Basic information

1997/2028(COS) COS - Procedure on a strategy paper (historic)	Procedure completed
Equal Opportunities for women and men in the Union. 1996 report **Subject** 4.10.04 Gender equality	

Key players

European Parliament	**Committee responsible**	**Rapporteur**	**Appointed**
	FEMM Women's Rights	KESTELIJN-SIERENS Marie-Paule (Mimi) (ELDR)	20/03/1997
	Committee for opinion	**Rapporteur for opinion**	**Appointed**
	JURI Legal Affairs, Citizens' Rights		
Council of the European Union			

Key events

Date	Event	Reference	Summary
12/02/1997	Non-legislative basic document published	COM(1996)0650	Summary
21/02/1997	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
23/07/1997	Vote in committee		Summary
23/07/1997	Committee report tabled for plenary	A4-0257/1997	
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	1997/2028(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/4/08651

Documentation gateway

European Parliament

Document type	Committee	Reference	Date	Summary
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A4-0257/1997 OJ C 304 06.10.1997, p. 0006	23/07/1997	
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T4-0432/1997 OJ C 304 06.10.1997, p. 0025-0045	16/09/1997	Summary

European Commission

Document type	Reference	Date	Summary
Non-legislative basic document	COM(1996)0650	12/02/1997	Summary
Non-legislative basic document	COM(1999)0106	05/03/1999	

Other institutions and bodies

Institution/body	Document type	Reference	Date	Summary
EESC	Economic and Social Committee: opinion, report	CES0770/1997 OJ C 296 29.09.1997, p. 0024	09/07/1997	Summary

Equal Opportunities for women and men in the Union. 1996 report

1997/2028(COS) - 16/09/1997 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

In adopting the report by Mrs Marie-Paule KESTELIJN-SIERENS (ELDR, B) on the Commission's first Annual Report on equal opportunities, Parliament regretted the lack of evaluation and analysis. It called on the Commission to ensure that its next report included: - a greater focus on developments in the year in question, - more examples illustrating the situation in Member States, - a glossary of terminology in the field of equal opportunities, - greater analysis of the issues so that the report could form the basis of a debate on future strategy. In addition, Parliament hoped that the next report would give special attention to the consequences of enlargement with reference to the acquis communautaire in terms of equal opportunities. It hoped, in particular, that the Commission would present an annual progress report on mainstreaming (integration of equal opportunities into all policies) and that: - new Community legislation would contain a gender-impact assessment, - Member States and the Council would step up their monitoring of the application of the principle of mainstreaming, - the Commission would establish the structures and provide the funding necessary for the application of mainstreaming. As regards the Beijing Conference, Parliament regretted that the Annual Report did not give a comprehensive overview of steps taken in Member States to implement the Platform for Action established in Beijing. It consequently called for this Platform for Action to become the frame of reference for the implementation of policies promoting the role of women in the Union. It asked that, given the decline in the number of women participating in decision-making, policies should be implemented in order to correct this trend in Member States. It also called on the Commission to consider in its next report the obstacles to women's access to decision-making posts and, in particular, to give details, in its 1997 report, of the specific situation of women within Community institutions. As regards the economy, Parliament considered that men and women should be treated equally in terms of taxation and social benefits. It called on the Commission to put forward a proposal to amend Directive 86/613 on equal treatment for self-employed women and men, with a view to guaranteeing the visibility of and professional status for women who help in family businesses. It called on the Commission once more to indicate the steps which had been taken involving the principle of 'equal pay for work of equal value' in the Member States and to ensure that measures were adopted to end this split in the labour market. It was important to put an end to this situation of exclusion in which women found themselves. As regards combining work and family life, Parliament called on the Member States to find ways of introducing more flexibility into the labour market. However, this flexibility should not adversely affect women, who may continue to be

available in large numbers on the labour market. Finally, as regards women's rights, Parliament was satisfied with the new Article 6a in the Treaty of Amsterdam on combating sexual, racial and ethnic discrimination and hoped that, on this basis, measures would be taken to combat racism involving female immigrants.

Equal Opportunities for women and men in the Union. 1996 report

1997/2028(COS) - 12/02/1997 - Non-legislative basic document

OBJECTIVE: This first annual report on equal opportunities for women and men in the European Union aims to review the advances which have been achieved by the Union and its Member States with regard to equal opportunities for women and men. It is also an instrument for monitoring the equal opportunities policies provided by Community mainstreaming (application across the board of the principle of equality in all Community policies). SUBSTANCE: This report is the first to cover Community policy on equal opportunities as a whole. It is divided into two parts: - scope and challenges of the fourth Community Action Programme on equal opportunities and description of the policies and situation at national level in the various sectors, - advances of the Beijing World Conference on Women. According to the report, policy in the field of equal opportunities between the sexes is in a transitional phase of renewal. Implementation strategies have not advanced at the same pace as awareness of the need for new methods and approaches to equal opportunities. In the long term the Commission advocates that the principle of equality is taken into account in all the Community's policies and objectives, even if the results of this policy are felt only very gradually (mainstreaming). The communication makes a certain number of observations on various sectors of economic and social life: - labour market: in this sector the report notes an increased number of women in jobs despite the discrimination which persists in all areas of employment. Women tend to be grouped tightly in a narrow spectrum of professions and employment areas, in particular in the service industries. They also tend to move more easily from one category of employment to another and are clearly more affected by unemployment than men: since the 1980s the level of unemployment among women has always remained high and since 1995 the proportion of women who are long-term unemployed amounts to 50% of the female work force. Women are also most affected by atypical work, in particular in the services sector where the majority of part-time jobs are held by women. Lastly, the increase in the number of women in the work force has not reduced the inequality in pay (on average women earn about 20% less than men for the same job); - family life and working life: responsibility for young children places a block on the achievement of the principle of equality between the sexes. While the level of mothers' participation in the labour force differs considerably from country to country it is strongly affected by the presence of children; - balanced participation in decision-making: the general trend over the last ten years has been for the number of women in decision-making posts to decrease despite an important change in their status role and contribution. The Nordic countries have shown a consistent track record in electing a larger number of women to decision-making posts while in the Union as a whole there has been an increase of 4% of women elected to the lower houses and 2.6% to the upper houses. At government level the general improvement is shown by the fact that average political participation by women has increased from 11% during the 1980s to 16% today.

Equal Opportunities for women and men in the Union. 1996 report

1997/2028(COS) - 09/07/1997 - Economic and Social Committee: opinion, report

The adoption of this first, comprehensive report on equal opportunities is not only a welcome complement to existing Community policy, but above all marks a new, constructive step in the development of a general and coherent EU equal opportunities policy. It is therefore a very laudable initiative with which the ESC is particularly pleased.Clearly one aim is to provide a way of looking at the impact of Community policy in the Member States. And in relation to a number of areas the Commission does this. For example the exercise has been successful in relation to EC structural policy and the implementation of the Structural Funds. But in other areas there is room for improvement (childcare, exercise of rights). It may be because of the nature and layout of the report that there is little (critical) evaluation of the Community's own policy. The form of report which the ESC would like to see offers more opportunities for this for the future. The focus of the report on equal opportunities is too narrow. It gives the impression that women already have equality as far as rights are concerned. But both aspects are essential; equal rights are the basis and equal opportunities the next step. The Community is increasingly resorting to all kinds of non-binding instruments in order to give form to Community law. It seems that the Commission assumes that recommendations, for example, also entail commitments for the Member States.