Equal opportunities women-men: integration into Community policies (mainstreaming). Progress report

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OBJECTIVE: assessing progress made in incorporating equal opportunities for women and men into all Community policies and activities following the adoption of the Commission communication of 1996 on 'mainstreaming'. SUBSTANCE: In February 1996, the Commission adopted a communication on incorporating equal opportunities for women and men into all Community policies and activities or 'mainstreaming' (COS0390) and set up a new structure with a view to systematically incorporating the equal opportunities dimension in all Community policies and activities. The present report sets out to assess the measures taken since then and their real impact. From this analysis it emerges that the most tangible results were obtained in the fields of external relations, cooperation and development, employment policy, the structural funds, education, training and youth policies and in Commission staff and information policies. Nevertheless, the result is not an unqualified success. The Commission considers that most of the measures taken to promote equal opportunities are isolated and without major impact. Neither do these activities seriously influence the orientation of mainstream Community policies. The Commission takes the view that incorporating equal opportunities for men and women requires a wider and more comprehensive approach. It is particularly concerned at the lack of awareness of gender issues at decision-making levels and the lack of human and budgetary resources and training in this connection. It therefore proposes a number of measures to improve the organizational and methodological framework for gender mainstreaming within the Commission. - awareness-raising of senior and middle management, - large scale training to develop the necessary expertise, - regular impact assessment of policies, - gender proofing to guarantee the proofing of any legislative proposal and other policy document or Commission activity in the field of equal opportunities, Concerning the Commission's 1998 work programme the following policies are singled out for specific attention: (1) close monitoring of achievements in the field of employment policies (employment guidelines), (2) structural funds, (3) new generation of Community education training and youth programmes, (4) programmes to promote part-time work and new forms of work organization, (5) identification and elimination of rigidity caused by gender issues in the functioning of the single market, (6) impact of the euro on equal treatment for men and women, (7) full participation of women in opportunities offered by the new technologies and the information society, (8) impact of the enlargement process on equal opportunities, (9) the cooperation of equal opportunities in the Commission's internal reform programme, (10) continued monitoring of the gender mainstreaming policy and regular reporting on the progress achieved.