

## **European social partners for central government administrations discuss equal pay between women and men**

(13 September 2011) At its 3rd working group meeting on 09 September 2011 in Brussels, the social dialogue committee for central government administrations stated that the gender pay gap is unacceptable in modern central government administrations.

The discussion took place in view of the European Commission's pending consultation of the trade unions and employers on the revision of the EU equal pay directive scheduled for November this year.

Following presentations of the Commission's gender equality strategy 2010-2015, two case studies in the Czech Republic and France and a draft joint statement that called for better pay transparency, the following was discussed:

- Despite progress, there is a persistent gender pay gap that stands at 18% in the EU, underrepresentation of women in decision-making positions and overrepresentation of women in lower-paid grades. The higher on the pay scale and hierarchy, the higher the gender pay gap is. The undervaluation of women's work can be reflected in lower pay levels in ministries with more women such as social affairs, employment, education, than in male-dominated defence or interior ministries;
- The motherhood penalty for career development, in some cases it takes twice as long for women than for men to reach managerial positions
- The importance of transparency of pay including bonuses, performance-related pay, supplementary pensions. Whilst it is said that the gender pay gap is lower in the public sector than in the private sector in most member states, it is difficult to have a clear picture of the situation in the absence of EU-wide reliable and comparable data in central government administrations
- In the case studies discussed, the criteria of allocation of supplementary pay are

rather vague and tend to penalize women, yet bonuses can represent more than 50% of basic pay.

- The importance of the effects of the crisis and the need for a gender equality assessment of the austerity measures. It was said that as the basic pay had been reduced or frozen in a number of countries, the variable part of pay might well increase, thereby exacerbating the gender pay gap.
- The added-value of establishing quotas or quantified targets in recruitment to help achieve gender parity.

The trade union side welcomed, as a first and immediate step, ahead of the Commission's pending consultation, a commitment to pay transparency in central government administrations. The employers did not oppose the principle and the need for concrete actions, but requested more time to reflect on how best the Committee would position itself in a joint statement. Accordingly, the Committee's steering committee will revise a draft statement for adoption at the next SDC CGA meeting on 25 October.

It was also noted that the Commission will consult social partners by the end of the year on women's representation in companies' boards and work/life balance.

The Committee also discussed the revision of the working time directive and related discussions on cross-sectoral negotiations and the pending consultation on anticipation of change and restructuring. On the latter the Commission said that the internal decision-making process was not over yet. The Chair said that a response from Commissioner Andor to a letter sent on behalf of the Committee regarding that consultation was still pending. The Committee however received a response by Commissioner Andor, on behalf of Commission President Barroso, regarding the role of central government administrations in the EU 20/20 on growth.

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