

I

(Resolutions, recommendations and opinions)

OPINIONS

EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE

525TH EESC PLENARY SESSION OF 26 AND 27 APRIL 2017

Opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee on ‘Women and transport — Platform for change’**(Exploratory opinion requested by the Commission)**

(2017/C 246/01)

Rapporteur: **Madi SHARMA**

Consultation	European Commission, 13 October 2016
Legal basis	Article 304 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union
Section responsible	Transport, Energy, Infrastructure and the Information Society
Adopted in section	11 April 2017
Adopted at plenary	26 April 2017
Plenary session No	525
Outcome of vote (for/against/abstentions)	148/0/2

1. Conclusions and recommendations

1.1. The European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) has considerable experience working on policy in the transport sector and has more recently considered the gender dimension in this traditionally male dominated sector (see opinion TEN/573 *Women and Transport*)⁽¹⁾. As the EU institution representing civil society, it has expertise in stakeholder dialogue and consultation on legislative actions.

1.2. The EESC recognises Stakeholder Platforms to be effective change forums if they:

- allow exchange of best practice between different institutions, businesses and associations facing similar challenges;
- encourage stakeholders to take responsibility and tackle challenges;
- consider the root causes of challenges;

⁽¹⁾ OJ C 383, 17.11.2015, p. 1.

- follow SMART objectives (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Time-bound);
- generate evidence-based activities for dissemination;
- develop tools and resources for others to adopt;
- replicate European-level Platforms at national and even regional levels to address similar challenges across Member States;
- receive information about initiatives from other sectors facing similar issues.

1.3. The EESC proposes an EU 'Platform for change' ('Platform'), to address **gender equality in transport**, initially prioritising increasing **women's employability in the sector**. This initial objective could later be supplemented by including 'women as users'. Transport includes air, sea, road, rail, inland navigation and logistics. Membership could include, but not exclusively, EU- and national-level representative bodies of policymakers, the transport industries, their trade unions, media, passenger organisations and NGOs willing to commit to concrete actions to address gender inequality in transport.

1.4. The EESC would promote the objectives of implementing gender-sensitive policies through the establishment of clear objectives: terms of reference and defined scope, including indicators, which are developed by the members during the Platform formation. This would provide a model of partnership working and coordinated action by sector stakeholders to transpose new initiatives across Europe.

1.5. The EESC recommends that the Platform retains the ability to be flexible and adaptable between all the dimensions of the sector and at policy level. It should insist on transparency and accountability of its members and functioning. Monitoring, evaluation and annual reviews are essential tools for the Platform's credibility and success.

1.6. The Platform can only be successful if the members take full ownership and hence the EESC proposes a web presence which lists members, their activities and hosts a database of the actions, recommendations, monitoring and evaluations, for others to replicate or source information.

2. Background

2.1. Employment of women in the transport sector is particularly low. In 2013, 78 % of transport workers in the EU were men. Attracting more women is essential to bring more gender balance to the sector, making it more user friendly whilst compensating for workforce shortages and challenges (a third of all transport workers are over 50 years old).

2.2. On 1 July 2015, the EESC adopted an exploratory opinion on 'Women and transport' and participated in a follow-up event organised by Commissioners Bulc and Jourova in April 2016. Subsequently, DG MOVE conducted various expert group consultations where current challenges and recommendations were discussed. An idea was put forward by the EESC representative to implement a 'Platform for change' which was endorsed by the European Commission as a good means of fostering concrete and visible actions in favour of gender equality in transport. In his letter of 13 October 2016, the European Commission Vice-President Frans Timmermans stated 'such a platform could be launched during the second half of 2017 at a joint EESC/Commission event'.

3. Platform for change

3.1. The EU Commission has many stakeholder consultation tools and activities. A 'Platform for change' could be centred around voluntary, concrete measurable actions which drive the goals of its establishment. Such a benchmark platform is the DG SANTE 'Diet, Physical Activity and Health' platform.

3.2. Hence, the EESC would propose to DG MOVE an EU-level stakeholder platform able to implement action-based commitments in favour of **increased employment opportunities for women and gender equality in the transport sector**, to better include women and generate more economic, social and sustainable growth, where:

- its Members adhere to a defined criteria for appointment and conduct;
- its actions are defined in accordance with objectives and scope established by Platform members at the onset;
- its commitments are monitored, evaluated and made public, thus spreading information exchange.

3.3. In establishing such a Platform the EESC suggests DG MOVE initially considers the following steps and elements (which are set out in detail thereafter):

- I. Phase I — Preparatory — Identify relevant interested stakeholders to engage on the Platform and commence dialogue to identify interest, key objectives, terms of reference and scope.
- II. Phase II — Development — Define with stakeholders drafts for approval: Charter for Engagement, Terms of Reference, Scope and Objectives. Additionally identify timelines, potential funds, secretariat and IT support tools.
- III. Phase III — Implementation — Organise an inaugural event with participation of Commissioner in charge of the Platform where members agree definitions, terms and scope and make concrete recommendations for actions. Discuss SMART objectives, indicators, gender-sensitive communication, monitoring, evaluation, publication and dissemination.
- IV. Phase IV — Sustainability — Define indicators, targets, ongoing resources, annual review and feedback mechanisms. Identify ways to have continuation of commitments and engagement of additional partners.

4. Role of EU institutions

4.1. Alongside President Juncker's drive for growth and jobs, the Maltese Presidency has gender equality as one of its priorities. The Platform could provide an 'EU added value' mechanism to traditional policymaking which specifically focusses on a single EU challenge '**Opportunities through Gender Equality in the European Transport Sector**'. This targeted focus engages relevant stakeholders who may otherwise not connect with the EU Commission. The Platform could thus complement the work of EU institutions.

4.2. It is of great importance that DG MOVE leads from the top and the Commissioner in charge of the Platform supports its functioning, for example by personal presence at its inauguration and Platform meetings in general. Platform members, whilst conducting the commitments voluntarily, will thus recognise it is a privilege to be asked to fulfil such a role. Therefore, the availability and interaction with the senior team of DG MOVE is crucial. Likewise, it is important that if EU institutions seek to be members of the Platform, they too must commit to proposing targeted actions.

4.3. EU Institutions and representatives of Transport Ministries (Member States) play a crucial role in disseminating key findings at Member State level. Hence, the EESC would recommend the establishment of a High-Level Group (HLG) providing an overview for governments and their policymakers, creating a mechanism for best practice dissemination, strengthening partnership working and improving a liaison between policymakers and the Platform. Where such stakeholders choose to sit as Platform members too, they should also commit to carrying out concrete actions.

4.4. The EESC would see DG MOVE as being responsible for operating the Platform. DG MOVE would allocate budgets, secretariat and some resources. Other EU institutions could provide stakeholder recommendations from their networks and they might also provide meeting rooms, translation and interpreting services. Possible alternative funding options could be through Platform members' resources.

4.5. A significant cost will be the central communication tool, the web page and database including maintenance. Various EU bodies have developed such web resources and it is felt that DG MOVE may be able to adapt an existing template.

5. Membership

5.1. The Platform should not be a 'talking shop'; it is a process designed for stakeholders to meet and discuss challenges and opportunities for women in the transport sector, and then commit to audit-able actions. Understanding the stakeholder type to which members belong will help identify their potential level of interest and influence. Those with the greatest interest will be those who are directly faced by current industry challenges.

5.2. Membership of the Platform could include the following European and national level stakeholders: industry, SME associations, trade unions (social partners) — including specialised women's representative organisations, public administrations including those with influence on purchasing and tenders, i.e.: ERDB; NGOs including umbrella organisations defending women's rights and equality, media, think tanks, academia and research institutes.

5.3. Consideration could additionally be made for the occasional inclusion of (1) persons involved in the design of commitments who may not be a designated Platform member; (2) decision-makers and influencers, including EU institutions and Member State representatives/public authorities.

5.4. Membership of the Platform should be free of charge with criteria and Terms of Reference for Membership. No reimbursements for activities conducted by members nor costs incurred for being a Platform member would be envisaged initially.

5.5. Membership should be governed based on:

- inclusive participation;
- transparency, openness and accountability;
- accepting differences and respecting proportionality;
- using SMART objectives to deliver coherence.

6. Outline objective and scope of the Platform

6.1. The overall objective of this Platform could be to increase the participation of women and improve gender equality in the transport sector by improving the opportunities for women, for women-owned companies and for female managers, and by improving working conditions for all within the sector and their ultimate impact on jobs, inclusiveness, innovation, sustainability and growth. The focus should be on gender equality, thus promoting employment and addressing gaps in the sector. This objective can be achieved, inter alia, by improving the quality of jobs and working conditions for all; addressing harassment and gender based violence, improving reconciliation between work, private and family life, increasing the number of women in decision-making positions and improving the image of the sector to attract more female workers, entrepreneurs, academia and innovators. The scope of the Platform could be later expanded to cover related issues such as improving the user experience and focusing on actions which address women as users.

6.2. The EESC would recommend the implementation of gender-sensitive policies and gender-sensitive budgeting as a key tool to address the objectives above. This new concept is often misunderstood: it does not mean an increase in overall spending but rather sets new priorities and reorients expenditures within programmes, departments and services. Gender budgeting adds clarity and creates mechanisms that allow for a global and transversal approach to promote more gender equality.

6.3. The EESC recommends that the scope and priorities to be addressed should be in line with EU policies and legislation whilst respecting social partner dialogue. The Platform should combine top-down and bottom-up approaches to support private sector and public policies, avoiding a need for legislation change. The Platform should be seen by all as a positive and necessary investment.

6.4. The EESC highlights that the benefits of stakeholder participation are to:

- provide stakeholders with opportunities to share views, needs and knowledge;
- find common objectives to reach common goals;
- enable participants to influence outcomes by including them in the processes of shaping, developing, identifying and implementing actions;
- enhance understanding between stakeholder groups, thus reducing potential conflicts or divergence of views, and promoting effective cooperation;
- build stakeholders' commitment and a feeling of responsibility and ownership;
- ensure sustainability of plans and associated decisions;
- bring autonomy and flexibility in decision-making and implementation.

6.5. The EESC considers that the Platform could identify key actions to:

- collect data and establish key indicators to identify and deconstruct barriers and stereotypes;
- ensure women are visible and active in policy, decision-making, and planning — over and above administrative duties;
- proactively engage both sexes in creating a better working environment: facilities, equal pay for equal work, training, reconciliation between work, private and family life, etc.;
- take action to attract women to employment opportunities with measures to improve both quality and quantity of jobs particularly by reviewing recruitment processes;
- review legal barriers which may prevent women accessing all types of jobs;
- better engage universities and career services to promote the wide scope of the sector, including technology, R & D and engineering, consider also those with the least skills to improve their training options;
- proactively promote the role of women in business;
- empower women and the sector to be more inclusive;
- promote emphasis on education and vocational training of women throughout life;
- prevent violence, harassment and discrimination in the workplace.

6.6. As the Platform expands it may seek to focus on key areas which may not involve all members. The diversity of the transport sector may lead to this. Hence, subcommittees could be established to focus on key areas of interest.

7. Guidelines for setting priorities and ensuring actions fit priorities identified

7.1. The EESC recognises that establishing the priorities of the Platform can only be completed by the Platform members themselves. Stakeholders may arrive with their own vested interests so making them engage collectively with a view to addressing common challenges should remain uppermost in everyone's mind. Committing to actions to support and drive change are responsibilities which will encourage stakeholders to take ownership for their organisations and the Platform.

7.2. The EESC suggests that the commitments should be ambitious and challenge the status quo and require an investment of the members' own resources. Clear communication and transparency of the actions on the web page will bring not only recognition of commitments but also scrutiny by interested parties. Thus good communication and dialogue amongst the Platform members is paramount to ensure continual engagement and avoid a mismatch of expectations. Joint activities should also be encouraged.

7.3. The EESC recommends that targets and indicators could be additionally set to endorse the Platform actions. These targets and indicators should help implement and evaluate steps towards the employability opportunities, equality and empowerment of women including how men and women are put on an equal footing, regardless of the technologies used. Development indicators as assessment tools, which strengthen the impact and integration of results in a progress report, help influence political and strategic planning by mapping progress.

7.4. General statistical data is available from Eurostat. DG MOVE could work with Eurostat and Platform members to improve the collection of gender-disaggregated data to give a more complete picture.

7.5. Data, targets and indicators should contribute to the thinking on equality between genders and on stereotypes and discrimination. Without any normative character, the aim is to encourage organisations to translate the issues of gender into transparent and comprehensible communication for their organisations and the public, allowing internal analysis of their own policies and practices.

7.6. Baseline indicators could be developed in the following areas:

- targeted objectives can be set by the platform to realise achievable goals;
- percentage of women per job specification including on boards, owners, managers, members within trade unions, administration, technical, etc.;
- periodic review and reporting on the measures taken to ensure the gender balance at decision-making levels;
- effective policies aimed at equal pay and progressively reducing the wage and pension gap between men and women;
- policies/measures adopted in order to remove all obstacles to equal opportunity and promote the work of women (childcare provision, reconciliation between work, private and family life, transparent framework, etc.);
- budget specifically allocated in support of equal opportunities;
- periodic review of recruitment — conditions, including those of recruitment agencies or education institutions — transparency, accessibility, gender sensitive communication;
- develop indicators on the scope, prevalence and incidence of violence, harassment and discrimination in the workplace;
- annual overview of targets put in gender-sensitive budget.

8. Monitoring and evaluation

8.1. The EESC proposes that to enhance partnership, working members could create commitments and actions which they discuss with other Platform members before implementation. At the end of the action, a Monitoring Report would be produced listing the activities, timelines, data gained and key findings so that they can be analysed and evaluated by the Platform. These reviews should be presented in an objective and unbiased way, with evidence and qualitative assessments, reflecting the relevance to the Platform's objectives. External consultants could be used for this purpose, if resources allow, as with the evaluation of the DG SANTE platform (see *Annual Monitoring Report 2016*).

8.2. The EESC suggests that the commitments are well-designed at the outset and are relevant to the established objectives. Members should consider SMART commitments, which have in-depth preparation: timelines, targets and goals, for effective reporting, easy monitoring and communication on completion.

8.3. The commitments would require work and dedication from the members, over and above their normal duties. This investment should be added value to their internal work, beyond corporate social responsibility, and presentable to the external world as their intent to support improved gender balance in the workplace. Their actions should be available for others to replicate.

8.4. Reviewing the activities of the Platform should create increased networking and a momentum to work together to drive the objectives. Thus this helps to increase the number of joint commitments by:

- increased collaboration between policymakers, HLG and Platform members and their associations, fostering synergies for long-term relationships and actions, potentially developing and contributing to new policies if required;
- increased activities can be developed less formally outside the platform structure, including engaging with those who may not fit the criteria for membership;
- improve the visibility of the sector and its efforts to bring greater equality into it, with improved conditions for all;
- creation of external events to showcase actions and attract new employees, innovations or contributions to transport;
- learn from continual improvement as a collective and implement new ways of working and promoting the sector.

Brussels, 26 April 2017.

The President
of the European Economic and Social Committee
Georges DASSIS
