Equality between women and men: roadmap 2006-2010

2006/2132(INI) - 31/07/2009 - Follow-up document

This Commission Staff Working Paper provides a summary of the 20092010 Work Programme of the Roadmap for equality between women and men (20062010).

Recall: the Roadmap for equality between women and men (2006-2010), adopted in March 2006, defined the Commission's commitments to gender equality for the period 2006-2010. To monitor the implementation of the Roadmap actions, two work programmes were drawn up, and a mid-term progress report was adopted (all summaries in the previous follow-up documents).

This document is the **third Commission Work Programme** covering the period 20092010. It is drawn up in the context of a severe economic downturn, which has a significant impact on employment and social prospects, and entails the risk that the situation of women, in particular, will be affected. In this context, fierce competition for public spending could lead to a redefinition of priorities in the Union, and to less attention being devoted to gender equality policies.

However, as indicated in the mid-term progress report, the Roadmap is starting to pay dividends (see summary of 26/11/2008) and shows that it has a certain impact in order to ensure better visibility of Community actions in this area.

State of affairs and actions to be implemented: since the adoption of the last Roadmap work programme, there have been new achievements with regard to the inclusion of gender considerations in some new areas such as State aid and audio-visual media services.

However, the economic downturn represents both an opportunity and a potential threat for women's employment and gender equality. While unemployment seems to hit the male sectors hardest (construction work, finance etc.) in the first instance, highly feminised services (e.g. public services, health, education) may be next if the crisis worsens.

The Commission therefore considers that it will be important to pay attention to the **gender impacts when designing policies both at EU and at national level to respond to the crisis** because, apart from the unemployment situation, previous crises have also had an impact on women's access to credit, to education, and have increased household work. In this regard, the situation of women in developing countries also requires very special attention.

There also needs to be a focus on combating stereotypes and on the segregated labour market, and also on achieving a better balance between the genders in education and in the choice of a career in the labour market to avoid unemployment impacting only one of the genders in the future.

An additional challenge will be to evaluate progress and assess the contribution of the current Roadmap to gender equality policies with a view to the preparation of the future strategy (**after 2010**).

Lastly, note that the Commissioners' group on fundamental rights, anti-discrimination and equal opportunities held an extraordinary meeting on the occasion of the 2009 International Women's Day to take stock of the implementation of 2006-2010 Roadmap on equality between women and men. The meeting was attended by several representatives, including President Barroso who confirmed the Commission's commitments to push the gender agenda forward. While noting that gender issues have

progressed in all Commission policies, such as employment, education, health, external relations, he stressed that the Commission should remain vigilant and should continue to develop its action **until gender equality is a reality**. In this context, the future Commission framework for gender equality should provide a holistic response to the new challenges, particularly those that result as a consequence of the economic crisis.

A conference was organised to reflect upon the future strategy in this area (20112015). It stressed that delivering of tangible results on gender equality depends largely on the Member States and on synergies between all actors involved in policy making. The new framework will have to consider how to create the conditions for combining efforts in order to achieve gender equality.