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REPORT

on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men in the European Union
(2003/2011(INI))

Committee on Women's Rights and Equal Opportunities

Rapporteur: Joke Swiebel

PR_INI

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PROCEDURAL PAGE

At the sitting of 16 January 2003 the President of Parliament announced that the Committee on Women's Rights and Equal Opportunities had been authorised to draw up an own-initiative report, under Rule 163 of the Rules of Procedure, on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men in the European Union.

At the sitting of 15 May 2003 the President of Parliament announced that he had also asked the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs for its opinion

The committee appointed Joke Swiebel rapporteur at its meeting of 20 May 2003.

It considered the draft report at its meetings of 11 September, 3 November and 26 November 2003.

At the last meeting it adopted the draft resolution unanimously.

The following were present for the vote: Anna Karamanou (chairman), Marianne Eriksson (vice-chairman), Olga Zrihen Zaari. (vice-chairman), Joke Swiebel (rapporteur), Regina Bastos, Armonia Bordes, Ilda Figueiredo (for Feleknas Uca), Marialiese Flemming (for Christa Klaß), Geneviève Fraisse, Fiorella Ghilardotti, Koldo Gorostiaga Atxalandabaso, Lissy Gröner, Catherine Guy-Quint (for Marie-Hélène Gillig, pursuant to Rule 153(2)), Mary Honeyball, Rodi Kratsa-Tsagaropoulou, Thomas Mann, Miet Smet, Patsy Sørensen, Helena Torres Marques, Elena Valenciano Martínez-Orozco, Anne E.M. Van Lancker (for Christa Prets) and Sabine Zissener.

The opinion of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs is attached.

The report was tabled on 17 December 2003.

DRAFT EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION

on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men in the European Union (2003/2011(INI))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the report from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions entitled: 'Annual Report on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men in the European Union 2002' (COM(2003) 98),
 - having regard to the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council entitled: 'Framework Strategy for Gender Equality - Work Programme for 2003' (COM(2003) 47),
 - having regard to the Community Framework Strategy on Gender Equality (2001-2005)¹, to the Commission's Work Programmes for 2001, 2002 and 2003², and to the Commission's annual reports for 2000, 2001 and 2002³,
 - having regard to Articles 2, 3(2) and 141 of the EC Treaty and to Article 23 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union⁴,
 - having regard to Rule 163 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Women's Rights and Equal Opportunities and the opinion of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs (A5-0481/2003),
- A. whereas the Commission is seeking gradually to attain the objectives laid down in the Framework Strategy for the period 2001-2005 and will involve all its departments in that endeavour,
- B. whereas the objectives laid down are not defined in measurable terms, and whereas it is, therefore, difficult to ascertain whether the Commission is actually making any real progress as a result of its activities,
- C. whereas the Commission's annual report for 2002 provides a clear description of the situation and outlines the most significant legal developments in the Member States and in the accession countries, but whereas the report fails to indicate any breach of Community legislation by the current Member States and to provide a proper analysis and assessment of the current situation,
- D. whereas the Structural Funds, and the European Social Fund in particular, must play a complementary role in relation to, and provide the stimulus for, action by the Member States, at both national and local level, to implement measures to promote women's

¹ COM (2000) 335.

² COM(2001) 119 and COM(2001) 773.

³ COM(2001) 179 and COM(2002) 258.

⁴ OJ C 364, 18.12.2000, p. 1.

participation in the labour market,

- E. whereas, in the context of the implementation of the European Employment Strategy and with a view to generating full and high-quality employment, the entrepreneurial spirit among women must be supported by specific measures, including targeted training and measures to facilitate access to credit,

Annual Report on Equal Opportunities for 2002

1. Welcomes the efforts made by the Commission to promote equal opportunities for women and men in many policy areas of the Union; regrets, however, that the Economic and Financial Affairs, Competition, Energy and Transport, Taxation and Customs Union, Health and Consumer Protection, Trade, and Enlargement DGs, ECHO (Humanitarian Aid Office), the Budget DG, the Internal Audit Service, the Joint Interpreting and Conference Service, the Translation Service, the Publications Office, the Legal Service and the Press and Communication DG seem to be rather unwilling to incorporate gender mainstreaming into their policies or to undertake new specific policy actions; calls, therefore, on the ten Commissioners with special responsibility in these fields to devote greater attention to the equal opportunities policy in their departments and policy areas and to submit a report to Parliament before 31 December 2004 on the measures which they have taken;
2. Notes with regret - once again - that very little reference is made in this annual report to Commission actions to ensure that current equal opportunities legislation is applied in and by the current Member States and that the Commission's general reports on the application of Community law must be consulted by anyone wishing to acquire information about that matter;
 - takes the view that the annual report on equal opportunities as a policy report cannot provide the total overview that it should unless it includes reports on those actions;
 - calls on the Commission, therefore, to devote a separate chapter of the annual report to equal treatment legislation and to include therein an overview of the transposition into national law of current equal opportunities legislation in the Member States and in the accession countries, of any arrears and shortcomings and of the measures taken by the Commission to remedy the situation;
3. Welcomes the fact that the Action Programme for gender equality was opened up to the accession countries in 2002; calls on the Commission, when granting aid for projects in those countries, to devote specific attention to participation by women themselves, with regard to both the implementation of the projects and the women who are supported by the projects;
4. Calls on the Commission, before the end of its term of office, to provide Parliament with information on the period from 1999 to 2002 inclusive which shows:
 - what percentage of its general aid to the accession countries benefits projects and programmes which target the achievement of gender equality,
 - what actual projects and programmes are involved, and

- how many women in the accession countries benefit therefrom or participate in those projects and programmes;
5. Regrets the fact that the European Union's equal opportunities policy does not appear to be very consistent with the UN policy on equal opportunities for men and women as laid down, for example, in the Platform for Action¹ and that it is not clear from its annual report what activities the Council undertook in this field in 2002; calls, therefore, as a matter of urgency, for:
 - publication of the reports debated by the Council on indicators and benchmarks in various sub-areas,
 - a report from the Council to the European Parliament on the application of the indicators and benchmarks established, so that an assessment may be made of the extent to which the Member States have made progress in the various sub-areas;
 6. Calls on the Member States and the accession countries to give higher priority to the problem of good and affordable childcare facilities so that the objectives established at the Barcelona European Council of providing childcare facilities for 90% of children aged between 3 and the mandatory school age and for 33% of children under three years of age may be attained by 2010;
 7. Calls on the Commission to submit to Parliament an overview of the results achieved by the projects undertaken under the 2001 (Equal pay) and 2002 (Reconciliation of work and family life) priority actions, funded to the tune of EUR 8 million and EUR 7.5 million respectively, and to indicate the extent to which the objectives established - especially a reduction in the pay disparity between men and women in the Union, improvement of access to good and affordable childcare facilities, equal share of care and household responsibilities, encouragement for paternal leave and flexible arrangements - have been attained by these projects;
 8. Calls on the Commission to publish an expanded report on the number of women who have submitted projects or expressions of interest in connection with the European Commission's funding and subsidy schemes for 2001 and 2002 and asks the Commission to indicate exactly how many women have benefited from those schemes;
 9. Calls on the Commission to pursue a policy which will put an end to the disappointing level of women's involvement in and access to the new information and communication technologies, paying particular attention to women at risk of being excluded from the benefits of the information society, such as elderly women, unemployed women and women on low incomes, immigrant women, women who are members of ethnic minorities, women farmers and disabled women, in order to prevent the creation of a two-speed society;
 10. Notes the particularly weak position, in terms of employment rights and social protection, often faced by spouses in rural areas and calls on the Commission and the Member States to pay particular attention to ensuring equal treatment and opportunities in this regard, including the integration into the agricultural industry of the principle of equal pay for

¹ <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/>

work of equal value;

11. Urges the rapid and genuine implementation of the Brussels Declaration on trafficking in human beings and calls on the European Commission to submit to the European Parliament a report on the progress made in that area, using indicators and mechanisms with which progress may be monitored on an ongoing basis; calls, further, on the Commission to carry out a study into the situation of the victims of trafficking who are unable to return to their country of origin because they encounter problems with their families and/or the traffickers; calls on the Commission, further, to give consideration to the manner in which victims of trafficking in human beings who are actually threatened when they return to their country of origin or who have no chance whatsoever of reintegrating themselves in social, welfare or economic terms into their society may still be entitled, on humanitarian grounds, to receive an official document authorising them to reside in the European Union;

Work programme for 2003

12. Regrets the fact that, with regard to the priority actions, the Work Programme for 2003 does no more than reiterate the objectives set out in the Work Programme for 2002; is delighted, the other hand, that the Commission Staff Working Document does give a very accurate picture of the policy actions to be undertaken in the various Commission departments; encourages the Commission to continue to draw up such broadly-based internal programmes and also to have an analysis and assessment carried out of the results achieved;
13. Hopes that the Commission is aware that this Work Programme and the underlying Commission document have a marked in-house bias and are virtually unknown outside the Commission; takes the view that the Commission should play a more active role in promoting the dissemination of these documents and in keeping its website up to date, so that Ministries and authorities in the Member States may follow this good example;
14. Calls on the Commission to explain why, despite the intention laid down in Decision 2000/407/EC of 19 June 2000, it appointed fewer women to serve on committees and expert groups in 2002 than it did in 2001, with the result that the disparity between the number of men and women in committees and expert groups became larger, and calls on the Commission, further, to submit a report on the reasons which led to the other institutions doing better in this respect and appointing more women in 2002;
15. Recalls the European Commission's feasibility study relating to the European Gender Institute and calls on the Commission to inform the European Parliament of its views on that subject and of the steps that it is planning to take;
16. Emphasises that, in the final phase before accession in May 2004, the Commission must urge the accession countries to pursue an awareness campaign on gender equality so that they may inform their citizens about their rights and, in so doing, ensure that there is sufficient judicial capacity to overcome disparities in this area and to guarantee that institutional and administrative capacities in this field will be strengthened;
17. Emphasises once again how important it is for the Commission to monitor Member State

compliance with existing equal treatment legislation and calls on the Commission, therefore, to expand the Network of legal experts in the field of gender equality as soon as possible by the inclusion of experts from the accession countries;

18. Emphasises the need for positive action to implement the Framework Strategy on gender equality and, with particular reference to the priorities laid down for 2003/2004 - the inclusion of women in the decision-making process - highlights the need to encourage the presence of women wherever decisions are taken concerning the economy in both the public and private sectors; reiterates the need for the action plan included in the Framework Strategy on equality to concentrate on promoting gender mainstreaming in the economic sectors by means of specific actions and instruments, including gender budgeting;
19. Welcomes the Commission's July 2003 *Options Paper* on the simplification and improvement of legislation in the area of equal treatment between men and women¹ and:
 - calls on the Commission to come to a conclusion as soon as possible, partly on the basis of the responses it receives, on the strategy to be pursued and to set that strategy down in one or more legislative proposals,
 - calls on the Commission, at all events, to take into account the need for those proposals to be in line with Directive 2000/43/EC implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin, Directive 2000/78/EC establishing a general framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation, and Directive 2002/73/EC, as well as a proposal for a directive, yet to be submitted, on equal treatment for men and women outside work;
20. Welcomes the Commission proposal for a draft directive concerning the promotion of the principle of equal treatment for men and women in access to and the supply of goods and services; takes the view, nevertheless, that, in the future, legislation on equal treatment for men and women must be brought into line with legislation to combat racial discrimination and that it must therefore also cover welfare protection, including health care, welfare benefits and education;
21. Is delighted by Commissioner Diamantopoulou's announcement of the publication, in spring 2004, of a Green Paper on the development of a comprehensive anti-discrimination policy; believes that, for various reasons, the European Union must pursue an anti-discrimination policy which provides an equal measure of protection;
22. Is delighted that the Commission has announced its intention to draw up an interim assessment of the Action Programme (2001-2005) in late 2003 and calls for that assessment to be submitted to the European Parliament;
23. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Commission and the Council and to the governments of the Member States and of the accession countries.

¹ http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/news/2003/jul/options_en.pdf

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

The nature of the annual reports on equal opportunities

On 5 March 2003, the Commission published its seventh annual report on equal opportunities for women and men in the European Union (COM(2003) 98). In contrast to what might have been expected from the title, this annual report is not primarily designed to give a detailed picture of the position of women compared with that of men in the Member States, hence the reference to the 2002 Eurostat publication entitled *'The life of women and men in Europe'*. The report aims to give an overview of the main developments and achievements at Member State and European level in 2002 in the area of gender equality. It is, therefore, a policy report. It would be better if that notion were also expressed in the title of the report.

Responsibility for the gender equality policy is shared between the Union and the Member States. That being the case, it is the European Parliament's primary task to quiz the Commission and Council as to what they have done and what they have not done in that area during the year to which the report refers. The measures taken by individual Member States may be discussed in the EP only in so far as they involve cooperation in and compliance with legislation and policy guidelines agreed at EU level. The EP also has a duty to monitor whether the Commission has acted properly in its capacity as 'guardian of the treaties', in other words, if it has, to a sufficient degree, fulfilled its obligations and made sufficient use of its powers, under Article 226 of the EC Treaty, to issue a warning to Member States which have failed to implement EU legislation. Unfortunately, the information set out in the annual report is inadequate for a precise assessment in that area. Despite all the policy plans and legislation, it remains a fact that a woman in the EU earns, on average, 84% of what a man does, that sex discrimination on the labour market is still widespread in the EU and in the accession countries and that the average unemployment rate for women in the EU in 2001 was 2.3% higher than for men.

It goes without saying that Parliament has compared the measures taken (or not taken) by the Commission and Council with the Action Programme (2001-2005) adopted by the Council on 20 December 2000¹ with a view to implementing the Framework Strategy proposed by the Commission on 7 June 2000 (COM(2000) 335). One problem was created by the fact that, in those documents, neither the Council nor the Commission defined the established objectives in measurable terms. At the very most, therefore, the European Parliament will be able to ascertain whether the measures taken have been moving in the same direction as was previously indicated in the policy documents referred to above.

In its Framework Strategy for the period 2001-2005, the Commission introduced a number of devices in order to pursue a coherent policy in this field, such as clear assessment criteria, control instruments, benchmarking, gender analysis and evaluation. However, these aspects are not clearly reflected in the implementation of the Framework Strategy and the reporting thereon, and that makes it impossible to compare projects and the implementation thereof.

¹ OJ L 17, 19.1.2001, p. 22.

We (may) have more to go on in the annual work programmes drawn up by the Commission. Accordingly, in an attempt to compare the policies proposed and those actually implemented, your rapporteur concentrated on the Work Programme for 2002 (COM(2001) 773) and the underlying Commission document (SEC(2001) 1992). The resolution adopted by the EP in this matter (P5-TA 2002-0372 of 4 July 2002) was also taken into consideration, as was the Commission's reaction thereto. All this may seem to be a bureaucratic and dry approach, but it does allow some order to be brought into a plethora of individual communications which are included in those documents.

The Annual Report for 2002

In its Annual Report for 2002, the Commission gives an overview of the new measures in the Member States and the accession countries in various policy areas but fails to provide an analysis of the actual results achieved with those measures. And it is precisely the presentation of the results of the equal opportunities policy which is important if we are to assess whether the Union has chosen the right path with its policy or whether some adjustments to the policy are required. The Commission's seventh annual report on equal opportunities for women and men is structured around the following headings:

1. Gender equality in an enlarged EU
2. Framework Strategy for gender equality
3. Specific policies and actions for gender equality
4. Human rights
5. Perspectives for 2003.

1. Enlargement

Accession negotiations were concluded with ten countries in late 2002, and their accession is scheduled for 1 May 2004. Most of the accession countries are well advanced with their transposition into national law of Community legislation on equal treatment for men and women, but the establishment of institutions and the strengthening of institutional and administrative capacities in this area are still required if implementation of the legislation in full is to be guaranteed. In addition, it is important for women and women's organisations to benefit from the opening up of the action programme on equal treatment for women and men and from the funds available for the accession countries as part of general Commission aid.

2. Framework Strategy

The aim of the Framework Strategy for the period 2001-2005 is to ensure that attention is paid to the issue of equal opportunities in all the Commission's policy areas in order to secure an insight into the Commission's activities and into the impact thereof on the lives of women and men, as well as to promote the balanced representation of both sexes in committees and expert groups. The Framework Strategy is underpinned by an annual work programme in which the priorities and actions of the Commission's departments are laid down.

The Framework Strategy and the Work Programme for 2003 are so comprehensive that it is almost impossible to assess them in detail in this report. Fortunately, in the past, the European Parliament has devoted the requisite attention to various aspects of the Framework Strategy and drawn up outstanding reports on, for example, employment strategy, the Structural Funds,

women and science, and social inclusion.

Your rapporteur decided not to re-hash in this report the views expressed previously by Parliament.

The priority actions set out in the Work Programme for 2002 are:

- impact assessment of policy areas which have not, to date, been gender mainstreamed.
- more systematic collection of gender-desegregated data, and
- awareness-raising and training in the Commission's departments.

The report refers to some successful actions undertaken by the Commission in areas where the integration of the equal opportunities policy had not been achieved. Above all, the setting up of theme-based working parties within departments, the conducting of studies and the organisation of conferences and seminars seemed to be successful. As regards the collection of data on equal treatment for women and men, the Commission continued to develop indicators, including indicators for the enlargement process. Nevertheless, it would appear that the national statistical offices need to devote more attention to the gender-desegregation of statistics, since they form the basis for Community data collection. Various DGs have included gender mainstreaming in their training courses for new officials.

The Annual Report for 2002 shows that the Commission has not succeeded in increasing the number of women appointed to serve on committees and expert groups by comparison with 2001. The target figure of at least 40% representation of either sex was attained only in a very limited number of DGs. The Commission Decision of June 2000 should have put the Commission in a position where it could ensure gender equality, given that, for each post, the Commission, the Member States, the social partners and other bodies were required to put forward four nominees for each post, including at least one man and one woman. Your rapporteur feels that it is important for the Commission to indicate clearly the nomination procedure for committees and expert groups used in 2002 so that lessons may be learned therefrom which may be applied in future years.

3. Specific policy and specific actions

In this chapter of the Annual Report for 2002, attention is paid to the legislative initiatives taken in the Member States as regards measures to combat sexual harassment, to secure equal pay and to promote reconciliation of work and family life. However, no clear information is given as to the extent to which the Member States are breaching current legislation on equal opportunities for women and men. Although the Commission presents an annual report on the application of Community law¹, breaches of legislation on equal treatment are covered in just one very short paragraph. It would be preferable for the Commission to give an account in the annual report of its activities as guardian of the treaties devoted specifically to equal opportunities for women and men.

¹ For example, see COM(2002) 324, Nineteenth Annual Report on Monitoring the Application of Community Law (2001).

Under the Action Programme 2001-2005, the Commission made EUR 8 million available for projects in 2001 targeted on the priority action of equal pay and EUR 7.5 million for 2002, when the priority action was the reconciliation of work and family life. 27 projects were funded in 2001 and 18 in 2002. It is expected that the results for 2001 will be available in 2003. The pay disparity between men and women still exists. What is important is the way in which the Commission will approach industry and employers in order to bring about a real change in pay culture.

4. Human rights

The Brussels Declaration was adopted in September 2002 with a view to tackling the issue of trafficking in human beings. It aims at further development of European and international cooperation, concrete measures and best practice. Attention is also devoted to the protection of victims. Your rapporteur takes the view that such protection must be provided not just while the victims of such trafficking are on territory of the Member States; consideration must also be given to the provision of protection if the victims (wish to) return to their country of origin and there encounter problems with relatives or with the persons who were originally behind the trafficking. In practice, it seems that the lives of some of the victims are at risk, because relatives are seeking revenge for the family's honour having been besmirched or because the traffickers lose their income when the victim returns. Accordingly, it would be appropriate for the Commission to conduct a study into the reception of the victims of such trafficking in their country of origin in order to devise a strategy which will provide better protection for the victims in the future.

The Work Programme for 2003

The main aim of the Work Programme for 2003 is to evaluate the implementation of the Work Programme for 2002 with regard to three priority actions: a gender impact assessment of policy areas which have not yet been gender mainstreamed, more systematic collection of gender-desegregated data, and awareness-raising and training on gender issues in the Commission's departments. The SEC document which underpins that evaluation includes a very broad overview of the actions to be undertaken by all the directorates-general in the Commission in 2003.

A number of Commission departments - Economic and Financial Affairs, Competition, Energy and Transport, Taxation and Customs Union, Health and Consumer Protection, Trade, and Enlargement DGs, ECHO (Humanitarian Aid Office), the Budget DG, the Internal Audit Service, the Joint Interpreting and Conference Service, the Translation Service, the Publications Office, the Legal Service and the Press and Communication DG - seem to be rather unwilling to include gender mainstreaming in their policy or to undertake new specific policy actions. The actions which those DGs are planning to undertake in 2003 seem to be no more than a re-hash of earlier measures, which implies that the DGs did not implement them in 2002. As a result, ten of the fifteen Commissioners have, in practice, failed to devote sufficient attention to the equal opportunities policy within their departments and policy areas.

With regard to legislation in the field of equal treatment for men and women, your rapporteur calls for attention to be paid to the Commission's *Options Paper* dated July 2003 on the simplification and improvement of that legislation. Once the consultation round is over, the Commission must come forward as soon as possible with proposals for the strategy to be

pursued and how the options may be set down in one or more legislative proposals. They will have to be drafted in such a way as to be in line with Directive 2000/43/EC implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin, Directive 2000/78/EC establishing a general framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation, and Directive 2002/73/EC, as well as a proposal for a directive, yet to be submitted, on equal treatment for men and women outside work.

The Council

Your rapporteur takes the view that the European Parliament must also assess the Council as regards its progress on equal opportunities for women and men. In the past, the Council has come to a number of striking conclusions with regard to the recommendations of the Beijing Platform for Action. To date, Parliament has devoted no attention thereto, partly because those conclusions have never been published as such but have, as it were, remained hidden away in the (nonetheless public) press reports which serve as reports of Council meetings, in this instance the Labour and Social Affairs Council.

As long ago as December 1995, the Council requested an annual review of the implementation in the Member States of the Beijing Platform for Action¹. The follow-up process in 1996 and 1997 revealed a need for more consistent and systematic monitoring. Accordingly, the Council agreed in December 1998 that the annual review of the implementation of the recommendations of the Beijing Platform for Action would include a simple set of indicators and benchmarks. However, the Council never published the report - entitled: 'Indicators and benchmarking: a focus on women in power and decision-making' - on which that decision was based².

In October 1999, the Finnish Council Presidency established nine indicators with regard to *women in power and decision-making*³. In November 2000, the French Council Presidency established nine qualitative and quantitative indicators with regard to the *reconciliation of work and family life*⁴. In December 2001, the Belgian Council Presidency established nine indicators with regard to *equal pay*⁵. Finally, in December 2002, the Danish Council Presidency drew up seven indicators with regard to *domestic violence against women*⁶. In the conclusions of that meeting, the Council also undertook periodically to review the progress achieved on the issues in question and to assess progress in those areas with the help of the established indicators.

It is remarkable that, to date, the Commission has not reported on these Council activities in any of its annual reports. That gives rise to an impression that, in this area, the Commission and Council are working completely independently of each other. It is even more remarkable that, although the Council Decisions may, with a little bit of sleuthing, be retrieved, the underlying documents have never been published. However, the most important question is: have the Member States actually been using the indicators, and what was the outcome? Where

¹ Conclusions of the Madrid European Council, 15 and 16 December 1995.

² Conclusions of the Labour and Social Affairs Council, 1 and 2 December 1998.

³ Conclusions of the Labour and Social Affairs Council, 22 October 1999.

⁴ Conclusions of the Employment and Social Policy Council, 27 and 28 November 2000.

⁵ Conclusions of the Employment and Social Policy Council, 3 December 2001.

⁶ Conclusions of the Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council, 2 and 3 December 2002.

are the results? To what extent have the Member States hit the targets set by the indicators?

Unless that material is produced, Parliament cannot accurately evaluate the Council's current activity, and its evaluation becomes no more than going through the motions. It is, therefore, absolutely essential for the Council to publish the hitherto 'secret' documents and to submit to Parliament, before the end of the current parliamentary term, a comprehensive progress report on the implementation by the Member States of the 1995 Platform for Action.

15 September 2003

OPINION OF THE COMMITTEE ON EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS

for the Committee on Women's Rights and Equal Opportunities

on the annual report on equal opportunities for women and men
in the European Union 2002
2003/2011(INI)

Draftsman: Regina Bastos

PROCEDURE

The Committee on Employment and Social Affairs appointed Regina Bastos draftsman at its meeting of 14 May 2003.

It considered the draft opinion at its meetings of 9 July and 10 September 2003.

At the latter meeting it adopted the following conclusions unanimously.

The following were present for the vote: Theodorus J.J. Bouwman (chairman), Marie-Hélène Gillig (vice-chairman), Marie-Thérèse Hermange (vice-chairman), Winfried Menrad (vice-chairman), Regina Bastos (draftsman), Johanna L.A. Boogerd-Quaak (for Elspeth Attwooll), Hans Udo Bullmann (for Jan Andersson), Philip Bushill-Matthews, Alejandro Cercas, Harald Ettl, Carlo Fatuzzo, Ilda Figueiredo, Stephen Hughes, Anna Karamanou, Arlette Laguiller, Jean Lambert, Elizabeth Lynne, Thomas Mann, Mario Mantovani, Claude Moraes, Manuel Pérez Álvarez, Bartho Pronk, Helle Thorning-Schmidt, Ieke van den Burg and Sabine Zissener (for Luigi Cocilovo).

CONCLUSIONS

The Committee on Employment and Social Affairs calls on the Committee on Women's Rights and Equal Opportunities, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following points in its motion for a resolution:

1. Welcomes the annual report on equal opportunities in 2002, which seems particularly important in view of the challenges facing the Union with its forthcoming enlargement in 2004; welcomes the initiatives that the accession countries have taken with regard to legislation and support measures for equal opportunities and underlines the need to draw up specific application measures for equal opportunities by the end of 2003, so that the end of the parliamentary term in 2004 does not slow down their implementation.
2. Reaffirms the need for a two-pronged approach to equal opportunities, particularly with regard to ensuring equal treatment and equal pay for work of equal value in employment, combining specific equal opportunities measures introduced by the Member States in connection with the employment strategy with genuine political mainstreaming of gender issues; it is vital that the employment strategy includes references to funding, setting up facilities to care for children and dependent people, and access to paid parental leave.
3. Underlines the need to make every effort to include areas such as social security, among others, so as to take account of atypical workers and the various forms of discrimination against and social exclusion of women (migrant women, women from ethnic minorities, women in rural areas or remote regions, single-parent families); also underlines the need to adopt policies to ensure that women have access to training throughout their lives and to the new information and communications technologies and to analyse the reasons for the small numbers of older women on the job market in comparison with men and take appropriate action so as to encourage workers to extend their working life, particularly by establishing working conditions which encourage people to remain in employment, facilitate the resumption of employment and remove incentives for early retirement; calls on the Commission to analyse the consequences of certain policies relating to the family and their potentially adverse effects on women's employment and retirement pensions.
4. Notes the particularly weak position, in terms of employment rights and social protection, often faced by spouses in rural areas and calls on the Commission and Member States to pay particular attention to ensuring equal treatment and opportunities in this regard, including the integration into the agricultural industry of the principle of equal pay for work of equal value.
5. Notes that the Structural Funds, and the European Social Fund in particular, must play a complementary role in relation to, and provide the stimulus for, action by the Member States to implement measures to promote women's employment, both at national and local level.
6. Stresses the need - in the context of the implementation of the European Employment Strategy and with a view to generating full and good-quality employment - to encourage the entrepreneurial spirit among women by means of specific measures including targeted training and measures to facilitate access to credit.

7. Notes that, as the Commission points out, the growth of employment is directly linked to whether it is possible to combine work with family life; welcomes the decision taken by the Barcelona Council to ensure that childcare places are available for at least 90 % of pre-school children by 2010, but underlines the need for targeted support measures to assist women in returning to work after raising a family, to provide a whole package of services to enable young mothers to find, or return to, work and ensure that it is financially advantageous for them to do so, by reducing the burden that women are carrying at home, not only looking after children but also elderly, sick or disabled people in the family, and also to promote the sharing of these burdens between women and men.
8. Calls on the Commission, the Council and the Member States to pay particular attention to combating poverty among women and the social exclusion of women, who are often disproportionately affected by it; welcomes the decision to incorporate the gender aspect in the action plan on social inclusion; underlines the need for measures to cope with the growing number of elderly women in society, either by reforming the pension system to take account of the different employment histories of women and men (career breaks, half-time working, etc), or by setting up a number of social and health services specifically for elderly people and elderly women in particular, as requested by Parliament in its resolution of 15 January 2003 on 'the future of health care and care for the elderly: guaranteeing accessibility, quality and financial viability'; in view of the fact that women outnumber men in the over-65 age group, stresses the importance of gender-related aspects of national strategies to achieve adequate and sustainable pension systems, not least for the purpose of eliminating the disparities between the average pensions received by men and by women in the various Member States.
9. Recognises that one in four women in the EU have been a victim of domestic violence at some stage in their life and that violence against women acts as obstacle to the full participation of women in society and to the development of equality; calls on the Commission, the Council and the Member States to put in place measures to prevent domestic violence including awareness campaigns and recognition within national justice systems.
10. Insists that action to combat trafficking in human beings must continue to be one of the European Union's political priorities; welcomes the establishment of cooperation at European and international level with countries involved in trafficking in human beings as countries of origin, countries of transit and countries of destination; reasserts the need for a policy to prevent such trafficking and assist its victims, as stressed in the Brussels Declaration.
11. Stresses the need for positive action to implement the Framework Strategy on gender equality and, with particular reference to the priorities laid down for 2003/2004 - the inclusion of women in the decision-making process - highlights the need to encourage the presence of women wherever decisions are taken concerning the economy, in both the public and private sectors; stresses the need for the action plan contained in the Framework Strategy on equality to concentrate on promoting gender mainstreaming in the economic sectors by means of specific actions and instruments, including gender budgeting.

12. Calls on the Commission, the Council and the Member States also to put in place measures to prevent the worrying phenomenon of trafficking in women and to help the victims including the establishment of indicators and permanent mechanisms to monitor the progress achieved while providing, inter alia, for close collaboration on these matters with the accession countries, which are often the countries of origin of the victims of trafficking and forced prostitution.
13. Notes that the representation of women in elected assemblies is still generally too low; calls therefore on the Commission, the Council and the Member States to work in various ways towards increasing the representation of women in elected assemblies; recalls in that connection that the long-term objective must be the equal representation of the sexes.