Basic information

1996/2036(COS) COS - Procedure on a strategy paper (historic)	Procedure completed
Incorporating equal opportunities for women and men into all Community policies and activities (mainstreaming) **Subject** 4.10.04.01 Programmes and actions for gender equality	

Key players

European Parliament

Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
FEMM Women's Rights	KOKKOLA Angela (PSE)	21/03/1996

Committee for opinion	Rapporteur for opinion	Appointed
REGI Regional Policy	OJALA Outi (GUE/NGL)	27/02/1997
INST Institutional Affairs	IZQUIERDO ROJO María (PSE)	27/05/1997

Council of the European Union

Key events

Date	Event	Reference	Summary
20/02/1996	Additional information		Summary
21/02/1996	Non-legislative basic document published	COM(1996)0067	Summary
11/03/1996	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
14/07/1997	Vote in committee		Summary
14/07/1997	Committee report tabled for plenary	A4-0251/1997	
16/09/1997	Debate in Parliament		
16/09/1997	End of procedure in Parliament		
06/10/1997	Final act published in Official Journal		

Technical information

Procedure reference	1996/2036(COS)
Procedure type	COS - Procedure on a strategy paper (historic)
Procedure subtype	Commission strategy paper
Legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 148
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	FEMM/4/07660

Documentation gateway

European Parliament

Document type	Committee	Reference	Date	Summary
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A4-0251/1997 OJ C 304 06.10.1997, p. 0006	14/07/1997	
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T4-0433/1997 OJ C 304 06.10.1997, p. 0025-0050	16/09/1997	Summary

European Commission

Document type	Reference	Date	Summary
Non-legislative basic document	COM(1996)0067	21/02/1996	Summary

Incorporating equal opportunities for women and men into all Community policies and activities (mainstreaming)

1996/2036(COS) - 21/02/1996 - Non-legislative basic document

OBJECTIVE: The purpose of the communication is to give substance to the principle of 'mainstreaming' as regards equality of opportunity for men and women, i.e. the promotion of such equality in all Community policies and initiatives. What is called for in particular is a systematic definition and assessment of all the areas in which such equality is lacking and the implementation of strategies which will enable the principle of equality between men and women to be taken into consideration more effectively at all levels. SUBSTANCE: the purpose of the Commission's communication is not just to provide a list of policies and initiatives in which the male/female equality aspect should be taken into greater consideration. On the contrary, its purpose is to mobilize all of the Community's general policies and initiatives, both current and future, with a view to ensuring full equality. More specifically, the Commission intends to incorporate the 'equality' dimension actively and visibly in the actual process of drawing up Community policies and initiatives so that more account can be taken of the respective situations of men and women ('gender perspective'). As regards the acquis communautaire the Commission points out that the principle of equal pay has existed since the Community was set up. Since then a series of laws have come into being with particular regard to equal rights in terms of employment, vocational training and social protection. At the same time the Community has developed a series of positive actions in order to promote such equality at all levels. However, the Commission emphasizes the fact that it has very little scope for action in this area on account of the existing legal basis (Article 119 - equal pay), even though the most recent European Councils (Essen, Cannes and Madrid) have called for the principle of equality to be strengthened. This is why, in the second part of its communication, the Commission describes all the changes it would like to see made to certain policies and, in particular certain specific areas such as: - employment and the labour market, - the status of women entrepreneurs and assisting spouses in SMEs, - education and training, - rights of individuals, - external relations, - information/awareness. In addition to these six areas there is a section on the Commission's staff policy, by way of an example. At the same time the Commission describes the role of the Structural Funds, which constitute the main Community financial instrument and which are used in several of the above areas.

Incorporating equal opportunities for women and men into all Community policies and activities (mainstreaming)

1996/2036(COS) - 16/09/1997 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

In adopting the report by Mrs Angela KOKKOLA (PSE, G) on incorporating the principle of 'mainstreaming' into Community policies and activities, Parliament noted that the Commission had taken a huge step forward with its Communication by recognizing that women had only enjoyed their full share of society's benefits in theory, and not in practice. It believed that the implementation of this principle should not be hindered by considerations of cultural values and traditions, rigid societal structures or the demands of competitiveness. It welcomed the fact that the equal opportunities had been incorporated into most policies in the Draft Treaty of Amsterdam, and called for the establishment of an interinstitutional working party to make the objective of equal treatment between men and women a concern in all Community activities. It pointed out that European efforts, because they were limited to areas of competence enshrined in the Treaties, had to be imitated by the Member States in their own national policies, in order to increase awareness of policies in this field and to ensure through them a true sense of equal opportunities and rights. Parliament noted once more that there was an economic need for greater participation of women in the workforce to compensate, in particular, for the expected ageing of the EU population. Equal rights for women in professional activities should allow them to achieve financial independence. It was convinced that, to enable women to play a more active role professionally, social services should be made available to help care for dependants (children and the elderly) and believed that more emphasis should be put on education, training and public transport. Parliament was convinced that there should be increased investment (particularly financial investment) to improve the availability of support structures which would contribute to equal opportunities. It drew attention to the fact that there should be a genuine sharing of tasks in family life. In this respect, it invited the Commission to study ways in which fiscal measures and specific social security benefits could be used to help give work in the family official recognition within the economy. In addition, the issue of equal pay should continue to be actively promoted at all levels. Parliament regretted the fact that women working with their spouses within family businesses still did not have official status in some Member States. It asked the Member States immediately to look into this matter and to organize campaigns, pending the introduction of such a status, with women's organizations, the professions, independent entrepreneurs and SMUs, with a view to informing the women concerned and their spouses of their legal status. They should also be informed about all the possibilities made available through voluntary regulations on the basis of company law and the laws on inherited wealth and inheritance which might improve their legal status. As regards Community legislation, aside from the 'mainstreaming' dimension, the 'gender perspective' concept (consideration of the gender dimension and possible repercussions on situations and policies) should be included. Parliament also called on the Commission to reach agreement on priority action concerning the principle of mainstreaming in specifically targeted Social Fund actions that could be assessed according to specific criteria. In addition, it underlined the fact that this principle should be taken into consideration during the negotiations surrounding the next enlargement. Finally, it asked that, within the Commission itself, each unit in the Directorate-Generals appoint an official to ensure that the 'mainstreaming' criteria were being correctly applied.