been facing an unprecedented economic, social and health crisis. While the COVID-19 pandemic has deepened gender inequalities, it has also allowed us to join forces to find resilient and sustainable solutions. Gender equality has thus become an absolute priority for Europe, because the Union's vocation cannot be fulfilled without effective equality, which permeates our entire society.

In order to achieve equality both legally and in practice, the French Presidency of the Council of the European Union (FPEU) is particularly concerned by the fight against sexual and gender-based violence. Gender-based violence has harmful short- and long-term consequences for women, their children, their families and the population as a whole. For the first time in ten years, follow-up conclusions to the Beijing Platform for Action on combating violence against women will be proposed for adoption at the Council. These conclusions aim to raise awareness of new forms of violence, particularly psychological violence, and of the phenomenon of coercive control, by proposing concrete actions to all stakeholders.

In order to achieve gender equality, the promotion of women's economic empowerment is essential and is at the heart of the commitment of the French Presidency of the Council of the European Union. Eliminating the pay gap, ensuring equal opportunities for women and men and combatting stereotypes offers both women and men more freedom of choice and confidence in their respective contributions.

The French Presidency of the European Union thus supports the Commission's directive on equal pay. The promotion of women in decision-making bodies is also a commitment of the French Presidency, reflected in the directive on improving the gender balance among non-executive directors of companies listed on stock exchanges and related measures.

In order to discuss the implementation of the Gender Equality Strategy, and to achieve the second objective of the strategy aimed at "Thriving in a gender-equal economy", the French Presidency is organising a ministerial conference to raise at the highest level the European priorities of fighting stereotypes, professional equality and the promotion of women's entrepreneurship.

The French Presidency plans to organise the following events:

- **High Level Group on Gender Mainstreaming**, 28 January 2022 (remote);
- **Ministerial Conference on Women's economic empowerment: key to gender equality**, 31 January 2022 (remote);

The Czech Republic

Following the Trio Presidency commitment to advance women's economic empowerment the Czech Republic will support the negotiations leading towards the adoption of the directive to strengthen the application of the principle of equal pay for equal work or work of equal value between men and women through pay transparency and enforcement mechanisms. Taking into account the 2022 European Year of Youth the Czech Republic will focus on socio-economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on young people and will prepare Council Conclusions on a topic related to the economic empowerment of women with specific focus on young people.

The Czech Republic will support the implementation of the Commission's strategies for a Union of Equality, especially the Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025, and promote the realisation of the principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights. The Czech Republic will work closely with the European Institute for Gender Equality to mainstream gender equality in its Presidency events, and it will support the release of the 2022 Gender Equality Index by its activities.

Following the commitment to take a comprehensive and interdisciplinary approach to eradicate gender-based violence, the Czech Republic welcomes the Commission's ambition to propose legislative measures to prevent and combat violence against women and girls and is ready to promote negotiations of the proposal. Prevention of gender-based violence and tackling gender stereotypes are key elements of elimination of violence against women and girls. The Czech Republic will organise a seminar aimed at sharing good practice among EU Member States in the area of violence prevention.

The Czech Presidency plans to organise the following events:

- **High-level Group on Gender Mainstreaming**
- **Presidency conference on a topic related to the economic empowerment of women**
- The discussion and **possible adoption of Council Conclusions** on a topic related to the economic empowerment of women with specific focus on young people at the meeting of the Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council (EPSCO)
- **Seminar on the prevention of gender-based violence**

Sweden

The core challenges affecting the European Union today all have a gender dimension, whether they concern the green and digital transition, demographic change, or the Multiannual Financial Framework. Short term emergency measures and long-term reconstruction measures prompted by the COVID-19 pandemic are no exception to this rule. The Swedish Presidency wants to contribute to gender equality by highlighting good examples of gender mainstreaming, including gender budgeting, such as in the Member States' national Recovery and Resilience Plans.

The Recovery and Resilience Facility has made €672.5 billion in loans and grants available to support reforms and investments undertaken by Member States. The aim is to mitigate the economic and social impact of the coronavirus pandemic and make EU economies and societies more sustainable, resilient, and better prepared for the challenges and opportunities of the green and digital transitions.

According to the regulation governing the Recovery and Resilience Facility, article 18.4 (o), each Member State is to provide an explanation of how the measures in the recovery and resilience plan are expected to contribute to gender equality and equal opportunities for all and the mainstreaming of those objectives, in line with principles 2 and 3 of the European Pillar of Social Rights, with the UN Sustainable Development Goal 5 and, where relevant, with the national gender equality strategy.

As gender equality is created where resources are allocated, where standards are set and where decisions are made, a focus on the Recovery and Resilience Facility is warranted. Durable advancement for gender equality can only be achieved through long-term, strategic work on gender mainstreaming, in combination with targeted measures.

Within the context of the Beijing Platform for Action, area H, the Swedish Presidency wants to explore how each Member State has taken into account the issue of gender mainstreaming, including gender budgeting, for example in the context of the Recovery and Resilience Facility. The aim is to reflect the results of the findings in more concrete ideas on how EU can move forward on these issues. Furthermore, the Swedish Presidency wants to explore gender aspects in national policy measures implemented in 2021 during the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings will result in best practices being put forward.

Gender-based violence must stop.

Gender-based violence is a manifestation of historically unequal power relations between women and men. Violence against women is one of the crucial social mechanisms by which women are forced into a subordinate position compared with men. Accordingly, the structural nature of violence against women must be recognised and gender-based violence must be eradicated, as well as honour-related violence and harmful practices.

Women's economic independence is a cornerstone of their self-determination. Economic independence does not stop the violence, but it can enable women to break free from abusive relationships.

To date, measures have tended to deal with the consequences of violence rather than the causes. Sweden would like to expand this perspective and focus on effective measures to prevent both the causes, use and reoccurrence of violence. This also requires broader and more constructive involvement of men and boys than previously, and breaking with the notion of gender norms as well as norms that justify violence, the purchase of sexual services and other restrictions on the freedom of action and life choices of women and girls.

The Swedish Presidency wants to emphasize the importance of an effective preventive work to combat gender-based violence. In this context, attention will also be paid to the significance of women's economic independence.