



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

**IMPLEMENTATION BY THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY  
OF THE PLATFORM FOR ACTION ADOPTED AT  
THE FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN  
IN BEIJING 1995**

**Working document from the Commission Services**

**May 2000**

# CONTENTS

<b>INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>PART I: OVERVIEW OF TRENDS AND MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS SINCE 1995.....</b>	<b>4</b>
INTRODUCING GENDER MAINSTREAMING.....	4
PROGRESS REVIEWING GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN EUROPEAN UNION ACTIVITIES AND POLICIES .....	5
THE AMSTERDAM TREATY .....	7
OTHER LEGISLATIVE DEVELOPMENTS .....	8
MONITORING OF THE BEIJING PLATFORM AT EU LEVEL.....	9
THE MEDIUM-TERM COMMUNITY ACTION PROGRAMME ON EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES .....	10
THE ROLE OF NGOS IN COMMUNITY LEVEL FOLLOW-UP TO THE PLATFORM FOR ACTION .....	11
DEVELOPMENT CO-OPERATION .....	12
<b>PART II: THE 12 CRITICAL AREAS OF CONCERN OF THE BEIJING PLATFORM FOR ACTION .....</b>	<b>14</b>
A. WOMEN AND POVERTY.....	14
B. EDUCATION AND TRAINING OF WOMEN .....	15
C. WOMEN AND HEALTH.....	17
D. VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN.....	18
E. WOMEN AND ARMED CONFLICT.....	20
F. WOMEN AND THE ECONOMY .....	22
G. WOMEN IN POWER AND DECISION-MAKING .....	25
H. INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN .....	26
I. HUMAN RIGHTS OF WOMEN .....	27
J. WOMEN AND THE MEDIA .....	28
K. WOMEN AND THE ENVIRONMENT.....	29
L. THE GIRL-CHILD .....	29
<b>CONCLUSION .....</b>	<b>30</b>

## INTRODUCTION

The year 2000 marks the fifth anniversary of the UN Fourth World Conference on Women. The Conference, held in Beijing in September 1995, was the largest UN conference ever to be organised with 189 governments participating. A forum of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) bringing together 30,000 women from around the world was held in parallel with the intergovernmental conference. The World Conference in Beijing, like its predecessors in Mexico City, Copenhagen and Nairobi, was an event of major significance for women and throughout the world.

A Platform for Action (PFA) and a Declaration were adopted by consensus at the Conference. The Platform for Action calls upon Governments, the international community and civil society to take strategic action in 12 critical areas of concern. The Declaration addresses three principles: the empowerment of women; the promotion and protection of the human rights of women and the reaffirmation of women's rights as human rights; and the promotion of equality through mainstreaming.

The European Community was involved in the formulation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in the preparatory process and at the Conference. The European Community has observer status at the UN, and therefore participated at the Conference and in its preparation as an observer. The Community's work helped the Member States to agree on a common position for the European Union, which served as a crucial tool during the conference and adoption of the PFA.

The success of the Platform for Action agreed at Beijing requires a strong political commitment from all concerned. It needs implementation at all levels by governments, international organisations, social partners and NGOs. Primary responsibility for the advancement of women, however, lies with the governments. The role of regional and international organisations is increasingly relevant in a globalised society but their main purpose must be to support efforts at national level.

Essential for achieving gender equality is success in establishing a new partnership between women and men, entailing equal sharing of power and responsibility in the public and private domains. Such a partnership requires the acknowledgement of women's fundamental rights, the full and equal participation of women in the decision-making process, their equal access to the labour market and economic empowerment.

The United Nations has decided to convene in June 2000, a Special Session – Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century, Beijing+5. This session will appraise and assess the progress achieved in the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women of 1985 and the Beijing Platform for Action.

The United Nations encourages Governments, the international community and Non-Governmental Organisations to contribute to the preparatory process and consider further actions and initiatives. The Community will look at the progress achieved since the Beijing Conference within the context of the interest and expertise of the Member States. Further actions and initiatives that will be required to fully implement the Beijing Platform for Action beyond the year 2000 will be of high priority.

This Special Session will build on the regional preparatory meetings organised in the five regions by ESCAP (Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific) on 26-29 October 1999 in Bangkok (Thailand), ECA (Economic Commission for Africa)

on 22-27 November 1999 in Addis Ababa (Ethiopia), ESCWA (Economic Commission for Western Asia) in Beirut (Lebanon) on 12-15 December 1998 and 29 November - 1 December 1999, ECLAC (Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean) on 8-10 February 2000 in Lima (Peru), and the ECE (Economic Commission for Europe) on 19-21 January 2000 in Geneva (Switzerland).

The European Commission was a partner in the ECE Regional Preparatory Meeting on the 2000 Review of the Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action together with UNDP, UNIFEM and the Council of Europe. The meeting led to the adoption of agreed conclusions. The countries in transition were active in the meeting both at governmental and regional level. The negotiations were marked by the involvement of NGOs on an equal footing with government delegations.

The Beijing Conference gave the Community an opportunity to prove its determination to continue taking a vital lead in the advancement of women. This report shows how the Community has transformed and reaffirmed in practice its commitment to the policy on gender equality stated in the Platform for Action. It covers all areas of concern of the PfA and is based on contributions from the relevant European Commission's services.

## **PART I: OVERVIEW OF TRENDS AND MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS SINCE 1995**

### **Introducing gender mainstreaming**

Since 1995, the issue of gender equality has moved into centre stage at European Union level. The impetus of the Beijing conference brought a new momentum to this policy area that has been championed by the European Community since the mid-1970s.

At the time of the Beijing conference, the principle of gender mainstreaming became central to the EU's equality strategy. The European Community committed itself to mobilising all its general measures and policies specifically for the purpose of achieving gender equality which was to become central to the process of preparing, implementing and monitoring all policies, measures and activities of the European Community. This became also the guiding principle in the Medium-Term Community Action Programme on equal opportunities adopted in December 1995<sup>1</sup>.

By February 1996, the Commission published a key text explaining its new approach of mainstreaming gender equality: the communication entitled "Incorporating equal opportunities for women and men into all Community policies and activities"<sup>2</sup>. This text reflected the discussions in the Group of European Commissioners on equal opportunities set up in 1995 and showed the high-level commitment made by the Commission to gender mainstreaming.

The definition of gender mainstreaming used in the communication is close to that of the Beijing Platform for Action, which called for the integration of gender perspectives in all policies and programmes. It emphasises the need for an active and visible integration of gender issues in all policy areas and at all levels.

---

<sup>1</sup> Council Decision 95/593/EC, OJ L 335, 30.12.1995

<sup>2</sup> Communication from the European Commission: "Incorporating equal opportunities for women and men into all Community policies and activities." COM (96) 67 final

The Commission expressed its intention of *“mobilising all general policies and measures specifically for the purpose of achieving equality, by actively and openly taking into account at the planning stage their possible effect on the respective situations of men and women (gender perspective).”*

Equality between women and men, it stated, is one of the basic principles of democracy and respect for humankind. To make it a reality, it is time to build *“ a new partnership between men and women to ensure that both participate fully on an equal footing in all areas and that the benefits of progress are evenly distributed between them.”*

To bring about such a transformation, the Commission stated that not only changes in legislation, attitudes and collective practices were required but also “nothing short of a cultural transformation of individual behaviour” and “determined political action based on the broadest political mobilisation.”

### **Progress reviewing gender mainstreaming in European Union activities and policies**

The first progress review of the European Commission’s gender mainstreaming efforts, was published in a report in 1998<sup>3</sup>. The Commission stated in it that “considerable” progress had been made within the Commission’s own services although many barriers and shortcomings remained.

The main results were achieved in the European Employment Strategy, and the European Structural Funds. The gender dimension was also being successfully promoted in development co-operation and in the Commission’s education, training and youth as well as its personnel and information policies.

From the very beginning of the launch of the European employment process at the Luxembourg Summit in 1997, gender equality has been integrated into the employment policy agenda. (*see also area of concern F. Women and the Economy*). Reinforcing equal opportunities policy for women and men has been formulated as one of the four Pillars in the 1998 Employment Guidelines. This pillar included guidelines on tackling gender gaps, reconciling work and family life and facilitating reintegration into the labour market.

The need to mainstream equal opportunities across all pillars of the Guidelines was accepted by the Council as a new guideline in the 1999 Employment Guidelines. In the Helsinki European Council conclusions (10-11 December 1999), equal opportunities for women and men was singled out as an area for particular attention in the labour market. The conclusions of the Lisbon Council (23-24 March 2000) strengthened the Luxembourg process significantly and added the ambitious target of increasing women’s employment rate from an average of 51 % today to more than 60 % by 2010 as well as enforcing all aspects of equal opportunities, including reducing occupational segregation, facilitating the reconciliation of work and family life, in particular by establishing a new benchmark for improved childcare provision. Since 1997, this whole process has brought about a new dynamic to gender equality policy in the Member States.

---

<sup>3</sup> Progress report from the Commission on the follow-up of the communication: “Incorporating equal opportunities for women and men into all Community policies.” COM (98) 122 final

As far as the Structural Funds are concerned, increased attention has been paid as to how they can have a greater impact on equality through the improvement of indicators, evaluation and information/training of the main actors. As a result, the new Structural Funds regulations (2000-2006) proposed by the Commission in March 1998 and adopted by the Council in June 1999, put in place a comprehensive approach to effectively implement gender mainstreaming. The new regulations are in line with the requests made by the 1996 Council Resolution on gender mainstreaming in the Structural Funds<sup>4</sup>. The Structural Funds assistance form the most important financial arm to implement the European Employment Guidelines.

In development co-operation the Commission's Communication and Resolution on Integrating gender issues in Development co-operation both dating 1995, consider redressing gender disparities to be a crucial development issue in terms of both aid effectiveness and social justice.

Experience with gender integration work has been collected and analysed by external experts, resulting in reports on the status of integrating gender issues in development co-operation in ACP and ALA/MED countries.

Over the last five years a number of important instruments for mainstreaming of gender issues in development co-operation have been prepared, such as, the Gender Impact Assessment Form and Guidelines, a gender marker fiche (OECD/DAC), "Gender Issues in Project Cycle Management". A format on how to integrate gender issues in pre and feasibility studies has also been finalised.

In the research policy, the gender dimension has also been introduced. The Commission adopted a communication 'Women and science: mobilising women to enrich European research' in February 1999<sup>5</sup> in which it presents its action plan in this area to promote at national and EU level research by, for and about women. In particular, the participation of women scientists in international research collaborations for development is encouraged and care is taken that women scientists from Europe and DCs are represented in the evaluation panels.

The progress review of 1998 emphasised that a comprehensive and systematic approach was needed to ensure that the objective of promoting gender equality was met. It outlined certain "indispensable elements and conditions" for the successful implementation of any mainstreaming policy. These included:

- strong and **high-level commitment** to the policy;
- **awareness raising** as a means to achieving commitment;
- use of a **dual strategy** combining gender mainstreaming in all policies and activities with specific programmes and reallocation of resources in order to strengthen positive actions against gender inequalities;

---

<sup>4</sup> Council Resolution of 2 December 1996 on mainstreaming equal opportunities for men and women into the European Structural Funds, OJ C 386, 20.12.1996

<sup>5</sup> COM(99)76 final

- **co-operation structures** between services to ensure an integrated policy approach and to ensure that equality between women and men appears regularly on the agendas at policy management level;
- **assignment of responsibilities** and appointment of officials to oversee the mainstreaming process at sufficiently high levels so that they can influence policy;
- development of **gender expertise** to carry out gender impact assessments and gender proofing. Gender mainstreaming officials are key to this process and to fulfil their tasks they need the support of management including the necessary time, human and budgetary resources as well as specific training for this work;
- **monitoring and evaluation** to ensure progress, evaluate results and introduce the necessary adjustments to the strategy whenever necessary.

### **The Amsterdam Treaty**

The new Treaty, which came into force on 1 May 1999, represents a crucial achievement for gender equality at Community level.

In the Amsterdam Treaty, equality for women and men becomes one of the explicit tasks of the Community (Article 2).

Complementary to this new provision, the new Article 3 now requires the Community to aim to eliminate inequalities and promote equality for women and men in all its activities. This new obligation gives a formal legal status to mainstreaming.

One of the breakthroughs of the Beijing conference was to reaffirm the human rights of women. The Amsterdam Treaty introduces further provisions relating to respect for fundamental human rights. The Union, according to Article 6 (1) of the Treaty 'is founded on the principles of liberty, democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and the rule of law, principles which are common to the Member States'.

For the first time (on the basis of Article 7) any Member State violating human rights in a 'serious and persistent' manner risks the suspension of some of its membership rights under the Treaty. The human rights provisions have been strengthened in the Amsterdam Treaty, which allows, for the first time, sanctions to be taken against Member States violating in a "serious and persistent way" liberty, democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms and the rule of law. The promotion and protection of the human rights of women is an essential part of the EU's human rights policy. The new human rights regulations adopted by the Council in April 1999<sup>6</sup> contain several specific references to these rights.

The scope of the earlier provision (Article 119 EC) on equal pay for women and men was broadened in the Amsterdam Treaty (Article 141), which also, for the first time, gives a proper legal basis to the Community to adopt measures to ensure the application of the principle of equal opportunities and equal treatment of men and women in matters of employment and occupation, including the principle of equal pay.

---

<sup>6</sup> Regulations 975/99 and 976/99 of 29 April 1999. OJ L120/8 of 8.5.99.

The new title on employment (Title VIII, articles 125 to 130) also provides for the promotion of equal opportunities in this field.

### **Other legislative developments**

Since 1995, a number of Directives, recommendations and resolutions have been adopted which have a direct impact on gender equality.

The Directives adopted during this period were:

- A Directive on parental leave which implements a framework agreement negotiated and concluded by the social partners at European level. It provides that both working fathers and mothers shall have the individual right to take at least three months' parental leave on the grounds of the birth or adoption of a child until a given age of up to eight years<sup>7</sup>.
- A Directive providing for equal treatment for women and men in occupational social security schemes, amending a Directive adopted in 1986, in order to take into account the case-law of the Court of Justice<sup>8</sup>.
- A Directive, also implementing a framework agreement between social partners, guaranteeing equal treatment for part-time and temporary workers, the majority of whom are women<sup>9</sup>.
- A Directive on the burden of proof in cases involving claims of discrimination based on sex, making it easier for claimants to have their right to equal treatment applied effectively in courts. The burden of proof must shift back to the respondent when evidence of such discrimination is brought<sup>10</sup>.

Other legislative developments included:

- a 1996 Council Recommendation on the balanced participation of women and men in the decision-making process<sup>11</sup>
- a 1996 Council Resolution on the mainstreaming of gender equality in the European Structural Funds<sup>12</sup>

---

<sup>7</sup> Council Directive of 3 June 1996 on the framework agreement on parental leave concluded by UNICE, CEEP and ETUC (96/34/EC) - OJ L 145, 19.06.1996

<sup>8</sup> Council Directive of 20 December 1996 amending Directive 86/378/EEC on the implementation of the principle of equal treatment for men and women in occupational social security schemes (96/97/EC) - OJ L 46, 17.02.1997

<sup>9</sup> Council Directive 97/81/EC of 15 December 1999 concerning the framework agreement on part-time work concluded by UNICE, CEEP and ETUC – Annex: Framework Agreement on Part-time work. OJ L 014, 20.01.1998. Amended by 398 L 0023 - (OJ L 31, 05.05.1998)

<sup>10</sup> Council Directive of 15 December 1997 on the burden of proof in cases of discrimination based on sex (97/80/EC) - OJ L 14, 20.01.1998

<sup>11</sup> Council Recommendation of 2 December 1996 on the balanced participation of women and men in the decision-making process (96/694/EC) OJ L 319, 10.12.1996

<sup>12</sup> Council Resolution of 2 December 1996 on mainstreaming equal opportunities for men and women into the European Structural Funds - OJ C 386, 20.12.1996



- a 1995 Council Resolution on improving the image of women and men portrayed in advertising and the media<sup>13</sup>
- a 1998 Council regulation on integrating gender issues in development co-operation.<sup>14</sup>
- a 1998 Commission Recommendation concerning the ratification of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) convention No. 177 on Homeworking of the 20 June 1996. Member States are invited to ratify the ILO convention which aims at improving the situation of homeworkers<sup>15</sup>.
- A 1999 Council resolution on women and Science<sup>16</sup>

### **Monitoring of the Beijing Platform at EU level**

Soon after the adoption at Beijing of the Platform for action, the European Council of Madrid, decided in December 1995 to follow up on its implementation on an annual basis. The first evaluation report covering 1996 was global in scope. The 1997 evaluation focussed on the integration of gender mainstreaming into national policies, best practices in positive action and measures undertaken in the struggle against violence against women.

For the 1998 review, the EU Presidency in turn prepared a paper on the development of indicators and benchmarks at EU level for monitoring the implementation of the different areas of the Beijing PfA. This document was agreed by Council and served as starting point for a new promising process. At the 1999 review, Council agreed, on a set of indicators for the area of women in power and decision making. For 2000, in addition to the EU internal preparations for the five years review at the UN, the Council will discuss, and hopefully agree upon, a set of indicators and benchmarks for measuring the reconciliation for women and men of work and family responsibilities.

The European Commission has monitored, since 1996, the EU-wide progress in the field of equal opportunities through the publication of Annual Reports<sup>17</sup> on Equal Opportunities for women and men in the European Union. In particular, a chapter on the follow-up to the Beijing Platform for Action is included, reviewing the progress in Member States as well as at Community level. The European Commission services have also prepared progress reports for the annual reviews of different critical areas of the PfA, conducted by the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW). Finally, the European Commission, as partner organisation of the ECE Regional Meeting, held in Geneva in January 2000, on the review and implementation of the Beijing PfA,

---

<sup>13</sup> Resolution of the Council and of the representatives of Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council of 5 October 1995 on the image of women and men portrayed in advertising and the media - OJ C 296, 10.11.1995

<sup>14</sup> Council Resolution (EC) no 2836/98 of 22 December 1998 on integrating gender issues in development co-operation - OJ L 354, 30.12.1998

<sup>15</sup> Commission Recommendation concerning the ratification of ILO Convention No. 177 on Homeworking of 20 June 1996 - OJ L 165, 10.06.1998

<sup>16</sup> Council Resolution of May 1999 on women and science (1999/C 201/01)- OJ C 201, 16.07.1999

<sup>17</sup> The 1996, 1997, 1998 and 1999 Annual Reports on equal opportunities between women and men in the European Union are available from the Office for Official Publications of the European Communities. They are also available on line : [http://europa.eu.int/comm/dg05/equ\\_opp/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/dg05/equ_opp/index_en.htm)

prepared a working document<sup>18</sup> on its activities related to the areas covered by the discussions of the meeting.

Within the Commission, the monitoring process is assisted by the Inter-service Group on Gender Equality, which brings together all the Commission Directorates-General and plays an important role in the Commission's mainstreaming strategy

In 1997 the European Commission presented to the Council a report on the implementation of integrating gender issues in development co-operation. The Council will review progress and requires the Community and Member States to prepare further reports of progress every two years.

In Madrid, in November 1998, the Commission and the Spanish authorities jointly organised a European conference on the follow-up to the Platform for Action. The Conference brought together ministers and government representatives, equal opportunities agencies, NGOs and social partners of the EU/EEA and applicant countries. It focused on four of the critical areas of concern: education and training, employment and the economy, women in power and in decision-making and violence against women.

In October 1999<sup>19</sup>, the Council adopted its first EU Annual Report on Human Rights (1998-99), which aims to contribute to a better understanding of the motives and institutional structures and policy instruments of the Union and contains a specific section on women's rights.

In February 2000, the Commission organised, with the co-operation of the European Parliament, the Council presidency and relevant European NGOs, a European Conference in preparation for the General UN review on Beijing +5. The aim of the conference was to further EU understanding in view of preparing the EU positions and proposals for the PrepCom and the Special Session of the General Assembly of June 2000. The Conference allowed for an open and fruitful dialogue among government representatives, independent experts social partners and NGOs of the Member States of the European Union, the countries of the Economic European Area and the candidate countries for accession to the European Union. The proceedings of the conference will be included in a publication that will be issued before the General Assembly in June.

### **The Medium-Term Community Action Programme on Equal Opportunities**

The Medium-Term Community Action Programme on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men (1996-2000) built on the achievements of the first three action programmes tackling gender equality.

It introduced a new concept to equal opportunities by establishing gender mainstreaming as an overriding principle. This confirmed the Commission's dual approach to achieving gender equality: the continuation of specific action targeted at

---

<sup>18</sup> Information note on the European Commission activities prepared for the ECE regional meeting on the 2000 review of implementation of the Beijing platform for action. It is available on line at the ECEC site: <http://www.unece.org/women/beijing+5/meetdoc/e.ece.rw2.2000.bp.4.e.pdf>

<sup>19</sup> Published by the General secretariat of the Council of the European Union.

women accompanied by actions that seek to integrate a gender perspective in all policies and measures.

The Council decision formulated six specific aims: achieving gender mainstreaming; mobilising all actors to achieve equality; promoting equality in a changing economy, reconciling work and family life; promoting a gender balance in decision-making and creating optimum conditions for the exercise of equality rights.

The interim report on the programme's implementation<sup>20</sup>, covering the first two years, hailed it as a success with regard to the creation of a common agenda for gender equality in Europe."

The European Parliament, in its resolution on the interim report<sup>21</sup>, said the Programme constituted the European Union's major instrument for the implementation of the obligations laid down in the Platform for Action adopted at the Beijing conference.

The Commissioner in charge of Equal Opportunities (Mrs. Diamantopoulou) has announced that she will be shortly proposing a new action programme (2001-2005) to promote gender equality which builds on the achievements of the current one and which will draw heavily on the mainstreaming strategy developed to date. The Council of Ministers welcomed this intention stating that the existing programme had a positive impact at all levels and especially at regional and local levels.

### **The Role of NGOs in Community level follow-up to the Platform for Action**

Liasing with NGOs is an important feature of EU gender-equality policy. In addition, in a number of key policy areas, co-financing is provided by the European Commission for action projects and information activities led by NGOs to promote gender equality.

At Community level, the largest grouping of women's organisations, bringing together some 2700 organisations across the European Union is the European Women's Lobby (EWL). Its main task is to lobby the European Institutions to improve the status of women. It submits position papers on Community policy and is formally consulted in certain instances. WIDE (Women in Development Europe) is a European network of development NGOs which share an active interest and commitment to promoting the integration of a gender perspective into EU and Member State development co-operation and external relations.

The EWL, WIDE and other NGOs play an important role in planning and shaping the follow-up activities to the Beijing Conference. The EWL has drawn up an NGO Platform for Action on the basis of the concept of a "gender contract". The Commission channels its support for the follow-up to the Platform for action through WIDE in Latin America, UNIFEM in Western Asia and through APDC in Asia.

In the field of external relations, support is provided to NGOs active in promoting and protecting the human rights of women around the world. As part of its development co-operation policy, the Commission channels financial support for follow up to the Platform for Action through WIDE in Latin America and through UNIFEM in Western

---

<sup>20</sup> COM (98) 770 final

<sup>21</sup> European Parliament Resolution A4-0194/99, 04.05.1999

Asia. Support is also provided to other NGOs in Central and Eastern Europe, the former Soviet Union, South and Central America, Cuba and Asia.

## **Development co-operation**

As preparations were under way for the Beijing conference, the Commission was concurrently examining the introduction of a new approach to equal opportunities in its development co-operation. By September 1995, it outlined this new strategy in a communication on integrating gender issues in development co-operation.<sup>22</sup>

In the Communication, the Commission reiterated the dual approach to achieving gender equality, which combines specific action for the empowerment of women with gender mainstreaming.

In a Council Resolution in December 1995 on integrating gender issues in development co-operation<sup>23</sup>, the key principles and strategies for gender-sensitive development co-operation were set out.

When formulating development co-operation, the Council of Ministers recommended that the EC and Member States should be “guided” by the following principles:

- Gender analysis should be included in the conception, design and implementation of all development policies and interventions as well as in monitoring and evaluation;
- Women and men should participate in and benefit from the development process on an equal basis;
- Reducing gender disparities is a priority for society as a whole;
- Analysis of differences and disparities between women and men must be a key criteria for assessing the goals and results of development policies and interventions;
- Changes in attitudes, structures and mechanisms at political, legal, community and household level should be encouraged and supported to reduce gender inequalities, particularly through:
  - political power sharing and full and equal participation in decision-making at all levels
  - strengthening economic empowerment and equal access to and control over economic resources
  - fostering equal access to and control over social development opportunities

This resolution was the beginning of the adoption of a number of key policy documents focusing on gender issues.

By December 1998, agreement was reached in the Council to set aside a specific budget to promote gender issues through technical assistance, training, research and projects in development co-operation<sup>24</sup>.

Gender Country Profiles have been prepared and gender impact assessment is used on a regular basis including financing proposals.

---

<sup>22</sup> COM (95) 423

<sup>23</sup> Council Resolution of 20 December 1995 on integrating gender issues in development co-operation

<sup>24</sup> Council Regulation (EC) No. 2836/98 of 22 December 1998 on integrating gender issues in development co-operation - OJ L 354, 30.12.1998

The Standard Project Cycle Management for development projects financed by the Commission has been modified in order to reflect women's and men's needs, priorities and potentials.

Mainstreaming of gender issues is part of the activities carried out within the framework of the Lomé Convention between the European Community, the Member States and African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries. In the mandate for the negotiations underway for a new partnership agreement with these countries, gender equality has now become one of the stated objectives of the talks alongside poverty reduction, environment conservation, world-wide market integration and private-sector development.

## **PART II: THE 12 CRITICAL AREAS OF CONCERN OF THE BEIJING PLATFORM FOR ACTION**

During the past five years, the European Community has developed a full range of activities for the attainment of all twelve strategic objectives of the Platform for action, which are inter-linked and crosscut many different areas of EC policies.

### **A. Women and poverty**

Within the European Union, poverty and social exclusion continue to co-exist alongside prosperity and wealth. Despite the increasing convergence of income standards between Member States, economic and social cohesion within most Member States has weakened in the last decade. Pockets of long-term income poverty continue to exist although these are concentrated in certain regions, spells of short-term poverty affect a more substantial proportion of EU citizens, and associated problems such as social exclusion and discrimination persist.

Poverty affects men and women differently. Women tend to fall into poverty more frequently than men, stay in poverty longer and face additional obstacles while trying to work their way out of it. They are markedly over-represented among many key groups at risk of social exclusion, including the unemployed, single parents, the elderly living alone, the working poor, those in low-paid and precarious jobs, and recipients of social welfare. In addition women are over-represented among the unemployed, one of the main factors leading to poverty.

Structural factors include the pay-gap between women and men, women's occupational segregation, gaps in women's employment due to pregnancy and childcare, negative belief systems about women's rehabilitation capacity after the onset of a disability or an illness, the link between contribution levels and social protection payments, and the financial impact of divorce or separation on women who have not worked outside the home.

Overall, the fact that employment and social protection models tend to be based on traditional assumptions about the gender division of work and family life profoundly affects women's ability to participate and to benefit from them.

Action to tackle poverty is primarily the responsibility of each Member State. Nevertheless, a number of actions undertaken at Community level are relevant to poverty issues.

Community measures aimed at tackling poverty are undertaken in the framework of the European Structural Funds, include policies promoting job creation and promoting the activation of the work force. The EU's employment strategy, discussed further in greater detail, has as one of its specific commitments tackling the gender aspects of income differentials and promoting equal pay for equal work or work of equal value.

Another key area is social security. In 1997, a Commission Communication on modernising and improving social protection<sup>25</sup> emphasised the need to replace social security systems based on the male breadwinner model with an approach which treats

---

<sup>25</sup> Commission Communication, "A concerted strategy for modernising social protection" - COM (97) 102 final

women and men equally as individuals, and supports the reconciliation of work and family life.

In 1999, a further Commission Communication on social protection systems takes on board the gender dimension of this issue<sup>26</sup>. The modernisation of the social protection systems aims at supporting participation in the labour market through appropriate incentives for work and activation programmes, and thus help people to get a better income through work instead of staying on benefits.

The Amsterdam Treaty, under Article 137, empowers the Community to act to combat social exclusion.

More than 1 billion people in the world today, the great majority of whom are women, live in unacceptable conditions of poverty. In the developing countries, there are approximately 1.5 billion people who are poor according to measures of income. Poverty is not just lack of income, it also consists of lack of opportunity, lack of access to services, lack of power and political voice, and social exclusion.

About 40% suffer from income poverty in South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa. In terms of other social indicators, 400 million people in East Asia do not have access to drinking water; a similar number are illiterate in South Asia; and 200 million people in Sub-Saharan Africa do not have access to health facilities. Poverty is increasingly a female phenomenon.

The policy of the European Community is to fight against this discrimination in all its development co-operation activities. The policy is made operational both by mainstreaming a concern with gender into all development activities, and by targeted interventions.

It also makes economic sense; the World Bank status report on Africa, for example, calculated that anti-discriminatory measures would have added several percentage points to economic growth rates in African countries over the last 10 years. This economic growth would also have directly contributed to the fight against poverty.

## **B. Education and training of women**

The Platform for Action reaffirms education and training as a human right and as essential tools for achieving the goals of equality, development and peace.

Crucial to this action is ensuring equal access to education and training, promoting lifelong learning for girls and women and eradicating illiteracy amongst women. Another strategic objective is the development of non-discriminatory education and training.

Gender segregation regarding skills still remains a significant problem in the European Union. Women make up the majority of new entrants to the labour market and also of those whose skills are under-developed or underused.

The promotion of gender equality is therefore an important aspect of European Community Programmes supporting education and vocational training.

---

<sup>26</sup> COM (99) 374 final

The European Employment Strategy, through its gender mainstreaming approach, encourages the availability for women of active labour market policies such as training to improve their employability and effective integration into the labour market.

The European Social Fund, one major instrument for the support of the European Employment strategy, gives priority to the professional integration of women (see chapter on The European Structural Funds under Women and the Economy).

The European Community provides co-financing to contribute to quality and innovation in education and training and to encourage lifelong learning through three programmes: Socrates (education)<sup>27</sup>, Leonardo da Vinci (vocational training)<sup>28</sup>, and Youth (youth/exchanges)<sup>29</sup>.

Already under the first phase of the Socrates programme (1995-1999) equality of opportunity for men and women was one of the selection criteria for all projects under the Socrates programme. A number of projects target specifically women's access to education, their access to managerial posts within the sector and the development of women's studies. However, the programme appeared to have contributed only limited European value in these areas and to have contributed little to a change in mindsets or the real situation.

Over the first four years of the Leonardo da Vinci programme (1995-1999), 126 projects focussed on equal opportunities between women and men for a total funding of more than 17 million €. However, despite the fact that project proposals in Leonardo da Vinci are now being systematically evaluated for their gender impact, the concept of mainstreaming is still not well understood by promoters as a whole.

As a result, in the new generation of education, training and youth programmes for the period 2000-2006, the gender equality dimension has been strengthened and has become more proactive. Promoting equal opportunities throughout all fields of education is now an integral part of the general objectives of the Socrates programme. Positive actions may be undertaken in order to promote equality between women and men. The gender equality dimension will be integrated into the management of the programme and in the projects being supported.

In addition to the specific gender equality measures, the Commission has stated a clear intention to give relevance to quality proposals focusing on gender equality over and above the specific measures in the programme.

However, despite the fact that project proposals in Leonardo da Vinci are now being systematically evaluated for their gender impact, the concept of mainstreaming is still not well understood by promoters as a whole, who often refer to "open access for both men and women" as their way of ensuring gender equality in their projects.

As a result, in the new generation of education, training and youth programmes for the period 2000-2006, the gender equality dimension has been strengthened.

---

<sup>27</sup> Decision No. 819/95/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 March 1995 establishing the Community action programme "Socrates" – OJ L 87, 20.04.95

<sup>28</sup> Leonardo Da Vinci Programme (1995-1999) - OJ L 340, 09.12.1994

<sup>29</sup> Council Decision No. 815/95/4 EC - OJ L 87, 20.04.1995



Measures have also been taken to develop a gender mainstreaming approach in the European Community's Fifth Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development (1998-2002).

A Commission Communication entitled "Women and science: mobilising women to enrich European research"<sup>30</sup> was published in 1999. It aims at increasing the number of women involved in research under the programme and sets out the main principles and proposals for promoting women and gender issues in research and technology. The Commission's aim is to achieve at least a 40% representation of women in the scholarships, advisory groups and assessment/monitoring panels under the Fifth Framework Programme.

The Commission is in the process of modifying the guidelines for support to education sectors in partner countries so that the gender situation in each partner country and each programme area can be taken into account. Girls' participation in the education system is not only dependant on the education itself, but also family economies, local society's attitude, transport and sanitation facilities and protection against violence.

Through contributions from the Community's budget, a great number of projects on all continents are financed by the Commission with a focus on women and girls' education and vocational training, for example in Latin America and in Asia.

### **C. Women and health**

In the Platform for Action, health is defined as a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. The strategic objectives for action in this field cover access, prevention and information.

The first objective is to increase women's access throughout the life cycle to appropriate, affordable and quality health care, information and related services. Preventive programmes promoting women's health as well as research and information on women's health are other objectives. Another key area is sexually transmitted diseases, HIV/AIDS, and sexual and reproductive health issues. Here, the Platform for Action calls for gender-sensitive initiatives to be undertaken.

Promoting a high level of health protection is one of the responsibilities of the European Community which prepares regular reports on the health situation in the European Union. The 1997 health report<sup>31</sup> focused specifically on women and health.

The report, which concentrates on women aged 15 and over, said that for biological and social reasons women's health concerns are different from those of men and that this fact deserves recognition. A number of health issues specifically concerning women such as eating disorders, osteoporosis, and problems related to women's reproductive health, are not given sufficient attention.

In the Community programme on the prevention of AIDS and certain other communicable diseases (1996-2000)<sup>32</sup>, specific measures are being promoted relating to

---

<sup>30</sup> COM (99) 76 final of 17 February 1999

<sup>31</sup> COM (97) 224 final: Report from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on the state of women's health in the European Community

screening for communicable diseases, in particular among pregnant women. Since 1996, the programme has supported several projects specific to women. In 1998, it initiated a network for AIDS prevention among women in Mediterranean countries.

In its development co-operation policies, the Commission is also paying particular attention to women's health needs and has become a major partner in resourcing the world's response to population, sexual and reproductive health and HIV/AIDS issues. Key areas in which it supports work in developing countries include: greater access to family-planning services; ensuring women have the possibility of safe pregnancy and childbirth; limiting the spread of sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS and caring for those who live with the virus; tackling gender-based violence and sexual abuse, especially of young women and children; building a partnership with civil society.

#### **D. Violence against women**

The Platform for Action states that in all societies, to a greater or lesser degree, women and girls are subjected to physical, sexual and psychological abuse that cuts across lines of income, class and culture. This is particularly true for women and girls with disabilities. The low social and economic status of women can be both a cause and a consequence of violence against women. Violence against women is now recognised as a human rights and public health issue.

Since 1996, many initiatives have been taken, both at European Community level and in the individual Member States.

The objectives of the Community's activities are to prevent and eliminate violence against women, to study the causes and consequences of violence against women, the effectiveness of preventive measures and to eliminate trafficking in women and assist victims of forced prostitution and trafficking.

The issues of violence and trafficking in women were specifically addressed in 1996 with a Communication on trafficking in women<sup>33</sup>. Increasing co-operation and co-ordination among the Member States and EU accession applicant countries, and providing greater protection for victims of trafficking, especially those who are prepared to testify as witnesses, were the main objectives.

Through the Joint Action of February 1997<sup>34</sup>, the Member States agreed to review their national legislation with a view to criminalising a number of offences and to introduce specific and serious sanctions with regard to trafficking in human beings for the purpose of sexual exploitation. The Joint Action also addressed a number of horizontal issues such as mutual legal assistance.

A Community Programme called "STOP"<sup>35</sup> was set up in 1996 to reinforce co-operation against trafficking in women and children. As a result, since then, a number of

---

<sup>32</sup> Decision No. 647/96/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 March 1996 adopting a programme of Community action on the prevention of AIDS and certain other communicable diseases within the framework for action in the field of public health (1996 to 2000) – OJ L 95, 16.04.96

<sup>33</sup> COM (96) 567

<sup>34</sup> OJ L 63 of 4 March 1997 page 2-6

<sup>35</sup> Joint Action of 29 November 1996 adopted by the Council - OJ L 322, 12.12.1996

transnational projects addressing the issue of trafficking in women have received support. This was followed by the DAPHNE initiative (1997-99), to support and promote close co-operation with, and among NGOs active in this field, to improve statistics and information on violence against women and children, to encourage preventive measures and to strengthen the protection of victims of violence. The new DAPHNE programme (2000-2003)<sup>36</sup> with a budget of €20 million permits multi-annual actions, is open to public bodies in addition to NGOs and will be opened to the applicant states and the EEA/EFTA countries.

In a second Communication on further Actions in the Fight against Trafficking in Women in December 1998<sup>37</sup> the Commission seeks to indicate the state of play and to identify gaps as well as to recommend a number of targeted new initiatives and the deepening of certain existing actions to the various parties.

The Main objectives are:

- to ensure that the question of trafficking remains high on the political agenda;
- to reinforce international and European co-operation including both governments and NGOs in countries of origin, transit and destination;
- to strengthen a multi-disciplinary approach focusing on both prevention, research, law-enforcement and an effective sentencing of traffickers, as well as on support to victims;
- to address a clear message to the candidate countries, in the context of the accession process, of the necessity to take national measures and to co-operate with the EU on the issue.

The most recent development in the field of trafficking within the EU are the conclusions from the European Council in Tampere that clearly give priority to the fight against trafficking in human beings, for instance in point 48 of the conclusions trafficking is pointed out as one of the sectors where approximation of national criminal law is particularly relevant. Thus, there is a clear mandate for further action in the fight against trafficking in women.

The Commission will present a legislative proposal to grant short-term residence permits to victims of trafficking who are willing to co-operate in the investigations to dismantle the traffickers' networks. Although the intention is not to limit the scope of the directive to women, the greatest number of victims of trafficking networks are women. Therefore, they will benefit particularly from the possibility of receiving a short-term residence permit.

The European Commission, together with the European Parliament, the Member States and NGOs, launched in 1999 a European-level awareness-raising campaign to combat violence against women which will run until May 2000. "Zero tolerance of violence" is the key message of the campaign. Based on the belief that any act of violence against women represents a serious violation of their human rights and is an attack on their dignity and integrity, the campaign focuses on the prevention of domestic violence and

---

<sup>36</sup> European Parliament and Council Decision No. 293/2000, OJ L 34 of 9.2.2000

<sup>37</sup> COM(98)726 final

addresses women and men. It shows that violence against women has serious consequences for the victim, those around her (including children who witness scenes of violence) and society as a whole. A survey on domestic violence against women and children<sup>38</sup> shows the need for further awareness raising.

Combating violence against disabled people was the theme chosen for the conference on the European Day of Disabled People, on 3 December 1999. The theme's specific pertinence to women with disabilities was underlined.

Aid to combat violence against women is also made available through development co-operation and in the framework of the EC human rights programmes. Such programmes have been funded in Central America, in the Mediterranean region, in Central and Eastern Europe and in the CIS.

### **Sexual harassment at work**

In a 1990 resolution<sup>39</sup>, Member States accepted that sexual harassment at work may be contrary to the principle of equal treatment and therefore to Council Directive 76/207/EEC on the implementation of the principle of equal treatment for men and women as regards access to employment, vocational training and promotion, and working conditions<sup>40</sup>. The issue has been on the Community agenda for many years.

A recommendation<sup>41</sup> on protecting the dignity of women and men at work and a *code of practice* on relevant measures were adopted by the Commission in 1991. A practical guide to implementing the code of practice was published in 1993<sup>42</sup>.

In 1999, a further Commission study on "Sexual harassment in the workplace"<sup>43</sup>, estimated that, approximately 30-50% of female employees (10% of male employees), have experienced some form of sexual harassment. However, attention is also drawn to the fact that definitions vary as to what constitutes sexual harassment, and that any comparisons drawn between the results need to be handled with caution.

## **E. Women and armed conflict**

The Platform for Action calls for increased protection to be given to women living in situations of armed and other conflicts or under foreign occupation.

Peace is inextricably linked with equality between women and men. Armed conflicts, acts of terrorism and hostage-taking still persist in many parts of the world. Women are particularly affected since despite the fact that international humanitarian law and the Geneva Convention relating to the protection of Civilian Persons in time of War provide that women shall be protected against humiliating and degrading treatment, including rape, attacks on the civilian population are at times systematically employed as a war tactic. 80% of the world's millions of refugees are women and children.

---

<sup>38</sup> Eurobarometer 51.0, June 1999

<sup>39</sup> Council Resolution of 29 May 1990 on the protection of dignity of women and men at work - OJ C 157, 27.06.1990

<sup>40</sup> Council Directive 76/207/EEC - OJ L 39, 14.02.1976

<sup>41</sup> OJ L 49, 24.02.1992

<sup>42</sup> "How to combat sexual harassment at work." - Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 1992

<sup>43</sup> Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 1999

However, women are also seen as key to bringing about a culture of peace. One of the strategic objectives of the Platform to deal with the issue of women and armed conflict is to increase women's participation in conflict resolution at decision-making levels.

The European Community supports conflict-prevention schemes, is active in confidence-building measures to restore peace, and promotes the observance of international humanitarian law by all parties to a conflict. Recognising the important role of women in the peace process, it has supported schemes covering and promoting women's interests in the peace process in the Balkan and Mediterranean regions and projects promoting women's political and electoral participation.

It has also provided psychological help and counselling for women war victims in and from Bosnia. The Commission has given support to the Gender and Development Programme Asian and Pacific Development Centre to follow the post Beijing Process in Asia. Support was also given through APDC to a regional consultation on refugee Women and Women in Situations of armed conflict.

NGOs which have acquired experience in dealing with violence against women in conflict situations have been supported to pass on their experience to other NGOs through training seminars. The European Community also supports projects to help women who have suffered female-specific human rights abuses.

In 1998, the Humanitarian Aid Office of the EC (ECHO) launched an international campaign 'A Flower for the Women of Kabul' on the initiative of the European Parliament. International Women's Day (8 March 1998) was dedicated to the women of Kabul in order to focus the world's attention on the oppression these women are suffering and to stop the violation of their rights.

### **Refugee and migrant women**

Gender-based persecution is a human rights issue on its own, and is recognised as such in the Commission's work in the area of asylum. In 1999, under the Odysseus programme, the Commission co-financed a seminar, organised by the Centre of European Studies in Strasbourg, to tackle the issues of asylum rights and the risks of female genital mutilation.

Against the background of the 1999 events, the Commission, the Swedish and Austrian governments and the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD) organised also on the basis of the Odysseus programme, a conference in Vienna on the theme "Rape is a war crime - How to support the survivors - Lessons from Bosnia - Strategies for Kosovo".

The Commission will ensure that the specific needs or the particular situation of women are duly taken into consideration, whenever necessary, within the initiatives taken by the Commission in the field of asylum. Within the EU financial instruments for the reception of asylum seekers, voluntary return and integration of refugees, several projects have also taken into consideration the vulnerable situation in which refugee women can be found and explore solutions to respond to their specific needs.

In the Draft Directive on the right to family reunification, tabled on 1 December 1999, the Commission devotes special attention to the situation of women. It is proposed that migrant women in particularly harmful situations could benefit from an autonomous status, leading to a right to stay in the host country, before the normal time limit. This

provision is designed among other things to protect women who entered a Member State for the purpose of family reunification and who have suffered domestic violence.

## **F. Women and the economy**

To promote women's economic rights and independence means tackling questions of access to employment, career advancement, appropriate working conditions, markets and resources; the elimination of occupational and sectorial segregation, income differentials and employment discrimination; and the promotion of a reconciliation of work and family responsibilities for women and men.

These key issues form the core of the different strategic objectives of the Platform for Action to improve women's economic capacity. They are also central to the European Union's employment strategy in the recognition that women's full participation in the labour market is necessary for Europe's economic and social development and its ability to grow and prosper.

Women constitute the largest reserve of non-employed and under-employed skilled labour in the European Union and thus constitute a major underused workforce. Women's unemployment rate is also higher than men's in almost all Member States ranging from 3% to 12% in some countries.

This is despite the fact that since 1994, female employment has grown four times faster than male employment in the European Union. By the year 2010, it is estimated that female employment rates will rise over 2.5 percentage points for the 15 Member States confirming women's attachment to employment.

Over the last 20 years, the European Union has become a largely service sector economy, with major declines registered in both manufacturing and agriculture. This has been accompanied by a move away from full-time to part-time jobs and from permanent to temporary ones. This transformation of the labour market offers one explanation for the rise of women's employment.

Despite the continued entry of women into the labour market, gender segregation remains and in some cases has been reinforced. The employment rate for women in the EU remains considerably lower than male employment (20 percentage points). Pay differences between women and men remain a stubborn feature of the labour market in all Member States even though long-standing equal pay legislation exists.

Recent and continuous transformation of the labour market which impact women is the emergence of the information society. Significant differences exist between women and men in terms of access to information society professions due to the under-representation of women in IT education and research. This is a critical issue in terms of economic empowerment of women in the developing knowledge economy. In its recent communication 'Strategies for Jobs in the Information society' the Commission has made a specific recommendation to the member States to maintaining gender balance in IT education.

Women also remain greatly under-represented amongst the self-employed. Only one quarter of the self-employed in the EU in 1997 were women. The Commission has taken a number of measures to encourage more women to set up and manage their own businesses, with some success. To balance the gender representation in business start-

up, the Commission continues to promote female entrepreneurship and the strengthening of support services targeted at women entrepreneurs.

### **The European Employment Strategy**

With equal opportunities firmly written into the Amsterdam Treaty, it also became a core element of the European Employment Strategy launched in 1997. This is one of the best and clearest examples of the impact of gender mainstreaming on European Community policies.

Equality of opportunity was identified as one of the four areas of action to combat unemployment and improve Europe's employment. It stands alongside measures to promote entrepreneurship, employability and adaptability of the labour force and workplace. The Employment Strategy also adopts a gender main-streaming approach for the four areas of action.

Every year employment guidelines are adopted. These guidelines are then used by the Member States to draw up their National Action Plans (NAPs) explaining in which fields and how they will act so as to achieve the stated goals. The implementation of the employment guidelines is then examined and recommendations to individual Member States can be issued. On the basis of that examination a joint report is produced annually, by the Council and the Commission, on the employment situation in the EU.

This means that every year, progress in equal opportunities in the labour market comes under the scrutiny of the European institutions and the Member States at the highest level as it is examined by heads of government at their annual end of year summit meeting.

### **The European Structural Funds**

The Structural Funds are the European Community's most important instrument for achieving economic and social cohesion. Together, the four funds provide financial assistance for development in EU social, regional, agricultural and fisheries fields and have become one of the main tools available to support the European employment strategy. The overall budget for the years 1994 – 1999 was 163 billion euro. This will be increased to 195 billion euro for the period 2000 – 2006.

In 1991, the NOW (New Opportunities for Women) initiative <sup>44</sup>was set up with a Community contribution of 156 million euro. Its aim was to promote equality for women on the labour market. By 1994, the NOW initiative was integrated into a larger Employment Initiative for the period 1995-1999. The new NOW initiative had an community budget of 496 million euro over 1994-99, increased to almost 1 billion euro with the contribution of the Member States.

By the end of the NOW employment initiative in 2000, 1750 projects across the European Union will have been funded. More than half address business creation by women, a third focus on the desegregation of the labour market and others are looking at sectors traditionally dominated by women such as health and care to develop professional profiles and qualification and so put more value on these jobs.

---

<sup>44</sup> JO C 372 of 29.12.1990

In the latest proposed reform of the Structural Funds to cover the years 2000 – 2006, gender equality has been strengthened through a twin track approach where the application of gender mainstreaming is accompanied by specific actions for women. The Member States gave their backing to the proposed reforms in June 1999<sup>45</sup>.

The European Social Fund (ESF), for example, will focus on improving the participation of women in the labour market, including their career development, to business creation, and to reducing vertical and horizontal segregation. The European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) will support enterprise creation activities and schemes to reconcile family and working life. The European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund (EAGGF) will back rural women's projects linked to farming activities.

From 2000, there will be only one Community initiative dealing with human resources called "EQUAL"<sup>46</sup>. The EQUAL Community initiative based on the experience of the Employment and Adapt initiatives, with a community budget of 2,847 billion euro, aims at combating any form of discrimination based on sex, race or ethnic origin.

In the other Community initiatives (LEADER<sup>47</sup>, INTERREG<sup>48</sup> and URBAN<sup>49</sup>), the Commission states that programming has to take into consideration the promotion of equality between women and men.

The new Structural Funds regulations have been completed by Guidelines as well as a series of technical documents prepared by the European Commission in order to assist the Member States in implementing their Programmes. These documents include a gender perspective<sup>50</sup>.

### **Work and family life – the care sector**

Women currently meet the bulk of society's caring needs, while the assumption that care is the responsibility of women persists. But as more women seek to combine motherhood with paid employment and as older people increasingly demand to be cared for in the community rather than in an institution, this informal often unpaid care provided by women will no longer be sufficient to fill the gap.

The importance of accessible, affordable and quality childcare to enable women and men to combine their family and working life has been recognised by the European Community and Member States in the framework of the European Employment Strategy.

---

<sup>45</sup> Council Regulation (EC) No. 1260/1999 of 21 June 1999 laying down general provisions on the structural funds – OJ L 161, 26.06.1999

<sup>46</sup> Draft Communication from the Commission to the Member States establishing the Guidelines for Community Initiative Programmes (CIPs) for which the Member States are invited to submit proposals under the EQUAL initiative – COM (99) 476 final, 13.10.1999

<sup>47</sup> COM (99)475 final of 13.10.1999

<sup>48</sup> COM (99)479 final of 13.10.1999

<sup>49</sup> COM (99)477 final of 13.10.1999

<sup>50</sup> The Structural Funds and their co-ordination with the Cohesion Fund, Guidelines for programmes in the period 2000-06, Communication of the Commission, 1.7.1999, and "The new programming period 2000-2006: methodological working papers", 1999, European Commission.



The Commission is currently analysing European research on effective policies to facilitate work and family life and assess policy trends. Diverse issues such as quality in care services, improving the status of care work, family leave and employee and employer participation in family-friendly policies are under consideration. A report on this subject entitled, "Care in Europe"<sup>51</sup>, has been published.

In February 1998, the Commission published a report on how Member States have implemented the 1992 Council Recommendations on childcare. This report complements the publication in 1996 of a guide to good practice on work and childcare<sup>52</sup>.

## **G. Women in power and decision-making**

Achieving the goal of equal participation of women and men in decision-making will provide a balance that better reflects the composition of society and is needed to strengthen democracy. This is why the Platform for Action made this issue one of its critical areas of concern.

Women's equal participation in decision-making and leadership, and especially political decision-making, is a demand for justice or democracy. The Platform for Action goes further saying that this is a necessary condition for women's interest to be taken into account.

In December 1996, the Member States adopted a Council Recommendation on the balanced participation of women and men in the decision-making process<sup>53</sup>. The Commission has examined how this recommendation has been implemented and its findings are presented in a report adopted by the Commission on 7<sup>th</sup> March 2000<sup>54</sup>.

In April 1999, in a Paris declaration<sup>55</sup>, Ministers from the Member States again committed their governments to undertake measures to bring about a gender balance in decision-making.

A number of research studies have been undertaken as part of the Medium Term Community Action Programme on Equal Opportunities for Men and Women (1996-2000) to look more closely at women's position in sectors such as health, finance, the law and politics<sup>56</sup>. Projects which aim to achieve a gender balance in decision-making have also been co-financed under the Programme.

With a view to encouraging women's participation, as voters and as candidates, in the European elections of June 1999, the European Commission supported organisations by providing campaign material. In addition, a brochure entitled "Europe for Women and Women for Europe" was published and widely disseminated.

---

<sup>51</sup> Joint report of the Commission's "Gender and Employment" and "Gender and Law" Group of Experts, European Commission, Directorate of Employment and Social Affairs

<sup>52</sup> "Work and Child-care; A guide of good practice." Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, ISBN 92-827-6318-8

<sup>53</sup> Council Recommendation 96/694/EC - OJ L 319, 10.12.1996

<sup>54</sup> Com(2000)120 final of 07.03.2000

<sup>55</sup> Declaration of Paris, 17 April 1999

<sup>56</sup> Available at Employment and Social Affairs DG, Unit Equal Opportunities for Women and Men

Legislative and regulatory measures (including quotas and targets) have also proved important for making progress as has political commitment at the highest level.

The Commission emphasises the need for awareness- raising and the sensitisation of decision-makers to show how a gender balance in decision-making will enhance the political, economic and social performance of societies and the European Union.

Since 1998, upon an initiative of the Austrian Presidency and as part of the annual review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, special attention has been paid to the issue of women in political decision-making within the initiative of developing indicators for all areas covered by the PfA. The Finnish Presidency, which has built on this work, proposed nine indicators to monitor progress. These were welcomed by Member States at their Council of Ministers meeting on 22 October 1999.

In the field of external relations, co-financing has been given to projects in Central and Eastern Europe and in the Mediterranean to increase the involvement of women in decision-making.

### **The European Commission's equal opportunities programme for its own staff**

Since 1995, the European Commission has fixed targets for the recruitment and the appointment of women in its middle and higher management positions. The result has been a slow but steady improvement.

In April 1997, it adopted its third action programme to promote equal opportunities amongst its own staff<sup>57</sup>. The programme, to run until the year 2000, has integrated the gender mainstreaming approach. The programme aims at taking into account female and male values, needs and priorities and develop the professional abilities of women in order to bring them to decision-making levels.

The new Commission marked a fresh effort to tackle the persisting gender gaps in political decision-making. Since taking in office in September 1999 the new Commission has stressed its firm intention to promoting a more equal participation of women in all relevant bodies, committees and expert groups where decisions are made and proposed a decision on a more balanced composition of its committees and expert groups. As part of an internal reform strategy, the Commission also announced explicit provision for improving the proportion of women appointed to senior posts in December 1999.

## **H. Institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women**

Mechanisms for the advancement of women are found at every level of the European Community.

The Council of the EU deals with gender equality and mainstreaming in its different compositions, depending on the subject (social affairs, development co-operation, etc.).

The European Parliament and especially its Women's Rights Committee, have been particularly active in ensuring that gender equality takes a key place in European

---

<sup>57</sup> Third action programme for equal opportunities for women and men at the European Community (1997-2000), adopted by the Commission 2 April 1997.

Community policies. The Women's Rights Committee has proved an ardent advocate of women's rights and serves as a watchdog ensuring gender sensitivity in Community policies.

The importance attached by the Commission to the promotion of gender equality in all its fields of activity was reflected on an institutional level by the setting up in 1995 of a Group of European Commissioners on Equal Opportunities for women and men. Under the auspices of the Commission President, its remit is to look at gender equality and strive to build it into all Community policies and activities.

The Interdepartmental Group on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men was set up at the initiative of the Group of Commissioners as a support mechanism for their activities and to improve interdepartmental co-operation on the promotion of gender equality and the implementation of the gender mainstreaming approach. The Group has, for instance, completed a guide to gender impact assessment<sup>58</sup>.

The Unit for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, located in the Directorate-General Employment and Social Affairs, promotes equal opportunities for women and men within the European Union and is responsible for the Medium-Term Community Action Programme on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men (1996-2000).

## **I. Human rights of women**

The Platform for Action reaffirms that the human rights of women and the girl-child are an inalienable, integral and indivisible part of universal human rights. It calls for the promotion and protection of the human rights of women through the full implementation of all human rights instruments and especially the United Nations Convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women. Respecting the human rights of women also means equality and non-discrimination under the law and in practice.

The European Union is aware of human rights abuses that are specific to women and aims to raise awareness of this in all its human rights activities. Its second major concern is encouragement of full participation by women in political, social and economic life. The provision of human rights education for women is essential as is the support given to women's professional and other organisations.

The promotion and protection of the human rights of women is an integral part of the EC's human rights policy. The Treaty of Amsterdam, which came into force on 1 May 1999, marks another significant step forward in integrating human rights into the legal order of the European Union. This Treaty inserts a new article 6 in the Treaty on European Union, which reaffirms that the European Union 'is founded on the principles of liberty, democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and the rule of law, principles which are common to the Member States'.

On 29 April 1999, two human rights regulations 975/99 and 976/99<sup>59</sup> were adopted by the Council which provide a comprehensive framework for EC human rights activities.

---

<sup>58</sup> "A guide to gender impact assessment." European Commission, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 1998

<sup>59</sup> OJ L 1201 of 8 May 1999.

They include several references to equal opportunities, non-discrimination and the promotion of women in their article 2: 'the promotion and protection of the human rights of those discriminated against' - 'the promotion of equality of opportunity and non-discriminatory practices' - 'promoting the equal participation of men and women in civil society, in economic life and in politics' - 'promote the participation of specific groups, particularly women, in the electoral processes'.

The regulations provide a legal basis for the European Initiative for Human Rights and Democracy which brings together under one budget Chapter the 11 human rights budget lines (budget of € 100 million for activities world-wide in 1999). All these refer explicitly to women as a target group. Under this initiative, gender issues have received priority. A number of human rights projects have been co-financed in this context under sections on violence against women and women in decision-making, namely in Central and Eastern European countries, in Latin-America, Asia, the Mediterranean (MEDA-Democracy programme) and ACP (African, Caribbean and Pacific) countries.

## **J. Women and the media**

The increasing number of women in the media does not seem to have influenced media policy where there is a continued failure to eliminate gender based stereotyping in media communications.

The strategic objectives call for change on two fronts. The first concerns the increased participation and access of women to expression and decision-making in and through the media and the new technologies of communication. The second focuses on media content and calls for the promotion of a balanced and non-stereotyped portrayal of women in the media.

In October 1995, the Council of Ministers adopted a resolution calling for changes in the portrayal of women and men in advertising and the media<sup>60</sup>. The resolution also gave backing to the Commission's work in this field and called for a strengthening of measures.

The European Commission has financed the Prix Niki. This prize, was awarded to programmes which provided insight into the situation of women today and which focused attention on women's efforts to play an equal and active part in society.

Following the Council Decision of 22.12.1995<sup>61</sup>, the Training Programme for Professionals in the European Audiovisual Programme Industry (Media II-Training) has to be implemented by taking equality between women and men into account.

In September 1998, the Council adopted a recommendation on the protection of minors and human dignity in audio-visual and information services<sup>62</sup>. It is the first instrument concerning the content of on-line audiovisual and information services made available on the Internet.

The Commission also funds projects dealing with women's information and equal opportunities and projects on how to improve the image of women in the media.

---

<sup>60</sup> Council Resolution OJ C 296, 10.11.1995

<sup>61</sup> OJ L 321, 30.12.1995

<sup>62</sup> Council Recommendation OJ L 270, 07.10.1998

## **K. Women and the Environment**

The European Commission acknowledges that women have a vital role to play in sustainable development (both within the European Union and in the less developed countries) in particular in relation to consumption and production patterns and in light of their influence on and education of future generations.

The Platform for Action calls for a greater involvement of women in environmental decision-making at all levels. It also wants to see gender concerns and perspectives integrated in all policies and programmes for sustainable development and the introduction of strengthening of mechanisms to assess the impact of development and environmental policies on women. For example, the Sustainability Impact assessment of multilateral trade negotiations carried out by the European Commission includes a gender dimension.

The European Commission actively promotes a wide variety of environmental initiatives such as urban development, air quality, water and nature protection. It also supports education and training in sustainable resource use in local and rural communities. In addition, the Treaty of Amsterdam, and in particular Article 6, will help reinforce the integration of environmental concerns into all Commission policies.

There is increased awareness of gender equality issues in the development of environmental policies. In addition, women benefit from specific projects although they are not the main focus.

## **L. The girl-child**

In many countries, the girl-child is discriminated against from the earliest stages of life, through to her childhood and into her adulthood. The Platform for Action calls for active policies to promote and protect the rights of the girl-child and increase awareness of her needs and potential. This means ending discrimination, economic exploitation and violence against them.

There is no specific Community competence on child or family policy. However, a number of actions targeting children are supported under the European Community's education and youth programmes, both mentioned earlier.

As part of development co-operation and human rights programmes, actions targeted at the girl-child are supported especially with regard to education and health.

The EC actively combats violence against children in the DAPHNE initiative and trafficking and sexual exploitation of children under the STOP programme (see above).

The extent and seriousness of the problem of child sex tourism led the European Commission, on 27 November 1996, to adopt a communication on combating child sex tourism<sup>63</sup>. The Communication set out the framework for Community action over the medium and long-term to tackle this problem and reflected both the Commission's concerns and increasing sensitivity towards the issue amongst the general public and the tourism industry.

---

<sup>63</sup> COM (96) 547 final, 27.11.1996

During 1999 a budget on 'Actions against child discrimination' was created, with the main objective to fight against child discrimination. This budget is used as a tool to mainstream the issue of children into EU development, rehabilitation and humanitarian aid policies and programmes, and to build local NGO capacity

The European Parliament and the Council gave their broad agreement on the principle lines of the communication.

## **CONCLUSION**

Considerable progress has been made in the area of gender equality at the European Community level since the Beijing conference.

In this short period, it has been transformed from a policy area concentrating on specific actions in favour of women in the social and employment sectors to being a central feature of European Union policy-making in all sectors. Gender Equality is now firmly anchored into the Amsterdam Treaty. It has become a key element of policy areas such as employment, education, training, research, regional development and development co-operation.

Important progress towards gender equality has been attained both in interventions specifically addressed to women, in order to redress persistent inequalities and in ensuring that women's together with men's concerns and interests are correctly reflected into policy. Examples of this are given in this text.

In particular, in the area of gender mainstreaming, there is also a recognition that, despite the progress, much still remains to be done. The institutional framework has been set within the European Commission to ensure that gender mainstreaming continues to move forward but we need to increase the awareness of gender issues at decision-making levels, ensure that adequate human and budgetary resources are allocated to gender mainstreaming and ensure that we can count on gender expertise.

This is what the European Commission is now tackling by developing a more comprehensive and systematic approach to gender mainstreaming. This includes gender impact assessment of policies, gender proofing and actions to develop gender expertise and awareness amongst its own staff.

The European Commission dual approach implies that, in the coming years, specific actions addressed to women will be continued and strengthened. The future Community programme on gender equality that the Commission is preparing for the period 2001-2005 will be built on the two pillars: effective gender mainstreaming into all Community policies and activities and the implementation of specific actions to tackle gender discrimination.