Equal opportunities: women participation to the European scientific research

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PURPOSE : to mobilise women to enrich European research and to describe what action has and will be taken by the Commission in the field of research and technological development in order to achieve this objective. CONTENT : the European Union at the service of its citizens must, in line with its general principles, set itself objectives regarding equal opportunities for men and women in the field of scientific research. Women are currently under-represented in this field: the aim is therefore to encourage women to take part in European research. Efforts will have to be made at European and Member State level in order to rectify this situation. As part of its information policy, the Commission will also seek to ensure that women are informed about the schemes and programmes intended to increase their participation in scientific research. The Commission undertakes to make significant efforts to increase women's participation in Community research programmes; the overall objective is to achieve for women at least 40% representation, on average throughout the 5th Framework Programme, in Marie Curie scholarships, advisory groups and assessment panels. Accordingly, the Commission undertakes to pursue two objectives: 1) to stimulate discussion and the sharing of experience in this field among the Member States so that action can be taken as effeactively as possible at all levels of power; 2) to develop a coherent approach towards promoting women in research financed by the Union, with the aim of significantly increasing the number of women involved in research during the period of the Fifth Framework Programme. The purpose of this communication is to describe what action has been and will be taken by the Commission in the field of research and technological development to achieve these two objectives, presenting it against the more general background of the European Union's policy on equal opportunities, on the one hand, and the action taken in the Member States, on the other. It should be noted that a very wide range of measures has been introduced at Member State level. Accordingly, action has been taken by the Commission. For instance : - discussion and sharing experience: a group of experts , a group of national civil servants and a network of women scientists; - a coherent approach within the Fifth Framework Programme; - a coordinating structure for implementing the gender and science watch system within the 5th Framework Programme. By setting up the various schemes described in this communication, the Commission is providing increased opportunities for women to take part in scientific research. However, these efforts will have been in vain unless all those concerned express their interest by working together towards this goal. The Commission will assess the measures which have been taken in accordance with this communication and will report on them to the European Parliament and the Council.