Gender equality: Community framework strategy, programme 2001-2005

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This Annual Report, the sixth on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men in the EU, presents an overview of the main developments at European and national level in 2001 and outlines perspectives for 2002. 2001 was the first year of the implementation of the Framework Strategy on Gender Equality. Some interesting new activities were selected for the integration of a gender equality perspective, for instance: - World trade and globalisation (DG Trade) - The integrated product policy, in particular waste management (DG Environment) - Asylum and refugee policy (DG Justice and Home Affairs) - An interpretative communication on the incorporation of social aspects in public procurement, including equality of treatment and opportunity between men and women (DG Internal Market in co-operation with DG employment). In order to give more details of progress, a Gender Scoreboard has been prepared. Despite a good start, more needs to be done. Progress within policy areas must be tracked by the use of gender indicators. A new Action Programme for which a priority theme is selected each year accompanies the Framework Strategy. The theme for 2001 was the gender pay gap. Progress towards the Lisbon objectives is assessed on the base of structural indictors, which now includes an indicator on gender pay differentials. In practice the majority of the 27 projects selected in 2001 under the Action Programme deal with equal pay issues. The total funding for them is approximately EUR 8 million. The results are expected for 2003. With regard to enlargement, candidate countries are required to have the nine equal opportunities directives at the time of entry. Legislation itself is, however, not enough. Structures such as equality bodies, ombudspersons for equality and independent advice are key. In 2002, the spotlight will be on reconciling work with family life. It will also be a year for reinforcing gender equality legislation. In this connection, there is now political agreement on the amendment to Directive 76/207/EC on equal treatment in employment. For the first time at EU level, binding legislation will now define sexual harassment and establish that it constitutes a form of sex discrimination. The new directive includes provision for reinforcement, compensation without an upper limit and sanctions. Finally, in advance of the elections to the EP in 2004, the Commission envisages concentrating its 2003 activities on the promotion of gender balance in decision-making.