



## Economic and Social Council

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### Commission on the Status of Women

#### Fifty-ninth session

9-20 March 2015

**Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and  
to the special session of the General Assembly entitled  
“Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the  
twenty-first century”**

### **Statement submitted by Fédération européenne des femmes actives au foyer, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council**

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.



## Statement

Fédération européenne des femmes actives au foyer welcomes the twentieth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. The Platform for Action is a landmark agreement: in it, United Nations Member States promised many actions to improve the lives of women; some of these promises have indeed been acted upon since 1995. The focus brought by the Millennium Development Goals has been particularly fruitful, for example, with regard to improvements in education and maternity care. Fédération européenne des femmes actives au foyer notes, however, that progress in recognizing and supporting women's unpaid work has lagged behind other priorities. Despite better attention to gender statistics and the recent focus on developing time-use statistics (for example, at the Global Forum on Gender Statistics of the Statistical Commission of the United Nations), the contribution of unpaid work by women (and men) to the economy is still not included as part of the gross domestic product, as had been agreed to in the Platform for Action, even though criminal and black-market activity now is.

Challenges to sustainability, which will increasingly be faced by Member States later on in this century, include potential economic and social crises owing to falling birth rates, increasing dependency ratios, insufficient pension provision, and health, education and family care policies that conflict with employment, transportation and other economic policies both in their assumptions and in their implementation. These issues must be dealt with if progress is to be continued in improving health, education and other key outcomes for women for the benefit of all. The alternative would be a decline in and a deterioration of life chances and experiences and further increases in inequality both globally and locally.

It is increasingly clear that the decline in birth rates is likely to become a significant economic issue in many countries. According to the Eurobarometer report entitled "Childbearing preferences and family issues in Europe" ([http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs\\_253\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs_253_en.pdf)), women in Europe are having fewer children than they want. It is likely that a combination of social and economic policies and pressures contributes to this difference between the preferred and actual number of children that people have: the cost of investing in children and their care needs is high, and is usually incurred when parents have relatively low earning power and are time-poor. The individualization of the tax code has not reversed the trend of lower birth rates; it has helped to entrench the difficulties faced by single parents and caregivers, since support for family members is at best only partially addressed through tax and social welfare systems and services. In many European Union countries, the cost of living and accommodation is such that, in effect, a minimum of two incomes is required to support a household. Even those countries which recognize that supporting birth rates is a priority lack an effective approach, and the development of related policies often does not include input from the key actors and stakeholders: mothers and caregivers.

Although women's unpaid work contributes to the economy and society, is not given the same recognition or support as paid work. It is now time to value and support unpaid caregiving and related work and to make this a priority for Member States and bodies within the United Nations system.

Fédération européenne des femmes actives au foyer requests that the Commission on the Status of Women do the following:

(a) Include a clear, targeted approach to the recognition and support of women's unpaid work as part of the outcomes from the review of the Platform for Action;

(b) Call on Member States and the Statistical Commission to continue to develop statistics on unpaid work and their use in public policy development, highlighting good practices in national accounts and time-use surveys as a priority;

(c) Highlight the economic, social and educational contributions of women's unpaid work, especially caregiving, and good practices for the effective inclusion of parents and unpaid caregivers in policy development;

(d) Reaffirm the Platform for Action and seek the immediate implementation of the strategic objective on generating and disseminating gender-disaggregated data and information for planning and evaluation.

Fédération européenne des femmes actives au foyer is a federation of European parent and caregiver organizations seeking recognition and support for unpaid work, and is a member organization of the European Women's Lobby and of Social Platform.

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