Basic information

2006/2132(INI) INI - Own-initiative procedure	Procedure completed
Equality between women and men: roadmap 2006-2010 **Subject** 4.10.04 Gender equality 4.10.04.01 Programmes and actions for gender equality	

Key players

European Parliament

Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
FEMM Women's Rights and Gender Equality	SARTORI Amalia (PPE-DE)	24/04/2006

Committee for opinion	Rapporteur for opinion	Appointed
AFET Foreign Affairs	The committee decided not to give an opinion.	
DEVE Development	VALENCIANO Elena (PSE)	11/07/2006
EMPL Employment and Social Affairs	ZIMMER Gabriele (GUE /NGL)	15/03/2006
ENVI Environment, Public Health and Food Safety	The committee decided not to give an opinion.	
ITRE Industry, Research and Energy	EK Lena (ALDE)	20/06/2006
LIBE Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs	SEGELSTRÖM Inger (PSE)	20/06/2006

Council of the European Union

Council configuration	Meetings	Date
Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs	2767	2006-11-30

European Commission

Commission DG	Commissioner
Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion	ŠPIDLA Vladimír

Key events

Date	Event	Reference	Summary
01/03/2006	Non-legislative basic document published	COM(2006)0092	Summary
15/06/2006	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
30/11/2006	Resolution/conclusions adopted by Council		Summary
24/01/2007	Vote in committee		Summary
08/02/2007	Committee report tabled for plenary	A6-0033/2007	
12/03/2007	Debate in Parliament		
13/03/2007	Decision by Parliament	T6-0063/2007	Summary
13/03/2007	Results of vote in Parliament		
13/03/2007	End of procedure in Parliament		

Technical information

Procedure reference	2006/2132(INI)
Procedure type	INI - Own-initiative procedure
Procedure subtype	Strategic initiative
Legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 55
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	FEMM/6/37570

Documentation gateway

European Parliament

Document type	Committee	Reference	Date	Summary
Committee draft report		PE378.533	06/09/2006	
Committee opinion	EMPL	PE376.633	10/10/2006	
Amendments tabled in committee		PE380.641	12/10/2006	
Committee opinion	LIBE	PE376.662	24/10/2006	
Committee opinion	DEVE	PE378.600	07/11/2006	
Committee opinion	ITRE	PE378.679	14/11/2006	
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A6-0033/2007	08/02/2007	
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T6-0063/2007	13/03/2007	Summary

European Commission

Document type	Reference	Date	Summary
Non-legislative basic document	COM(2006)0092	01/03/2006	Summary
Document attached to the procedure	SEC(2006)0275	01/03/2006	
Follow-up document	SEC(2007)0537	23/04/2007	Summary
Follow-up document	SEC(2008)0338	12/03/2008	Summary
Follow-up document	COM(2008)0760	26/11/2008	Summary
Follow-up document	SEC(2009)1113	31/07/2009	Summary

Equality between women and men: roadmap 2006-2010

2006/2132(INI) - 12/03/2008 - Follow-up document

This document is the second work programme since the adoption of the Road Map on gender equality for the period 2006-2010. It presents the main conclusions from the Commission for 2007 and its commitments for 2008.

Main conclusions and guidelines for 2008

Undeniable progress has been made 18 months after the adoption of the Road Map. The Commission supported the Member States' capacity to take account of gender equality in their policies. In the context of the Lisbon Strategy and the open method of coordination in the field of social protection and social inclusion, Member States have developed their tools which aim to integrate gender equality issues. These actions have been strengthened by more specific measures aimed to promote female entrepreneurship. The **promotion of female participation in the workplace** has been enhanced due to a **better conciliation between professional and family and private life**. This promotion has been noted in key sectors such as scientific research and the information society. Actions concerned the **position of women in the decision-making process** in education programmes and in the field of information society. New policy cohesion operational programmes incorporated the objectives set out in the Road Map.

The European Union's external policy has continued to promote the role of women in development cooperation, humanitarian aid, international organisations, and negotiations with partner countries, the Euro-Mediterranean partners, neighbourhood policy and external trade.

50 years of Community legislation in the field of equality was celebrated in 2007.

The European Year of Equality for All gave a boost to equality and to actions aiming to fight against multiple discrimination to which women are often victims.

The Road Map set out a coherent framework for all the Commission's commitments in the field of gender equality.

However, the analysis of actions carried out show that the **integration of gender equality issues varies according to the policies**. Policies are not always neutral as regards men and women. More effort should be made in areas where gender equality is not traditionally considered important.

In order to reinforce the Union's commitments to reduce gender inequality, it is important to raise awareness among the participating parties. Gender equality should reinforced in the drafting and in the monitoring of policies, in particular by providing greater support to the implementation of impact assessments according to gender and by examining the possibilities of considering the gender dimension in the budgetary process.

The services are invited to make actions more visible in policy areas, notably in view of the report which will be carried out in 2008 on the state of implementation of the Road Map.

Equality between women and men: roadmap 2006-2010

2006/2132(INI) - 31/07/2009 - Follow-up document

This Commission Staff Working Paper provides a summary of the 20092010 Work Programme of the Roadmap for equality between women and men (20062010).

Recall: the Roadmap for equality between women and men (2006-2010), adopted in March 2006, defined the Commission's commitments to gender equality for the period 2006-2010. To monitor the implementation of the Roadmap actions, two work programmes were drawn up, and a mid-term progress report was adopted (all summaries in the previous follow-up documents).

This document is the **third Commission Work Programme** covering the period 20092010. It is drawn up in the context of a severe economic downturn, which has a significant impact on employment and social prospects, and entails the risk that the situation of women, in particular, will be affected. In this context, fierce competition for public spending could lead to a redefinition of priorities in the Union, and to less attention being devoted to gender equality policies.

However, as indicated in the mid-term progress report, the Roadmap is starting to pay dividends (see summary of 26/11/2008) and shows that it has a certain impact in order to ensure better visibility of Community actions in this area.

State of affairs and actions to be implemented: since the adoption of the last Roadmap work programme, there have been new achievements with regard to the inclusion of gender considerations in some new areas such as State aid and audio-visual media services.

However, the economic downturn represents both an opportunity and a potential threat for women's employment and gender equality. While unemployment seems to hit the male sectors hardest (construction work, finance etc.) in the first instance, highly feminised services (e.g. public services, health, education) may be next if the crisis worsens.

The Commission therefore considers that it will be important to pay attention to the **gender impacts when designing policies both at EU and at national level to respond to the crisis** because, apart from the unemployment situation, previous crises have also had an impact on women's access to credit, to education, and have increased household work. In this regard, the situation of women in developing countries also requires very special attention.

There also needs to be a focus on combating stereotypes and on the segregated labour market, and also on achieving a better balance between the genders in education and in the choice of a career in the labour market to avoid unemployment impacting only one of the genders in the future.

An additional challenge will be to evaluate progress and assess the contribution of the current Roadmap to gender equality policies with a view to the preparation of the future strategy (**after 2010**).

Lastly, note that the Commissioners' group on fundamental rights, anti-discrimination and equal opportunities held an extraordinary meeting on the occasion of the 2009 International Women's Day to take stock of the implementation of 2006-2010 Roadmap on equality between women and men. The meeting was attended by several representatives, including President Barroso who confirmed the Commission's commitments to push the gender agenda forward. While noting that gender issues have progressed in all Commission policies, such as employment, education, health, external relations, he stressed that the Commission should remain vigilant and should continue to develop its action **until gender equality is a reality**. In this context, the future Commission framework for gender equality should provide a holistic response to the new challenges, particularly those that result as a consequence of the economic crisis.

A conference was organised to reflect upon the future strategy in this area (20112015). It stressed that delivering of tangible results on gender equality depends largely on the Member States and on synergies between all actors involved in policy making. The new framework will have to consider how to create the conditions for combining efforts in order to achieve gender equality.

Equality between women and men: roadmap 2006-2010

2006/2132(INI) - 23/04/2007 - Follow-up document

Established less than a year after the launch of the road map for equality between men and women 2006-2010, the 2007 work programme presents the main outcomes of 2006 and the envisaged actions for 2007 for the six priority areas:

- achieving equal economic independence for women and men;

- enhancing reconciliation of work, private and family life;

- promoting equal participation of women and men in decision-making;

- eradicating gender-based violence and trafficking;

- eliminating gender sterotypes in society;

- promoting gender equality outside the EU.

According to the Commission working paper, the adoption of the road map has given a strategic framework to the realisation of Commission actions on equality between men and women. Most of the actions proposed were launched in 2006. The European Pact for Gender Equality demonstrates the commitment at the highest political level in the Member States to increase efforts to achieve gender equality in partnership with the Commission.

The report shows that progress has been made to promote equality into different EU policies, the Lisbon Strategy and the open method of coordination. Considerable progress has also been made to include the gender dimension in the new programmes covered by the 2007-2013 financial perspectives as well as in those concerning freedom, justice and security.

In the context of the Euro Mediterranean Partnership, the adoption of ministerial conclusions and an action framework strengthens the role of women in the Mediterranean society which acts as an important political commitment.

Lastly, the regulation concerning the setting up of the Institute for Gender Equality Institute was adopted in 2006.

In 2007, the Commission will continue with the actions set out and will launch new actions such as:

- the setting up of the Institute for Gender Equality will be a priority as will the European Pact for Gender Equality, aimed at enhancing women's participation in the labour market - particularly in terms of job quality -, fostering measures to improve work-life balance for women and men, and promoting gender equality. The Pact should build on already existing objectives, targets and instruments within the Lisbon process;
- gender equality will be take into account in the implementation of the cohesion policy programmes 2007-2013 cofinanced by the structural funds;
- actions set out in the road map will be supported by the "Progress" programme as regards education and training, the 7th Research Framework Programme, the programme for innovation and competitiveness, the Daphne III, and the new instrument promoting human rights and democracy;
- gender issues will be taken into account in the EU strategy for sustainable development;

2007 marks the 50th Anniversary of the Treaty of Rome and community policy on gender equality. This will also be the year for Equality of All. Every opportunity should be seized to promote gender equality.

Equality between women and men: roadmap 2006-2010

2006/2132(INI) - 13/03/2007 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution based on the own-initiative report drafted by Amalia **SARTORI** (EPP-ED, IT) in response to the Commission communication entitled 'A Roadmap for equality between women and men'. It noted the Commission's determination to pursue the equal opportunities strategy on a multi-annual basis but pointed out that the Roadmap failed to specify the responsibilities of the Commission and the Member States as regards implementation and information to citizens. Parliament also objected that the Commission did not specify the funds that would be allocated to implement its recommendations.

The Commission was asked to draw up an overall framework for the assessment of policies and programmes to promote gender equality, including resulting national policies. Parliament felt that the European Institute for Gender Equality needed to be set up quickly so as to enable progress under the Roadmap to be constantly monitored. It called on the Commission to treat gender equality policy not just as a priority for the EU, but above all, as an indispensable requirement of respect for the rights of the individual. Such an approach should translate into an effort to coordinate and strengthen European and national measures providing for the legal protection of women and children. This applies particularly where women had been reduced to slavery or in cases involving crimes in the name of honour or tradition, of violence, trafficking, female genital mutilation, forced marriage, polygamy, or deprivation of identity (for example when women are forced to wear the burka, the niqab, or a mask), the aim being zero tolerance. The Commission was asked to carry out research on the underlying causes of gender-based violence and, provided that a legal basis is determined, and present a proposal for a directive on combating violence against women. It was also asked to carry out a study on the causal correlation between legislation on prostitution and trafficking for sexual exploitation and to disseminate best practices, including actions taken relating to the demand side of such activities. Member States should withdraw the licence of doctors who perform genital mutilation.

Parliament went on to stress that respect for women's rights must be an essential condition of the EU's neighbourhood, foreign and development policies. The EU must show greater commitment towards political dialogue with third countries and to giving financial support linked to development, with a view to promoting gender equality. Action should be taken to prevent women from being marginalised as regards development programmes by guaranteeing them equal access to labour markets, to permanent and better quality jobs, and to means of production such as land, credit and technology.

Member States and the Commission were asked to take practical steps to promote the emancipation and economic and social integration of migrant women. This included measures to foster language skills and understanding of the rights and duties deriving from the laws applying in host countries (which, among other things, prohibit polygamy under the cloak of family reunification) and from the EU's core values.

Parliament noted that the challenges faced by the Member States and the EU in the area of gender equality were increasing as a result of intensified global economic competition and the subsequent demand for an ever more flexible and mobile labour force. Women continued to suffer from social, employment and other forms of discrimination and these requirements were likely to have a stronger impact on women than on men. The report called for national measures to help women enter the labour market on a footing of equal dignity and equal pay for equal work and for the implementation of concrete strategies to reinforce female entrepreneurship. Parliament asked Member States to appoint a national official to take charge of gender equality for the purposes of implementing the Lisbon strategy, whose task should be to help draw up and revise the respective national plans and monitor their implementation so as to encourage gender mainstreaming and budgeting as regards the policies and targets laid down in the plans.

Parliament pointed out that the gender pay gap is still as high as 15%. It called on the Commission, as a matter of priority, to revise Council Directive 75 /117/EEC, especially those points relating to labour inspectorates and the legal remedies available in the event of discrimination.

Lastly, the Commission was urged to encourage the creation of policies to reconcile family and working life, by ensuring, inter alia, that the cost of motherhood is borne by society as a whole, that care services and assistance are made more accessible and flexible, that fathers are actively encouraged to make use of available flexible working time options and take on household chores and family work (for example, by laying down an initial form of compulsory paternity leave) and by defining alternative methods of ensuring that women's pensions are covered where their professional careers have been too short or interrupted because of their increased family responsibilities.

Equality between women and men: roadmap 2006-2010

2006/2132(INI) - 01/03/2006 - Non-legislative basic document

PURPOSE: to present a Roadmap on equality between women and men covering the period 2006-2010.

CONTENT: the current Roadmap is based on six priority areas for EU action in the field of gender equality for the period 2006-2010. For each area, it identifies priority objectives and actions. The Commission cannot alone achieve these objectives, as in many areas the centre of gravity for action lies at Member State level. Thus, this Roadmap represents the Commission's commitment to driving the gender equality agenda forward, reinforcing partnership with Member states, and other actors.

This Roadmap builds on the experience of the Framework Strategy for equality between women and men[1] for the period 2001-2005. It combines the launch of new actions and the reinforcement of successful existing activities. It reaffirms the dual approach of gender equality based on gender mainstreaming (the promotion of gender equality in all policy areas and activities) and **specific measures**.

Gender inequality in the EU will be tackled by 21 specific activities over the next five years. Commission activities include helping to set up a new EUR 50 million European institute for gender equality, reviewing all existing EU gender equality law, increasing awareness of gender inequality, ensuring gender equality is considered in all policies and pressing for better statistics. The roadmap aims to, inter alia, tackle the pay gap between men and women, support better work/life balance, eliminate violence and trafficking, support gender budgeting and promote gender equality both within and outside the EU.

The roadmap sets out six priority areas for action in the 2006-2010 period:

- achieving equal economic independence for women and men;
- enhancing reconciliation of work, private and family life;
- promoting equal participation of men and women in decision-making;
- eradicating gender-based violence and trafficking;
- eliminating gender stereotypes in society and;
- promoting gender equality outside the EU.

Each objective is followed by specific key actions designed to bring the goal nearer. Actions include:

- increasing awareness of gender equality in schools;
- promoting female entrepreneurship;
- establishing in 2007 an EU network of women in economic and political decision-making positions;
- publishing a Communication on the gender pay gap and highlighting gender issues during the 2007 European Year of Equal Opportunities for all.

Financing: as well as the funds for the new gender institute, the proposed new EUR 650 million PROGRESS programme will fund some of the activities outlined in the roadmap. EU Structural funds and financial programmes in various policy areas will also help to provide funding for both roadmap and other EU gender equality activities.

The new network of national gender equality bodies will be established under the provisions of EU gender equality Directive 2002/73/EC. They promote, analyse, monitor and fight discrimination on grounds of sex in Member States, by providing assistance to victims of discrimination and helping them to pursue their complaints.

Equality between women and men: roadmap 2006-2010

2006/2132(INI) - 30/11/2006

Following the Presidency conference on men and gender equality in Helsinki on 5 and 6 October 2006, the Council adopted the following conclusions. In particular, it:

- notes that, in order to improve the status of women and promote gender equality, more attention should be paid to how men are involved in the achievement of gender equality, as well as to the positive impact of gender equality for men and for the well-being of society as a whole;
- notes that gender inequalities and imbalances between men and women still exist;
- stresses that the participation of men and boys in achieving gender equality must be consistent with the empowerment of women and girls, and that resources for gender equality initiatives for men and boys should not compromise equal opportunity initiatives and resources for women and girls;
- confirms the importance of the effective and overall implementation of the gender mainstreaming strategy, which implies that the interests and needs of both men and women are taken into account in order to enhance the appropriateness, quality and effectiveness of policies and measures to achieve gender equality;

- recognises that issues related to men and gender equality have not yet been looked at as an entirety, and that the question of men and gender equality should go beyond the reconciliation of professional and private life;

- acknowledges the need to tailor measures to the specific situations experienced by men and women in different groups or in different life situations, depending on their family situation, age, health, ethnicity, social background, sexual orientation, disability etc;

- encourages the future European Institute for Gender Equality and the different national gender equality bodies to investigate how various circumstances, opportunities, structures and policies affect both men and women, boys and girls;

- encourages the development, from early childcare and education, of pedagogic practices aimed at eliminating gender stereotypes, also paying attention to educational methods and tools that improve the capacity and potential of boys and men to care for themselves and others as a means of contributing to a gender-balanced participation in society;

- encourages the Member States to pay attention to the promotion of gender equality, as well as how men relate to it, through debate and information on gender stereotypes and the relations between men and women, especially with regard to young people;

- urges the Member States to reinforce institutional structures for the promotion of gender equality, both in the public and private sectors, and to also support men's involvement in promoting and achieving gender equality;

- urges the Commission and Member States to ensure equal career opportunities for both sexes, taking into account the dominance of men in decision-making positions, and to take measures aimed at encouraging boys and men to choose education and employment in female-dominated fields and vice-versa with a view to dismantling gender segregation in the labour market; in this context, invites Member States and the Commission to take concrete actions towards eliminating the gender pay gap;

- stresses that the recognition of the gender dimension in health is an essential part of EU health policies and that health promotion projects and services should be tailored, as appropriate, to women's or men's needs;

- acknowledges that the vast majority of gender-based acts of violence are perpetrated by men and urges the Member States and the Commission to combine punitive measures against the perpetrators with preventive measures targeted especially at young men and boys and to set up specific programmes for victims as well as for offenders, in particular in the case of domestic violence;

- recognises the importance of providing a wide range of policies to reconcile professional and private life for both men and women at all levels of employment, taking into account the great variety of family types in today's society and the child's best interests, in order to support an equal sharing of domestic and caring responsibilities and tasks between women and men;

- urges the Member States to accelerate progress towards the achievement of the Barcelona targets on childcare facilities by 2010 and to take concrete measures to encourage men to share with women parenting and other care responsibilities, by encouraging them to take up their family leave entitlements, including through the development of parental leave entitlements for fathers, financial incentives as well as information and awareness-raising initiatives;

- recognises the crucial role that the social partners and companies play in reconciliation policies, in promoting awareness-raising schemes in companies and the take-up of flexible work options, especially by men, including in male-dominated professions.

Lastly, the Council invites the Member States to pay attention, when undertaking measures and projects to promote gender equality, to taking both genders into account. The Member States and the Commission are invited to identify which issues and challenges relate to men and gender equality by further developing gender-related research and the exchange of good practices, in particular with a view to enhancing the active participation of men in, and commitment to, policies aimed at achieving gender equality at national and EU level, and also with a view to developing greater understanding of the processes that lead to an uneven distribution of power in decision-making.

Equality between women and men: roadmap 2006-2010

2006/2132(INI) - 26/11/2008 - Follow-up document

PURPOSE: presentation of a mid-term progress report on the roadmap for equality between women and men (2006-2010).

CONTENT: 50 years of Community policy promoting equality have improved the situation for women. However, inequalities persist in a number of areas, and developments, particularly in the context of globalisation and demographic changes, have created new challenges to be faced in order to achieve gender equality.

It is the responsibility of the European Union and the Member States to improve the equality situation in the context of concerted action. The roadmap adopted in March 2006presented the commitments by the Commission to gender equality for the period 2006-2010.

In the roadmap, the Commission announced the actions it intended to take in six policy areas: 1) equal economic independence for women and men, 2) reconciliation of private and professional life, 3) equal representation in decision-making, 4) eradication of all forms of gender-related violence, 5) elimination of gender stereotypes, 6) promotion of gender equality in external and development policies. It also undertakes to monitor and evaluate the roadmap.

This mid-term report describes how, since March 2006, actions have contributed to achieving the roadmap objectives. A final evaluation of the roadmap is scheduled for 2010.

Achievement of the roadmap objectives

1. **Achieving equal economic independence for women and men**: the rate of employment among women in the Union will very probably reach the target of 60% in 2010. However, the pay gap between women and men remains wide (15%). A number of the initiatives set out in the roadmap have been taken in order to take greater account of equality issues in the new 2008-2010 cycle of the **strategy for growth and employment**. Analysis of national measures to implement equality policy under the Lisbon strategy has shown that insufficient attention has been paid to this policy. In order to increase participation in employment, the workforce potential of women needs to be fully exploited and all economic operators need to be more committed. The Commission has analysed the difficulties encountered by women in becoming entrepreneurs and, in particular, has supported the network of **female entrepreneurs**. It recently adopted a Regulation which, in principle, extends the granting of state aid in particular to new enterprises created by women.Practices aimed at encouraging greater equality between women and men have also been supported in the context of corporate social responsibility. Other initiatives have been taken in the field of social protection and social inclusion. The needs of women and men in the field of health and access to care have been taken into consideration. Discussion of the future of policies to combat discriminationused experience acquired through the European Year of Equal Opportunities for All in 2007 to highlight the need to combat all forms of discrimination. Actions aimed at the Roma community also showed the importance of integrating equality issues into all the instruments used. The Commission has called on the Member States to integrate equality objectives to facilitate access to employment, education and training, promote participation in decision-making and strengthen the reconciliation of working and family life.
2. **Enhancing reconciliation of work, private and family life**: legislative proposalshave been adopted in order on the one hand to reinforce the right of female workers to maternity leaveand, on the other, to ensure equal treatment for self-employed workers and assisting spouses.The Commission has noted the progress made by the Member States in improving the availability of childcare facilities (for 90% of children between the age of three and school age and for 33% of children aged under three). It noted in its report that only a minority of Member States has achieved this objective.Measures for developing childcare structures have been recommended and negotiations have begun on parental leave.
3. **Gender-balanced participation in decision-making**: the Commission has supported action by the Member States in this field; it has collected, analysed and disseminated comparable data and encouraged networking among stakeholders. To this end, a European network to promote women in decision-making posts in politics and economics has been established. For the first time, the network has brought together representatives of European networks in the field with the aim of acting in harmony. In the public research sector, the Union has set a target of 25% for women in leading positions. This target has been translated into a series of actions. Education and training programmes contain measures to reduce imbalances in education and in scientific and technical careers. The 7th Framework Programme for research takes gender equality into account. Women's career trends have been analysed in order to promote women's role in public research institutions, in particular through work by experts on decision-making in the research field. The preponderance of men among workers in the new communication technologies (NCT) sector has been highlighted, and a strategy has been proposed for encouraging women to commit to careers linked to NTC.
4. **Eradicating gender-based violence and trafficking in human beings**: actions to prevent and combat all forms of violence, particularly against women, will be pursued under the Daphne III programme. The large number of acts of violence among young people has also led the Commission to include the combating of violence against women among projects under the "Youth in action" programme. The Union's action plan to combat trafficking in human beings encourages the use of all instruments. A common framework for defining indicators and collecting data on trafficking in human beings has been drawn up in order to gain a better understanding of its scope. In addition, the Commission has presented recommendations on identifying and assisting victims of trafficking and supported the principal players and actions such as the Anti-Trafficking Day.
5. **Eliminating gender stereotypes**: sexist stereotypes influence the choice of education pathways and, as the Commission has stressed, result in women frequently being more represented in lower-paid professions. The objectives set by the European Council aim to increase by 15% the number of graduates in mathematics, sciences and technology while at the same time reducing the imbalance between women and men. In order to achieve these objectives and reduce stereotypes in general, gender equality has been integrated as a priority into Community education and training programmes. Stereotyped perceptions, particularly regarding women's ability to carry out certain tasks within undertakings, have led the Commission to launch awareness-raising actions in the business sector.
6. **Promoting gender equality outside the EU**: the Union's strategy for gender equality in development policy, to be followed by an action plan, has led to greater account being taken of gender equality in development cooperation and the EU's external relations. Promoting equality in individual country strategies drawn up under the 10th European Development Fund was supported by the drawing up of programming guidelines and the monitoring of equality issues in national plans. Gender equality was also reinforced under the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership. The new European instrument for democracy and human rights provides for support for equality and women's rights in a number of fields, particularly the participation of women in politics and combating domestic violence and genital mutilation. Other initiatives have also been taken in cooperation with the United Nations and the ILO on decent work in developing countries.

Conclusion: the roadmap provides an ambitious political framework for promoting gender equality in all the Union's policies and activities. There has been significant progress, and much more specific account has been taken of equality objectives in all policies recorded in the roadmap. The most significant advances appear to be linked to the Union's political commitments, where quantified common objectives guide Community action. However, progress is uneven and highlights the need to continue to act until 2010. A particular difficulty encountered in implementing equality policy is that of providing a clear idea of the challenges it raises. Awareness-raising and adherence to the social and political challenges of the equality objectives should be strengthened, which requires a strong political will. Balanced participation of women in all decision-making bodies, both economic and political, must be promoted at Union level and within structures managed by the Commission.

In 2010 the Commission will evaluate the results achieved and prepare a strategy for following up the roadmap. A conference will be organised in the spring of 2009 to assess the implementation of the roadmap, mobilise policies and raise awareness among players of the challenges of gender equality.