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Press release in connection with the launch of Gender Equality Index by the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE)

FIRST GENDER EQUALITY INDEX REVEALS – THE EU IS ONLY HALFWAY TOWARDS GENDER EQUALITY. HOW CAN WE MOVE FORWARD WHEN HALF OF US ARE BEING HELD BACK?

The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) is launching the first Gender Equality Index for the European Union. ‘The Gender Equality Index shows differences in outcomes between women and men at the individual level in EU Member States,’ says Virginija Langbakk, the Director of EIGE. ‘This unique measurement tool supports evidence-based policy-making and indicates where political priorities should be shifted to accelerate the process of achieving a gender-equal Europe.’ Although gender equality values have been recognised since its earliest days, the European Union is only halfway towards a gender-equal society, with an average EU score of 54 (where 1 stands for no gender equality and 100 for full gender equality).

‘Gender-sensitive statistics help us better understand the hurdles we need to bring down to make all citizens truly equal, and the Gender Equality Index does just that. In our fight against unemployment, improving job opportunities for women is a matter of fairness, but it is also good for society and good for the economy,’ says Herman Van Rompuy, President of the European Council.

The Gender Equality Index, proposed by the European Commission and developed by the European Institute for Gender Equality, provides scores for each Member State and presents an EU average in each of the following critical areas of gender equality: work, money, knowledge, time, power and health. The areas of violence and intersecting inequalities are also considered as critical areas, but treated separately as they adopt a different perspective. ‘I’m very glad that EIGE has developed a Gender Equality Index,’ says Michael Gustafson, Chair of the Committee on Women’s Rights and Gender Equality of the European Parliament. ‘It enables each Member State to evaluate and compare amongst each other the progress they’ve made in various fields of gender equality, as well as where progress is most needed. I hope this tool will be used extensively and that it will lead to better knowledge and, most importantly, to further progress in gender equality.’

LOWEST LEVEL OF GENDER EQUALITY IN DECISION-MAKING

The lowest score is in the area of power in decision-making, with an average score of only 38 at EU level: the EU and Member States need more women in decision-making. The greatest distance from gender equality is apparent in the representation of women and men on boards of the largest quoted companies, with an EU average score of only 23.3. Measures such as a quota system could improve gender equality in this area and lead to a positive effect on all other areas.

EQUAL SHARE OF CARING ACTIVITIES CRUCIAL TO REACHING THE EU’S EMPLOYMENT TARGET

The European Union could more quickly reach the employment target set out in the 2020 growth strategy – at least 75 % employment rate of the EU population aged 20-64 – by improving gender equality in the area of time spent on unpaid caring and domestic activities. Women’s participation in the labour market is limited because of their disproportionate involvement in caring roles. The Gender Equality Index shows wide differences between women and men in this area, with an average score of only 39 at the EU level – well below halfway towards gender equality. To ensure sustainable growth for Europe, it is important to assure the equal share of hours spent on providing care between women and men. In parallel with creating new employment opportunities, it is crucial to improve childcare provision, as stated in Barcelona targets, and to intensify efforts to increase the involvement of fathers in childcare.

COMBATING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN SERIOUSLY HAMPERED BY DATA GAPS

EU institutions are committed to making the EU free from violence for all, but the Gender Equality Index shows that there are no comparable sex-disaggregated data in this area at EU level. Because gender-based violence against women remains one of the most pervasive human rights violations of our time, one that is rooted in gender inequalities and reinforces them, the Gender Equality Index calls for all policymakers to address this gap.

The full report and all Gender Equality Index results are available at:

<http://eige.europa.eu/content/activities/gender-equality-index>

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