



Rat der Gemeinden und Regionen Europas
Council of European Municipalities and Regions
Europæiske kommuners og regioners råd
Συμβούλιο των Ευρωπαϊκών Δημών και Περιφερειών
Consejo de municipios y regiones de europa
Consiglio dei comuni e delle regioni d'Europa
Raad der Europese gemeenten en regio's
Conselho dos municípios e regiões da Europa
CONSEIL DES COMMUNES ET REGIONS D'EUROPE
Section européenne de IULA

EUROPEAN FEDERATION OF PUBLIC
SERVICE UNIONS

FEDERACIÓN SINDICAL EUROPEA DE
SERVICIOS PÚBLICOS

FEDERATION SYNDICALE EUROPEENNE DES
SERVICES PUBLICS

EUROPEISKA FEDERATIONEN FÖR
OFFENTLIGANSTÄLLDAS FÖRBUND

EUROPÄISCHER GEWERKSCHAFTS-
VERBAND FÜR DEN ÖFFENTLICHEN DIENST

**JOINT DECLARATION
OF THE CEMR EMPLOYERS PLATFORM AND EPSU
ON EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES**

INTRODUCTION

The social partners in local and regional government EPSU and CEMR Employers Platform state their commitment to the construction of a democratic, pluralist, tolerant and open Europe that respects the dignity and integrity of all human beings.

The social partners welcome that the European Union has as its task to promote equality between women and men. This statement and a follow up Conference are intended to contribute to the promotion of equality between men and women at work¹.

¹ The Social Partners also acknowledge the broader context of equality issues in relations to other disadvantaged groups including disabled persons and black and ethnic minority communities. As such we welcome the recent development of the inclusion of a general equality (article 2 and 3) and non-discrimination (article 6a) clause within the Amsterdam Treaty

BACKGROUND

In the context of earlier statements of EPSU and CEMR Employers Platform on modernisation of public services (November 1996) and Employment (November 1997) the social partners in local and regional government have developed this position.

Equal opportunities between men and women at work is a fundamental principle of the European Community. The EU Treaties and equality directives have had an important and innovative role in the development of equality principles for workers. These include the principle of equal pay for work of equal value and equal treatment in terms of working conditions in employment, access, and rights at dismissal or conclusion of employment. The European Commission Annual Equality Report 1996 has highlighted that the equality agenda continues to change.

The social partners in local and regional government have welcomed the Commission's proposal for the Employment guidelines. (Joint Statement on Employment). They stressed that special measures needed to be taken to ensure equality in considering employment. Gender segregation needs to be broken down.

EPSU and CEMR EP welcome the fact that the Commission and the Council have adopted more concrete Guidelines at their Employment summit and subsequent European Council.

EPSU and CEMR EP have also contributed to the Commission's study on Women's working conditions in different sectors of the European Economy (ECOTEC 1998)

The workforce is the greatest resource in public services. The majority of workers involved in delivering local and regional services are women. Many of these employees work in flexible employment patterns e.g. atypical and part-time employment. The social partners recognised that local authorities in many countries have taken significant steps towards eliminating low pay, however, this remains an issue.

PRINCIPLES

The goal of the social partners is to contribute to the achievement of equality of opportunity between women and men. They understand this in the following way:

Equality of opportunity between men and women in working life exists when women and men have the same formal and practical rights and the same practical possibilities to:

- gain and keep employment;
- to be educated to develop and be promoted in their work;
- to be found in approximately the same proportions in different occupations and level of hierarchy;
- to enjoy the same conditions of employment e.g. equal pay for work of equal value;
- to combine employment, family life and civic activities;
- when workplaces, methods of organisation and working conditions in general are adapted to both women and men.

The social partners agree that equality is also a matter of democracy at the place of work. Women and men should have the same formal and practical possibilities to take part in and have responsibilities for decisions at work.

- Local and regional authorities, have an important role to play in promoting good equal opportunities practice as public authorities.
- We recognise the responsibilities all employers have to apply and give effect to rights under EU law.

- The Social Partners agree that equal opportunities is a vital issue for the local and regional government sector, in relation to the composition of the workforce and the role of authorities as employers. As such equality of opportunity should be an integral part of the general human resources management of the workforce.
- The Partners would emphasise the role that access to appropriate child-care provision plays in promoting full participation particularly for women and men within the work-place. The Social Partners, note the 1992 EU Child Care Recommendation that Member states act to ensure availability of adequate good quality childcare provisions at affordable prices.

Positions

The Social Partners would emphasise the role of the local government sector as major employers of women. We are committed to a co-operative approach recognising the complex nature of questions/ issues arise. The following points need to be addressed, not necessarily in any order of priority. In particular:

promote positive action

- support and encourage the developing of women and men into non traditional roles, including the development of more representative workforces at all levels, by promoting positive action.

training and development

- encouraging and supporting development of flexible training and development to accommodate and maximise the potential of all employees regardless of mode of employment or family responsibilities; In this regard the development of programmes for vocational education and training would have an important role.

combating sexual harassment

- develop comprehensive programmes to prevent sexual harassment at or in relation to work based on the EC Recommendation and Code of Practice on the protection of the dignity of women and men at work. Develop appropriate remedies for handling complaints and disputes which arise.

family friendly employment policies and practices

- retaining skills and experiences of workers as family and career commitments develop by developing supportive policies and practices which reflect the reality of workers lives.

Equal Pay for Work of Equal Value

- endorsing the principle of equal pay, the social partners will endeavour to ensure application of the principle by local and regional authorities.

Modernising of public services

- initiating the development of methods for and applying a gender perspective throughout the process of modernising of public services.

The recent Green Paper on a Partnership for a New Organisation of Work identifies important issues in relation to the employment opportunities and experience of women. The Social Partners emphasize that equal opportunities strategies must be developed within the context of new ways of work organisation which :

- use resources efficiently and effectively to deliver quality services;
- maximise the quality, motivation and performance of staff;
- nurture co-operation and break down dysfunctional barriers.

The social partners equally recognise that workers' social needs and responsibilities as well as their need for employment security form part of the context within which new ways of work organisation are developed.

The Social Partners are committed to co-operating in developing greater awareness and understanding of the diversity of the workforce especially in relation to areas where skills, qualifications and experience may be underdeveloped.

CONCLUSIONS and Recommendations

- As such, it is clear from the Commission's own report into equality issues that this must be considered as a long-term issue. Such considerations include the development of tools and methods necessary to reach equality. CEMR-EP and EPSU recommend that the social partners at the appropriate level assign a high priority to the issues raised in this declaration
- EPSU and CEMR-EP have noted the conclusions, recommendations and best practices of the EcoTec study and will consider these further
- The Joint Conference will be used to develop the statement and issues further for future work

The Social Partners are concerned that the important role of local and regional authorities as major employers is recognised and should be promoted and encouraged through support and funding for developing innovative approaches and projects. The Social Partners would also encourage the Commission to support discussions between CEMR EP and EPSU for exploring new ways forward and more generally for sharing good practice and networking initiatives within and between sectors.

April 1998 - CEMR-EP proposal with amendments proposed by EPSU delegation and after discussion by both sides 7 October 1998.

For the EPSU

for the CEMR-EP