

Non discrimination and gender equality: European year of equal opportunities for all 2007

2005/0107(COD) - 01/06/2005 - Document attached to the procedure

COMMISSION'S IMPACT ASSESSMENT

For further information concerning the background to this issue, please refer to the summary of the Commission's initial proposal COM(2005)0225 of 1 June 2005 concerning the European Year of Equal Opportunities for All (2007) Towards a Just Society.

1- POLICY OPTIONS AND IMPACTS: The Commission examined three policy options.

1.1- Option 1 - No change scenario – sole reliance on the continuation of the existing Community action programmes to alter attitudes and behaviour and promote a just society, free from discrimination. This option is not likely to produce expected impact. The above-mentioned Programmes scheduled to run to 2013 do not adequately respond to the identified problems and needs as developed above. They are mainly concerned with improving understanding of the extent and impact of discrimination and inequalities, monitoring the application of Community legislation, supporting training activities addressed to practitioners and raising awareness among European level stakeholders on key challenges and policy issues in relation to non-discrimination and equality.

1.2- Option 2 - Action coordinated and centralised by the Commission on the basis of a limited incentive measure over a fixed period. This would provide a unique opportunity and platform to raise awareness on the necessity to create a more cohesive society that celebrates differences within the framework of EU core values and fosters the respect of the substantial EU acquis in equality and non-discrimination. This option is likely to put unnecessary burden on the Commission while not being capable of meeting the concerns and specificities of Member States. This option will fall short in acknowledging and accommodating the various national sensitivities and cultural contexts. It will not be able to take account of the varying level of progress achieved by Member States in promoting non-discrimination and equality. It is likely to encounter political opposition from the Member States as this option would seem disproportionate to the objective to be achieved.

1.3- Option 3 - Same action as Option 2 with the difference that the implementation of activities will be decentralised to the Member States under the supervision of the Commission to ensure consistency with the policy objectives of the European Year.

CONCLUSION: Option 3 would seem the most appropriate to create the momentum needed in 2007 to make actors and beneficiaries sensitive to the necessity to tackle the barriers to the participation in society and create a climate where Europe's diversity is seen as a source for the socio-economic vitality of Europe.

IMPACTS: Option 3 is likely to achieve significant political impact at the national level in raising awareness and in stimulating an open debate and dialogue on policy strategic issues linked to the diversity of European society. It will allow the objectives of the Year to penetrate more easily and reach out interested and concerned stakeholders at national, regional and local levels. It will imply a greater participation and a more active involvement of national authorities in support to the implementation of the Year. In turn, taking a shared responsibility for the Year will ensure that national authorities are active players. It will ensure that the policy objectives of the Year defined at the European level are translated in a way that adequately matches the national contexts.

The competences concerning the fight against discrimination on grounds of sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or beliefs, disability, age and sexual orientation are shared with Member States and cover several EU policy fields. This implies broad objectives to be reached in a European Year. To achieve concrete impacts in a limited period, the operational objectives should be focussed on the most needed actions linked with the specific objectives. The European added value will depend on the capacity to create the awareness on concrete issues and the conditions to transfer the experiences between MS.

The substantial differences among Member States, in terms of cultural context, sensitivities and progress achieved in the areas of the fight against all forms of discrimination weighs in favour of giving the Member States a large role in the implementation of the Year. This said, definition of policy priorities at the national level should be made under the supervision of the Commission with the view of guaranteeing no deviations from the agreed strategic objectives as established by the Year. Exchanges at EU level should be limited and elaborated on the basis of good practices at MS level.

2- FOLLOW-UP: The Commission and Member States should ensure the consistency of the measures financed. Monitoring should facilitate the quality of the activity financed and the consistency with the objectives of the Year. The monitoring should therefore be implemented in order to ease the exchanges of experiences between Member States and capitalisation of results achieved at EU level.

The design of the monitoring framework will be mainly the responsibility of the Commission in consultation with the Member States. The implementation of monitoring systems will be in accordance with the responsibilities for the financing of activities. Reporting on objectives and results achieved will be included in the conditions to receive financing.

An external evaluation will be launched in Year n-1 of the Year in order to follow the monitoring of the year and provide interim results if needed. The evaluation results should be available mid-2008. This arrangement will allow the Commission to report to the EU Institutions end of 2008 on the results achieved.