Equal opportunities for men and women in the European Union. 2002 7th annual report

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PURPOSE : to present the 7th Annual Report on Equal Opportunities in the EU. CONTENT : the report states that the EU has made progress in gender legislation, notably with adoption of the directive on harassment at work, looks at Member States new caselaw on equal pay and initiatives to reconcile work and family life. However, the Commission finds that data on women's participation in decision-making, especially in the private sector, are unsatisfactory. The report analyses how far gender issues have been given a role in each of the other EU policies ('gender mainstreaming'). The report examines how far candidate countries have got in adopting EU gender rules, concluding that 'paper law' is not, on its own, enough there is a need for back-up in the form of equality bodies, ombudsmen for equality and reliable independent advice. 2002 also heralded the start of the work of the Convention on the Future of Europe. The lack of women's representation within the Convention has been criticised and, to counterbalance this deficit, a strengthened gender mainstreaming approach has been advocated. In responding to the many challenges facing the European Union, it is clear that any future Constitutional Treaty must reflect the aspirations of women and men in an enlarged Europe and confirm the established principle of equal treatment between women and men. In order to achieve a gender equal society, the Union must continue working to eliminate inequalities and promote equality between men and women in all its policies and actions (gender mainstreaming). The Framework Strategy on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men continued to provide a structure for gender mainstreaming of all policy areas, and 2002 saw, for example, the evaluation of the European Employment Strategy, including the impact of gender mainstreaming, and an analysis of Gender in the Structural Funds. Important progress was made in raising awareness and exchange of good practice in the Social Inclusion process and in the Pension Report. The successful amendment of the Equal Treatment Directive thanks to strong collaboration with the Council and European Parliament in the co-decision process, moved the agenda of equality firmly forward in the area of employment. Attention also focused on domestic violence against women, including the adoption of indicators, and efforts were stepped up to prevent and eliminate this unacceptable practice. Gender equality is a human right for all and visible international solidarity and support for women who are denied this right is essential. Some important steps were taken in 2002, but much remains to be done and this therefore will continue to be a crucial area for efforts in the future.