



LOBBY EUROPEEN DES FEMMES EUROPEAN WOMEN'S LOBBY

**PRESS RELEASE – 27 March 06
European Spring Council Conclusions**

EUROPEAN UNION RENEWS ITS COMMITMENT TO GENDER EQUALITY

EU Heads of State and Government reaffirm that gender equality is a fundamental right, a common value of the EU, and a necessary condition for the achievement of the EU objectives of growth, employment and social cohesion.

Prior to the European Spring Council, the *Report from the Commission on equality between women and men (2006)* exposed the challenging situation European women face in relation to the European Labour market and the difficulties in reconciling work and private life and the absolute necessity to establish a strong support for gender equality with effective institutional mechanisms. The EU leaders have heard this message and have taken action by enhancing the gender architecture of the European Union.

By endorsing the *European Pact for Gender Equality* EU leaders recognise that women's increased labour market participation is a major factor contributing to the success of the "growth and jobs" strategy goal to increase employment rates overall and that women are a strength for EU productivity and competitiveness. At the same time, EU leaders recognise that women have careers, jobs, professional responsibilities, but continue to be in large part responsible for their children, household chores and care of dependants. "The way out of this "double life burden" of women, lies of course in changes in attitudes in the home, for an equal sharing of caring tasks between women and men, and it also depends on social and employment policies that allow women and men a real choice" stated Mary McPhail, Secretary General of the European Women's Lobby.

"This is a very positive time for the advancement of gender equality in the European Union, as the political will at the highest level has renewed its strong commitment to equality between women and men," stated Kirsti Kolthoff, President of European Women's Lobby (EWL) "this was essential considering that commitments to support female employment and to realise gender equality were underdeveloped in the National Reform Programmes."

EWL welcomes and looks forward to the successful implementation of the Commission's *Roadmap for equality between women and men 2006-2010* in helping to achieve the Lisbon goals. Especially since the gender dimension of the Lisbon strategy for jobs and growth must be strengthened. The Roadmap reaffirms the dual approach of gender equality based on gender mainstreaming – the promotion of gender equality in all policy areas and activities – and specific measures.

*With more than 4000 member organisations across Europe, the **European Women's Lobby (EWL)** is the largest platform of women's organisations in the EU, working to achieve equality of women and men in Europe and to realise women's human rights.*

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