

Equality between women and men in the European Union

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PURPOSE : Commission report on equality between men and women 2004.

CONTENT : The European Spring Council of March 2003 invited the Commission to prepare an annual report on developments towards gender equality and orientations for gender mainstreaming of policy areas. This report responds to that request. It gives an overview of progress made so far regarding to the status of women and men in main policy areas and addresses key challenges for the further promotion of equality between women and men.

The report recalls the Lisbon targets and states that reaffirmed commitment by Member States to support the active participation of women in the labour market and to reduce the gender gaps in different spheres of life will play a key role. Higher active participation in the labour market in jobs of good quality will contribute to tackling the increasing challenge of our ageing society. The report confirms a positive trend towards narrowing the gaps between women and men in several policy areas. However, progress is too slow and enhanced efforts are needed to meet the Lisbon strategy targets. Member States are committed to achieving a substantial reduction in gender gaps in employment rates, unemployment rates and pay by 2010. This is confirmed by the new guidelines of the European Employment Strategy.

Inequality between women and men is a multidimensional phenomenon that has to be tackled by a comprehensive mix of policy measures. The challenge is to ensure policies that support equal opportunities for women and men in education, employment and career development, entrepreneurship, equal pay for equal work or work of equal value, better sharing of family responsibilities, balanced participation of women and men in decision-making and the elimination of gender-based violence.

The Commission recommends that special attention should be paid:

- to ensuring the rapid implementation in the Member States of the recently adopted legislation and the correct implementation of the Community acquis on equal treatment in the acceding States;
- to adopting the proposal for a Directive based on Article 13, before March 2005;
- to taking specific measures to reduce the gender pay gap in co-operation with the social partners;
- to supporting actively a balanced representation of women and men in the elections to the European Parliament in 2004;
- to strengthening the integration of gender equality in all policy fields, including employment and social policies, education, justice and home affairs, external relations, development co-operation, budget and financial policies;
- to working towards reaching the targets set in Barcelona on the provision of childcare:
- to developing further indicators, with a focus on indicators on sexual harassment in the workplace in 2004, aiming at identifying core indicators, and monitoring progress, including the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action; to this effect regularly collecting adequate, coherent and comparable statistics disaggregated by sex, particularly in areas where such data are missing;

- to ensuring that an emphasis is given to gender equality, including women's access to employment in all Structural Funds and that appropriate funding is allocated;
- to implementing gender mainstreaming in the European Research Area through active support to the network of high level national officials (the "Helsinki Group" on women and science).
- to combating violence against women and using the set of indicators on domestic violence for following-up of progress;
- to combating trafficking in women, in particular to adopting a proposal for a Directive on the short-term residence permit issued to victims of action to facilitate illegal immigration in human beings who co-operate with the competent authorities.

The statistical annex gives an overview of the situation of women and men, its evolution over time, and remaining gender gaps in the EU and, whenever possible, in the acceding countries.

Paid work - There is an employment gender gap of 17.2% in the EU-15 and of 16.3% in the EU-15+ACC, while the unemployment gender gap is equal to 1.8% in the EU-15 and 1.9% in the EU-15+ACC. Women form a majority of those working part-time. The share of women employees working part-time was 34% in the EU-15 and 30% in the EU-15+ACC in 2002. The corresponding figures for men were 7% both in the EU-15 and in the EU-15+ACC.

Income and pay - In 2001, the gender pay gap was 16%, while the risk of poverty was 3% higher for women compared to men.

Decision-making - Balanced participation in decision-making is looked at in the political and economic fields. 25.4% of parliamentary seats in the EU-15 are currently occupied by women. In 2002, a slightly higher percentage of women - 30% - achieved managerial positions in the EU-15 and 30% in the EU-15+ACC.

Knowledge - Women present higher educational attainment than men: the gap between women and men aged 20-24 attaining secondary educational level is 6 percentage points in the EU-15 and 5 percentage points in the EU-15+ACC. Traditional patterns are on the contrary present in the research field where women represented 6% and men 19% of academic staff who are Full Professors (or equivalent) in the EU-15 in the year 2000.

Working Time - The gap between average hours worked by women and men with children shows that women with children work 12 hours less than men with children in the EU-15 and 11 hours less in the EU-15+ACC.