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**COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE COUNCIL, THE
EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL
COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS**

**Implementation of gender mainstreaming in the Structural Funds programming
documents 2000-2006**

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1. PURPOSE OF THE COMMUNICATION

This Communication provides an overview of the extent to which the gender mainstreaming dimension has been taken into account in the Structural Funds programming 2000-2006. It gives an inventory of progress and includes examples of good practice, and also identifies areas where progress is slow.

The Communication covers all four Funds¹ and the programmes of Objectives 1, 2 and 3. Information has been sourced mainly from the "Review of the proposed implementation of the ESF regulation across the EU", the study "Integration of equal opportunities in Objective 1 and Objective 2 Structural Fund programme documents", and other documents².

Findings in these documents were confirmed at several conferences, seminars and workshops where Structural Funds practitioners and gender experts at different levels discussed their experience, ideas and strategies. The 3rd European Conference on gender mainstreaming in the Structural Funds in June 2002 in Santander/Spain³, national or regional events such as the "Gender Mainstreaming in UK & Ireland Structural Funds Conference" held in May 2002 in Wales, the Conference on Gender Equality, Employment and the Structural Funds in Greece end of February 2002, and a workshop with an external expert and Structural Funds desk officers in the Commission, show that despite the wide variety of themes, most of the key issues which emerged were the same.

The purpose of this document is to give an input to the Structural Funds' mid-term review when the allocation of the performance reserve is determined, along with any revisions concerning financial allocations, targets, priorities and measures.

2. BACKGROUND

The Structural Funds are the main financial instruments to reduce disparities in development and to promote economic and social cohesion in the European Union. The total budget for the period 2000-2006 amounts to 195 billion Euro. 69.7 % of the total allocation goes to Objective 1, 11.5 % to Objective 2 and 12.3 % to Objective 3.

¹ The European Social Fund (ESF); the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF); the European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund (EAGGF); the Financial Instrument of Fisheries Guidance (FIG)

² see: <http://europa.eu.int/comm/regional-policy/sources/docgener>

³ Documents will be available on the website, see footnote 1.

The Structural Funds are an important catalyst for Community and national policies on gender equality. The General Regulation⁴ (2000-2006) sets gender equality as a key objective and provides that the gender equality dimension must be incorporated into operations cofinanced by the Funds. The issue of gender equality is explicitly mentioned in 10 of the 56 articles. The Regulation reflects the obligations of the Amsterdam Treaty with which the dual approach of combining gender mainstreaming and specific actions was formally anchored at EU level. This dual approach is also reflected in the ESF Regulation⁵.

The ERDF⁶ Regulation and the EAGGF⁷ Regulation also contain references to gender equality. Gender equality is also an objective in each of the four Community Initiatives (2000-2006) EQUAL, INTERREG III, URBAN II and LEADER+.

The Structural Funds and especially the ESF, are the main financial tools that underpin the European Employment Strategy (EES). The EES has incorporated the gender dimension as a horizontal priority across all pillars, in addition to a specific pillar on equal opportunities which contains specific Employment Guidelines on gender issues.

The Structural Funds commitment to gender equality is not a new development. The Regulation for the period 1994-1999 had already taken equal opportunities for men and women in the labour market as a Community goal and a priority task for the ESF. In 1996, the Council of Ministers adopted a resolution on the mainstreaming of equal opportunities for women and men in the Structural Funds.⁸

However, until now, the Funds have mainly supported specific measures for women or pilot projects. These are important but cannot remedy structural inequalities. Moreover, gender equality has been regarded as a task mainly for the ESF although conclusions of the ESF final evaluations of the period 1994-1999⁹ based on specific country results suggest that the measures, as well as jobs obtained after the measures, tended to reflect occupational segregation and gender stereotypes.

A turning point and a forerunner of measures to reduce vertical and horizontal segregation was the initiative NOW ("New Opportunities for Women") within the Community Initiative EMPLOYMENT. The successes in women's entrepreneurship and activities to reduce labour market segregation serve as an important basis for current Fund operations.

Building on this, the gender equality dimension has been incorporated into the methodological working papers for the preparation of the programming period 2000-2006, covering programming, ex-ante evaluation, monitoring and evaluation.¹⁰ The Commission has

⁴ Council Regulation (EC) No 1260/1999 of 21 June 1999 laying down general provisions on the Structural Funds

⁵ Regulation (EC) No 1784/1999 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 12 July 1999 on the European Social Fund, Art. 2 (1 e) and (2 c)

⁶ Regulation (EC) No 1783/1999 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 12 July 1999 on the European Regional Development Fund, Art. 2 (2 f)

⁷ Council Regulation (EC) No 1257/1999 of 17 May 1999 on support for rural development from the European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund (EAGGF) and amending and repealing certain Regulations, Art. 2

⁸ Council Resolution of 2 December 1996 on mainstreaming equal opportunities for men and women into the European Structural Funds (96/C 386/01)

⁹ "Conclusions of the ESF final evaluations", European Commission, October 2001

¹⁰ Working Paper 2 "The Ex-Ante Evaluation of the Structural Funds interventions", Annex IV, European Commission; Working Paper 3 "Indicators for Monitoring and Evaluation: An indicative methodology", Annex 2, Sheet I, European Commission

also drawn up a technical paper which sets out guidance on practical arrangements for implementing gender mainstreaming in the operations cofinanced by the Structural Funds and presented a definition of gender mainstreaming in the Structural Funds :¹¹

«Gender mainstreaming» involves ensuring that all general measures and operations openly and actively take into account – during planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation – their effects on the respective situations of women and men. It also involves the complementary design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of specific measures and operations to promote equality and to assist women to participate and benefit equally.

Overall, plans and programmes should contribute to improved equality between men and women, and should be able to demonstrate this impact, prior to, during and after implementation.

3. GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN THE PROGRAMMING DOCUMENTS FOR OBJECTIVES 1, 2 AND 3

3.1. Thematic priorities of gender equality measures

Gender equality is more effectively dealt with in the current programmes of the Structural Funds than in the previous programming period. However, like in the previous period, gender equality is concentrated in the field of employment and human resources development and to a large extent funded by the ESF, but neglected in other areas, such as environment, transport, rural development, research and development, etc. Connections between gender equality and other horizontal themes such as sustainable development or supporting the knowledge society are missing in the majority of programmes.

3.1.1. Focus on ESF funded measures - human resources development

The ESF plays an important role in reducing gender gaps in employment and in achieving the objectives of the EES by 2010. It has a particular role in relation to the target set at the Lisbon European Council to increase the female participation rate to 60 %, and the targets agreed upon in Barcelona to provide childcare to at least 90 % of children between three years and school age, and at least 33 % of children younger than three years.

In 2001, employment rates for women have increased in nearly all Member States. However, the employment rate for women in the EU (54.9 %) is still 18 percentage points below the male rate (73 %) and 5.1 points below the target set at the Lisbon European Council. Moreover, women continue to be over-represented in part-time work. The unemployment rate for women on EU average is currently 2.4 percentage points above men. The presence of children has a larger impact on women than on men's employment status. The employment rate of women aged 20-50 without children (68 %) is 12 points higher than that of women with children under 6 years old (56 %).

¹¹ Technical Paper 3 "Mainstreaming Equal Opportunities For Women And Men In Structural Fund Programmes And Projects", European Commission, March 2000

*Gender gaps in employment*¹²

	<i>EMPLOYMENT GENDER GAP</i>	<i>UNEMPLOYMENT GENDER GAP</i>	<i>GENDER PAY GAP</i>
EU-15	18.0	2.3	16.2
Greece	29.8	8.6	13.2
Spain	28.9	8.0	14.3
Italy	27.5	5.6	8.6
Luxembourg	23.9	0.7	N.A.
Ireland	21.4	-0.2	19.8
Belgium	18.7	1.4	7.3
Netherlands	17.5	1.1	21.1
Austria	16.5	1.3	21.1
Portugal	15.8	1.9	5.9
France	14.1	3.4	10.8
Germany	13.7	0.4	19.4
United Kingdom	13.3	-1.1	24.3
Denmark	8.3	1.1	10.4
Finland	5.5	1.1	N.A.
Sweden	2.9	-0.3	N.A.

In most of the ESF programmes, priorities concerning gender equality are focussed on two main objectives: improving women's access to and participation in employment, education and training; and improving the reconciliation of work and family life.

The majority of measures related to the participation of women in employment, education and training aim at promoting the employability of unemployed women and those having an unemployment risk and at overcoming skill barriers for women entering or returning to the labour market. They include training and counselling for women and awareness-raising and information activities.

¹² Commission staff working paper: Assessment of the implementation of the 2001 Employment Guidelines - Supporting Document to the Joint Employment Report 2002

Limited efforts are made to improve job quality, empowerment and career development of women. Only a few measures aim at reducing the gender pay gap or promoting women's access to management positions or to traditionally male dominated highly qualified jobs in the information and technology sector. Promoting and supporting women's entrepreneurship and business start-ups is also a priority mentioned only in a few programmes.

Measures aiming at a better reconciliation of work and family life mainly include support for care facilities for children. Very little attention is paid to the care of elderly and other dependants. Some activities intend to promote a more flexible working time but there is often a lack of accompanying policies.

The main concern from the previous programming period - that many measures reinforce existing gender patterns and segregation - is reflected in the current period. Measures to promote women in the traditional service sector, counselling, qualification and training or investments in childcare are more often found than activities to reduce gender segregation in the labour market or the gender pay gap, or to promote women in decision-making positions.

The risk of reinforcing gender segregation appears to be particularly high in growth sectors such as information technology sector. Most measures in these areas take no account of gender inequalities and do not include any actions to promote equal participation of women and men.

Spanish programmes are good examples of a wide range of actions to improve women's participation in the labour market. Out of 12 interventions in Objective 1 regions, 8 regions include the three measures: to improve women's employability; to promote women's business activity (i.e. women as entrepreneurs); to fight vertical and horizontal segregation, as well as salary discrimination; and to promote reconciliation of family and work. Each region foresees a wide range of actions, i.e.: training (mainly in sectors where women are under-represented); financial aids to enterprises hiring unemployed women; creation and consolidation of women enterprises (enterprises founded by women/run by women/led by women); information and dissemination campaigns; research; promoting women in decision-making positions, etc.

In the Objective 1 Programme "Employment, training and social development" in Portugal, the Measure "Promotion of equal opportunities between women and men" covers potential actors and actions in a wide sense. It is structured in three groups of projects:

1) Structural measures, including studies and statistics, awareness raising and training, prestige awards for companies and public services, creation of an Observatory for gender mainstreaming

2) Support for interventions in favour of gender equality, for instance for employers creating new working models, promotion of women's access to Information Communication Technology (ICT) training and to male dominated professions

3) Support to NGOs in charge of gender equality (capacity building)

3.1.2. Gender Equality measures funded by the ERDF

Few programmes funded by the ERDF contain specific actions to promote gender equality. They belong mainly to Objective 1 regions, for instance in Italy, the UK and Finland, and concern local and urban development, as well as innovation and R&D.

One group of the projects that receive funds in these programmes is aimed at supporting services, for instance, developing new service structures, or testing welfare services that improve participation in the labour market.

Some actions are directly related to the health sector, such as health awareness measures including campaigns to tackle teenage pregnancy and drug and alcohol abuse.

A number of projects aim at improving living and environmental conditions in local and urban areas. These include projects that develop new ways of participation, or activate/encourage inhabitants to improve their environment or promote children's and young people's well-being. Others include community managed building design and estate management strategies, particularly those that focus on tackling gender, disability and age-related issues of mobility, access to services and security.

Another group of actions concerns the area of innovation and information society. These actions include initiatives to promote involvement in innovation and R&D by women, or incorporate a gender perspective into the support for development and management of science parks, innovation centres, technology and new media centres.

A number of actions support childcare projects and facilities and provide opportunities to reconcile family and work. Especially in the area of childcare, there is a greater intervention and co-operation between the Funds in comparison with the last programming period, for instance in Ireland, Greece and Italy, where childcare services are supported by both the ESF and the ERDF.

A good example is the Objective 1 Programme for East Finland. The Measure "Developing the structures of everyday life" in the Programme Complement aims to develop new kinds of participation and innovative service structures and activities. Its objective is to benefit from civil society, and to develop new interaction between different groups of people and between working life and leisure time. With regard to the impact on gender equality, the activities are supposed especially to create new jobs for women. Integrating IT into everyday life will enhance women's interest in technology and improve market demand for women's skills in the IT-sector.

The Programme Complement to the Italian Objective 1 Programme for Mezzogiorno is intended, within the promotion of centres of competence, to encourage especially initiatives of women entrepreneurs in the field of environmental protection.

3.1.3. Gender Equality measures funded by the EAGGF and the FIFG

The gender dimension is less visible in the majority of EAGGF and FIFG measures than within ESF programmes.

In the implementation of the EAGGF Regulation¹³, certain obstacles have emerged which make it difficult to integrate the principle of gender equality. The majority of funding concerns the agricultural sector where women are underrepresented. Actions are primarily focused on farms and their beneficiaries are the farm owners. The fact that only one out of five farm owners is a woman reduces the possibility for women to benefit directly from these projects. Farmers' wives and female employees are ignored by this kind of funding.

¹³ see footnote 7

In most of the programmes, there is a lack of sex-disaggregated statistics, analysis of gender inequalities in rural areas and in the agriculture and fisheries sector, and of gender impact assessment. A few programmes clearly identify disadvantages of women but do not address them in measures to ensure that women will participate and benefit equally from actions. Gender imbalances might even increase when, for instance, as indicated in a measure to encourage young farmers to take over or improve farms, it is explicitly foreseen that less than 6 % of the beneficiaries will be women. Only in exceptional cases, are amounts allocated for the promotion of women through quota. Certain regions (for instance the Provence Alpes Côte d'Azur, France) took the initiative to include gender equality as a criteria in project selection.

Actions linked to areas where the representation of women is higher concern a rather low percentage of the programmes. Measures which might have a positive impact on gender equality mainly cover areas such as diversification, training, new employment opportunities and setting up small enterprises in rural tourism, producing and selling regional products, childcare.

A number of Rural Development Plans (RDP) state the principle of gender equality but refer to other funds, especially to the ESF, which intervenes in rural areas in terms of vocational training and employment aspects, and the ERDF for equipment aspects, services, small and medium-sized enterprises. Whilst all regions could benefit from ESF financing, only regions classified as Objective 1 or 2 can benefit from ERDF.

In the EAGGF funded Community Initiative LEADER+, certain Member States foresee a quota of women for the partnerships in the groups of local action (GAL): 40 % in Sweden, with the aim to reach 50 %; 20 % in the Netherlands. In LEADER + , the programmes presented take the needs of women in rural areas into account. However, as the programmes have just started, it is too early to judge to what extent rural women will benefit from the introduction of this priority.

The insufficient incorporation of the gender perspective was addressed by the Agriculture Council in May 2002. In the conclusions, the Council called for equal opportunities between women and men to be promoted at European level and incorporated into all programmes receiving support from the Structural Funds. These undertakings should now be translated into objectives, activities and specific measures.¹⁴

The Common Fisheries Policies programming for 2000-2006, takes gender mainstreaming and the conditions of women in the fisheries sector and their needs, into account on the basis of the recommendations in the study "The role of women in the fisheries sector in the 15 Member States" and national/regional initiatives. Regulation No 2792/1999¹⁵ has taken gender mainstreaming into account:

- In Article 11, activities of the family of fishermen, professional requalification, training, improvement of sanitary and working conditions in small scale coastal fishing is incorporated into FIFG activities, on the basis of experience in the previous programme.

¹⁴ 2428th Council meeting - AGRICULTURE - Brussels, 27 May 2002, 8959/02 (Presse 148)

¹⁵ Council Regulation (EC) No 2792/1999 of 17 December 1999 laying down the detailed rules and arrangements regarding Community structural assistance in the fisheries sector, see footnote 2

- In Article 15, the regulation takes into account operations of collective interest with a broader scope, where women are very supportive. It foresees, among others, the financing of training activities on land, creation of business incubators (women could be active in other commercial activities on land).

However, positive examples of the actual implementation of the gender perspective are rarely visible. In order to improve the gender perspective, a conference on the role of women in the fisheries sector will be organised by the Commission in Brussels in January 2003 in order to exchange experiences, good practices, and identify benchmark initiatives to be promoted.

3.2. The strategy to reach gender equality

The legislative framework for 2000-2006 has helped raise the profile of gender equality in the programming documents. Member States have accepted the commitment to gender equality, though many programmes lack specification. In most of the programmes, there is a significant gap between analysis and programming strategy. An analysis of differences in the socio-economic circumstances of women and men in order to define the obstacles to be overcome is evident in only a few plans and programmes. However, even where the analysis clearly points to certain gender gaps, the strategy for reducing these gaps and achieving gender equality does not always match the analysis. For instance, serious weaknesses or inequalities concerning women's situation in the labour market and in economic life, which are identified in the data, are often not addressed in the strategy and its priorities and measures. The analysis in the programmes does not always lead to the definition of strategic gender equality objectives or concrete measures in the Programme Complements.

3.2.1. Visibility of the dual strategy: gender mainstreaming and specific action

Community Support Frameworks (CSFs) and Single Programming Documents (SPDs) often aim at a horizontal integration of gender equality into all actions and programme priorities together with specific measures to reduce gender gaps. As in the previous programming periods, the ESF is the Fund where this dual approach is the most visible.

Many of Objective 1 and 2 interventions include some specific gender equality actions. However, although specific actions have been promoted in the framework of Structural Funds programmes and initiatives for more than 10 years - and are clearly identified as part of the gender mainstreaming strategy - about a third of the programmes make no mention of specific actions at all.

Instruments or procedures to ensure gender equality in mainstream measures or priorities exist to a certain extent in 70 % of Objective 2 interventions, but only in a minority of Objective 1 interventions.¹⁶

While there is often the intention to treat gender as a cross-cutting theme, the gender dimension is lacking in the description of priorities and measures, for instance in the Programme Complements. In only a few programmes is a real cross-cutting approach visible. Such programmes contain a systematic gender impact assessment as well as tools and instruments to ensure that gender equality is one of the criteria for project selection, monitoring and evaluation. Good examples are found in Germany, the Objective 2

¹⁶ The figures concerning Objective 1 and 2 programmes in Chapter III have been taken from the study "Integration of equal opportunities in Objective 1 and Objective 2 Structural Fund programme documents"

Programmes of Bavaria, North Rhine-Westphalia and Lower Saxony, and the Objective 1 Programmes of Berlin, Brandenburg and Saxony-Anhalt; in the United Kingdom, the Objective 2 Programmes of North West England and Yorkshire & Humber, and the Objective 1 Programmes of South Yorkshire and West Wales & Valleys; and the East Finland Objective 1 Programme.

The North West England Objective 2 Programme presents a detailed and comprehensive strategy for gender mainstreaming as a cross-cutting theme. Specific equal opportunity targets have been developed for the three vertical priorities, focusing in particular on numbers of jobs created and safeguarded, new companies and SMEs assisted, and the securing of positive outcomes in terms of learning, employment, self-employment and micro-business creation. The Equal Opportunity Strategy involves three mechanisms: scoring and appraisal criteria for projects, an Equal Opportunities Advisory Group, support and guidance for project sponsors.

– Recommendation / Action needed:

Programme leaders at all levels need to show their commitment to gender mainstreaming as a transversal priority across all Funds and Objectives.

3.2.2. *Targets, data and indicators*

Specific objectives and targets to reduce gender inequalities (for instance reduced vertical or horizontal labour market segregation, reduced gender pay gap) and to promote gender equality (for instance increased female activity rates, increased number of women setting-up businesses) are rare. Clearly quantified objectives are proposed in a minority of interventions across all Objectives, such as in the Objective 1 Programmes of Burgenland (Austria), Thuringia (Germany), North Finland, the Vocational Training and Social Integration Programme of Portugal, and South Yorkshire (UK).

The Guadeloupe (France) Programme contains a number of quantified targets: 25 % reduction of female unemployment by 2006; training of 60500 women (= 55 %); training of 125 female entrepreneurs (= 50 %); training of 1947 illiterate women (= 59 %).

In line with the requirement in Article 36 (2) of the General Regulation, the great majority of interventions in all three Objectives include at least some baseline data broken down by sex in their diagnosis of the situation. A number of programmes even present systematic, comprehensive statistics disaggregated by sex.

A set of data broken down by sex serves as the necessary input for developing indicators related to gender issues, that is to say, to monitor gender gaps and to measure progress in gender equality.

In fact, nearly 50 % of Objective 1 and about 30 % of Objective 2 interventions do not foresee any gender-sensitive or gender equality indicators. In only a small minority of interventions, are they presented systematically, for instance in Germany, Spain, Finland, Portugal and the United Kingdom.

In Ireland, the RTDI¹⁷ - Forestry Research Sub-Measure (Objective 1 Programme Complement) contains the following indicators to measure gender equality:
- Gender composition of those undertaking short-term research missions (target 2006 45 %)
- Gender balance of COFORD¹⁸ staff (target 2006 40-50 %)

– Recommendation / Action needed:

The provision and systematic use of data broken down by sex and quantified indicators and targets is required to measure the effectiveness of Structural Funds operations concerning gender equality, in particular with regard to the mid-term review. For the mid-term evaluation - which is a key element for the mid-term review - appropriate equality indicators are needed which, instead of numerical counting, measure reduced disparities or improved equality between women and men at results and impact levels.

3.3. Gender mainstreaming instruments in programming and implementation

Gender mainstreaming is a relatively new area of expertise and is not easy to implement in national policies and programmes. It is therefore essential to bring on board all available resources and expertise. As far as the Structural Funds are concerned, this can be done in a number of places, such as ex-ante evaluation, partnership, Monitoring Committees, training, allocation of resources, project selection criteria, information and publicity.

Ex-ante evaluation concerning the gender dimension

In spite of the clear requirement in Article 41 (2) (c) of the General Regulation, a substantial proportion of programmes do not include an ex-ante evaluation of the situation in terms of gender equality.

A good example is the ex-ante evaluation of the Spanish Objective 1 Programme for Andalusia. The evaluation is preceded by a comprehensive analysis/diagnosis of the situation of women in the labour market, by sectors, by ages, salaries, in education and vocational training, in the enterprises, in rural areas, conciliation with family life, etc., based on updated data broken down by sex. Such analysis points to factors behind the gender imbalances that need to be addressed. The ex-ante evaluation sums up the conclusions in a matrix establishing the degree of coherence of each priority and measure of the Programme with the EU priorities in the field of equal opportunities. It scores their impact with the terms: "high impact; medium impact; low impact, or not possible to evaluate." Furthermore, it quantifies the expected results in terms of number of women beneficiaries of the measures. To ensure the achievements of the quantified results, it proposes some measures and indicators to be included in the Programme Complement as well as the creation of an Observatory. Unfortunately, the diagnosis, evaluation and recommendations have not been fully translated in the Programme Complement.

Equality Partnerships

Article 8 (1) of the General Regulation explicitly states that the need to promote gender equality shall be taken into account in designating partnership. Appropriate knowledge and skills in gender issues, at the right phases and right levels, is critical to the success of plans and programmes.

¹⁷ Research, Technological Development and Innovation

¹⁸ Irish National Council for Forest Research and Development

In fact, the majority of programming documents of Objective 2 and 3 mention some consultation with bodies concerned with equality issues during the preparation of the programmes. But in most cases, this was limited to formal, "arms-length" consultation with national or regional gender equality bodies or departments. Gender equality organisations, including NGOs, were involved systematically only in a minority of cases, for instance in Objective 2 programmes in Austria, Germany, and Spain, whereas nearly four in five Objective 1 programmes make no mention of any consultation with gender equality bodies.

In those regions where partnerships with gender equality organisations already existed in the previous programming period, these structures play an important role and are also involved in all stages in the current period, e.g. the regional offices "Women and Employment" in North Rhine-Westphalia (Germany) and the working group "Women and Economy" in Berlin. In Berlin, since the end of 2000 a "gender-committee" under the responsibility of the ministry in charge has been established for monitoring and counselling in relation to concerning the further implementation of the gender mainstreaming approach in all Structural Funds interventions.

– Recommendation / Action needed:

Managing authorities, Monitoring Committees, local programme managers and project promoters are requested to elaborate and maintain partnership with gender equality experts at all levels and stages during the implementation process, e.g. by regular meetings or consultations, ad-hoc meetings on specific issues, working groups etc.

Monitoring Committees

Gender balance

A number of Member States have declared an intention to promote a balanced participation of men and women in Monitoring Committees, in line with Article 35 (1) of the General Regulation. However, this statement often seems to be more of a recommendation than a commitment. Only 16 % of the programmes under Objective 2, and 14 % of those under Objective 1 give clear statements of an intention to promote or ensure gender-balanced Monitoring Committees. The worst performers, with hardly any reference in their Objective 1 or 2 programmes, are Belgium, Spain, France, Italy, Portugal and the Netherlands.

Gender balance in Monitoring Committees according to most of Objective 1 and 2 programming documents

<i>Gender balance in</i>	<i>substantial</i>	<i>partly</i>	<i>not at all</i>
<i>Monitoring Committees</i>			
Austria		X	
Belgium			X
Denmark	X		
Finland		X	

France			X
Germany		X	
Greece		X	
Ireland		X	
Italy			X
Netherlands			X
Portugal			X
Spain			X
Sweden	X		
United Kingdom		X	

Participation of gender experts

In the majority of Objective 1 and 3 interventions, national or regional organisations or bodies in charge of gender equality are formally represented in Monitoring Committees. In contrast to that, nearly 60 % of Objective 2 interventions do not mention at all a participation of such organisations. A few notable exceptions are some regional Objective 1 and 2 Programmes in Germany and the United Kingdom where they are referred to in a very precise manner.

The Objective 2 Programme for Bavaria (Germany) clearly lists the gender equality representatives to participate in the Monitoring Committee: responsible public authorities, women's NGOs, authority for family affairs and, a number of local representatives.

The Objective 2 Programme for Yorkshire & Humber (UK) explicitly mentions the involvement of the Equal Opportunities Council and the Women's Training Network.

Gender equality working groups

In the vast majority - nearly three-quarters - of Objective 1 and 2 interventions, there is no reference to the creation of working groups on gender equality issues. Only a small minority of interventions explicitly mention the setting-up of such groups.

The working group for Gender Equality Issues in the Monitoring Committee of the Obj Programme in Sweden observes gender equality aspects in the entire programme and can changes when necessary, makes proposals for the use of special funds for gender equality. The group has organised a national conference on gender equality for all those working with the C 3 Programme (unless the Objective 3 programme is on gender equality aspects) and is pr instructional material how to deal with gender equality issues - together with the National Equality Ombudsman Office - targeted especially at small work places with less than 10 employ

- Recommendation / Action needed:

Monitoring Committees are the key actors to oversee the implementation of the programmes and reaching targets. Knowledge of gender equality objectives and gender mainstreaming tools is therefore essential and needs to be ensured through the setting up of special working groups and the participation of gender experts and gender balance in the Committees.

Gender mainstreaming training

Implementing gender mainstreaming systematically is not an easy task and requires training on how to use the various tools. However, around 85 % of interventions do not present any gender awareness-raising or training measures for staff in Structural Funds managing authorities or members of Monitoring Committees. Good examples exist only in some programmes, for instance in Germany, the United Kingdom and Ireland.

In Ireland, gender mainstreaming training is offered to Monitoring Committee members and all those responsible for implementing ESF on a daily basis. The "NDP Gender Equality Unit" within the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform runs training sessions for policy-makers and implementing agencies, for instance on gender mainstreaming in relation to urban development.

- Recommendation / Action needed:

Apart from gender experts involved in programming and implementation, those who have an influence on implementing the programmes have to get training - on the benefits gender mainstreaming brings, as well as on the key tools for effective gender mainstreaming. Training needs to be provided for members of Monitoring Committees, managing and paying authorities, project appraisers, programme secretariats, project applicants and sponsors.

Allocation of resources for specific actions to promote gender equality

The financial allocation planned for specific actions in favour of gender equality varies between the Member States and between programmes.

Within the ESF, policy field E (Women's access to and participation in the labour market) receives only 6 % of the total support which is the smallest part of assistance compared to the other fields: Field A (Active labour market policies) receives 24 % which is the greatest funding, followed by D (Adaptable workforce): 24 %, C (Lifelong learning): 21 %, and B (Social inclusion): 15 %. The table below shows the ESF funding across the Member States for policy field E in Euro and the percentage of total spending¹⁹:

	<i>Total spending in Euro</i>	<i>%</i>
Austria	76,782,000	10.5 %
Italy	837,469,241	10.0 %
Germany	1,099,335,311	9.5 %

	<i>Total spending in Euro</i>	<i>%</i>
France	257,352,700	3.8 %
Belgium	38,252,364	3.5 %
Denmark	10,498,333	2.3 %

¹⁹ The figures have been taken from the study "Review of the proposed implementation of the ESF regulation across the EU"

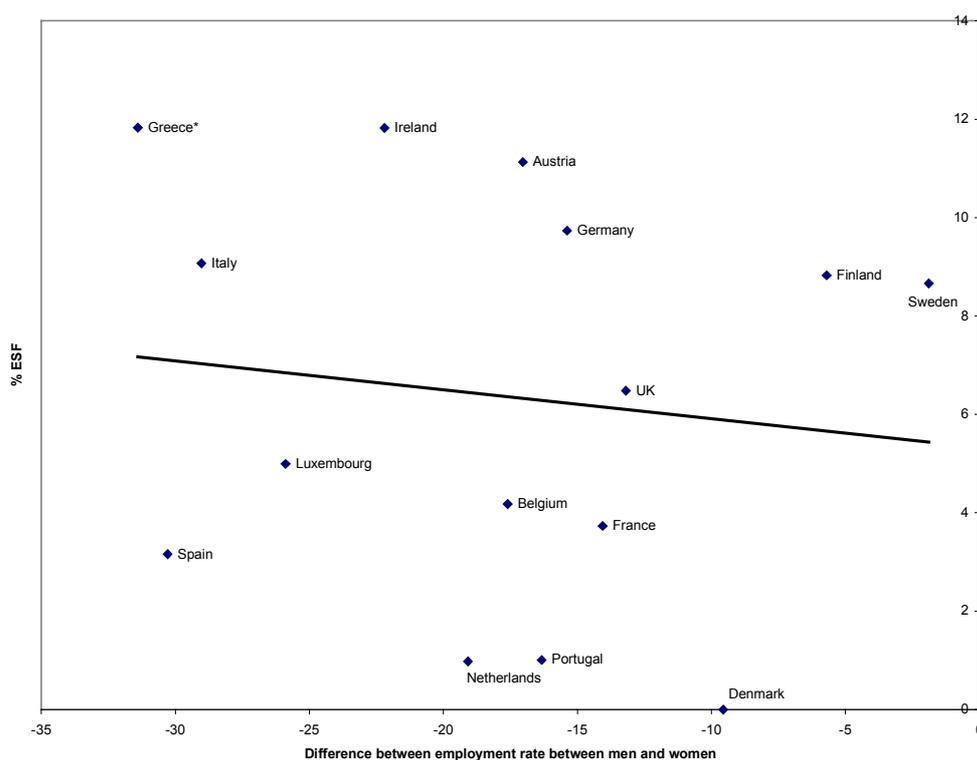
Luxembourg	3,380,600	4.6 %
UK	355,121,072	4.6 %
Greece	193,761,925	4.5 %
Spain	521,899,539	4.4 %
Ireland	46,631,000	4.3 %

Netherlands	43,139,000	2.2 %
Sweden	8,102,800	0.8 %
Finland	6,723,000	0.8 %
Portugal	17,240,700	0.4 %
EU	3,515,689,585	6.0 %

Only three Member States, Austria, Italy and Germany, devote more than the EU average to policy field E. However, it is difficult to compare the level of funding for this policy field. A Member States's relatively low level of funding in this area may not necessary reflect a low concern for gender issues but might indicate that activities to promote gender equality are funded under the other policy fields.

A comparison between the gender employment gap and planned ESF expenditure on specific action for women might suggest that some Member States with a large gender gap spend significantly less than other Member States where the gender employment gap is much smaller.²⁰

Comparison of the employment gap between men and women and planned ESF expenditure on specific actions for women



²⁰ Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament and the Economic and Social Committee on European Social Fund Support for the European Employment Strategy, 23.01.2001, COM (2001) 16 final/2, Annex 5

According to the "Commission Staff Working Paper on the Results of the Programming of the Structural Funds for 2000-2006 (Objective 1) - Technical Annexes",²¹ 29.63 % of the budget goes to assistance for human resources. Within this type of assistance, 4.6 % goes to specific action to favour women in the labour market.

– Recommendation / Action needed:

As part of the mid-term review, an assessment should be made as to the adequacy of resources for activities to promote gender equality. Sufficient resources are essential to allow the dual approach - gender mainstreaming and specific action.

Project selection criteria concerning gender equality

In less than 25 % of programmes is a systematic approach taken to include gender equality as one of the selection criteria for projects across the programme or in most priorities and measures. A number of programmes present scoring methods for project selection. Good examples can be found in several programmes, for instance in Germany, Spain, Greece, Finland, Portugal and the United Kingdom.

In the Objective 1 Campania Programme (Italy) the impact on gender equality is a priority selection criteria in a number of measures. Examples:

- Support for the development of micro-enterprises in national and regional parks;*
- Support for installations to produce renewable energies and to improve the distribution of electricity in industrial areas;*
- Support for the development of human competence and entrepreneurship in the cultural and leisure sector.*

– Recommendation / Action needed:

Clear project selection criteria concerning gender equality should be defined by managing authorities. Project appraisers should reject proposals in case of inadequate attention of these criteria. But apart from developing criteria for selecting projects, it is also important to look at the projects finally selected. Implementation reports should include information such as the number of projects aiming at gender equality, the amount of money spent on them, the specific areas they cover etc.

Information and publicity concerning gender equality

In spite of the clear reference in Article 46 (2)(a) of the General Regulation, the majority of programmes do not mention measures of information and publicity targeting women or women's organisations. Only a small percentage - regional programmes in Austria, Spain, Germany, United Kingdom - provide a description of the action to be taken to inform organisations and bodies involved in women's and equality issues.

The figures are even worse for measures of technical assistance which shall include, according to Article 23 of the General Regulation, inter alia the exchange of experience and information aimed at the partners, the final beneficiaries, and the general public. Less than 8

²¹ SEC(2001) 1140/2, 18 July 2001

% of Objective 1 and 2 programmes, namely in Austria, Germany and the United Kingdom, provide technical assistance targeted at women's or equality organisations. While not required explicitly by the Regulation, the provision of technical support to equality organisations can be considered as an indicator of the extent to which programmes make an effort to involve women and to make use of the expertise and experience of such organisations.

In Austria, a "Co-ordinating Unit for Gender Mainstreaming within the ESF" has been set up to inform and support all ESF actors in implementing gender mainstreaming, by networking (round tables across all Länder, international contacts), offering counselling, and providing and distributing information also to a wider public (website, database etc).²²

– Recommendation / Action needed:

Distributing and sharing information and in particular best practices, including those from previous programming periods, is vital for effective gender mainstreaming. The Commission and national authorities should co-operate to develop mechanisms for systematic collection and dissemination of information and best practices, for instance through good practice guides or manuals. Moreover, implementing gender mainstreaming in Structural Funds programming requires incorporating the gender perspective in technical assistance and in general information measures, as well as funding specific information activities targeted at women.

4. FINDINGS / RECOMMENDATIONS

Gender equality is an essential element of economic and social cohesion. Since the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995, the EU has adopted a dual approach for the effective promotion of gender equality : a balanced combination of specific measures for the under-represented sex and "gender mainstreaming" measures, i.e. the incorporation of the gender dimension in all Community policies. This approach applies also to gender equality activities within the Structural Funds.

Gender mainstreaming in the Structural Funds involves ensuring that all general measures and interventions openly and actively take into account – during planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation – their effects on the respective situations of women and men. It also involves the complementary design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of specific measures and operations, to promote equality and to assist women to participate and benefit equally from the Structural Funds and, more generally, from economic and social cohesion.

Experience shows that gender equality is a complex policy area, and that there are a number of obstacles to the successful implementation of a dual approach involving both specific measures and mainstreaming.

The following recommendations are designed to address the above obstacles immediately :

Immediate actions

1. Specific measures aimed at the under-represented sex are essential as a first step – for which dedicated funding needs to be visible. Member States and their Managing Authorities are invited to introduce incentives aimed at raising the awareness and

²² www.gem.or.at

importance of gender in all Structural Funds programmes. This could be done in particular by assigning, from the outset, additional points in the selection criteria to those projects which contribute to gender equality, e.g. with gender balanced participation.

2. Some Member States have placed the majority of their emphasis on gender mainstreaming – which risks making their actual funding allocation difficult to identify and monitor. Member States are therefore invited to clearly identify, on the one hand, the funding allocated to specific gender equality actions and on the other hand, those programmes and projects which contribute to gender equality (gender mainstreaming). Member States should report on these figures with clear indicators as part of the mid-term review of the Structural Funds as of 2003.
3. Effective gender mainstreaming is difficult and requires specific expertise. As this is a relatively new area, especially in the Structural Funds :
 - a) Member States are requested to encourage, through Managing Authorities, Monitoring Committees, local programme and project managers, especially in the short term, the use of **gender equality expertise**, and to ensure the presence of representatives of equality bodies and research institutions in Structural Funds Monitoring Committees ;
 - b) Member States are requested to establish **awareness-raising measures and training** in gender mainstreaming for Managing Authorities, members of Monitoring Committees, programme and project managers and partners.
4. All policies are improved with ex-ante evaluation and impact assessment. In the context of gender mainstreaming, ex-ante evaluation relies on the availability of analysis using sex-disaggregated statistics. Gender impact assessment needs clear qualitative and quantitative gender equality indicators for monitoring and evaluating output and results. Member States are urged to ensure, notably through their Managing Authorities, that sex-disaggregated statistics and gender impact assessment become an inherent component of Structural Funds interventions, including in "non-traditional" gender equality domains such as infrastructure, transport or environment.
5. Each Member State is invited to appoint a high-level representative to coordinate the national strategy for gender equality, to contribute to the co-ordination of the EU strategy, and to participate in a high level group to support the implementation of gender mainstreaming in Structural Funds interventions.

Mid-term review

The mid-term review will provide an opportunity to identify reorientations to the programming which may be needed to ensure the achievement of the original objectives of supporting gender equality. The mid-term evaluation which will be available from mid-2003 will serve as an important basis for the mid-term review, and as a useful tool to show

achievements and obstacles in incorporating gender equality in the implementation of the programmes, and to identify good practices.²³

The mid-term review of the Structural Funds will build on the findings and recommendations presented in this Communication in order to enhance the gender equality perspective in the implementation of programmes in the current programming period, as well as being a foundation for future action.

During the first semester of 2003, the Commission will elaborate guidelines for the implementation of the mid-term review, which will take into account the recommendations of this Communication.

Future considerations

The findings and recommendations stemming from the current programming period of the Structural Funds address deep-rooted issues that can only be dealt with over the longer term; therefore, they will, in substance, also remain valid for future Structural Funds interventions. In particular the allocation of funding for gender equality activities must be retained and even increased in most programmes.

A number of issues arise for further examination when looking at the future promotion of gender equality in the Union. The Commission considers the following as the most important ones:

- Equal opportunities between women and men must remain a priority with the dual approach – gender mainstreaming and specific actions – which has proved its effectiveness, being continued.
- Investment in human and social capital in the knowledge society will form the basis of long-term growth of Europe. Consequently, future interventions should focus on preventing the exclusion of women from these areas by giving particular attention to encouraging high quality training and employment in the ICT and R&D sector, in tandem with a wider commitment to promoting female entrepreneurship, life-long learning, training, skills and qualifications for women in non-traditional areas.
- The Structural Funds should play an important role in the specific context of the forthcoming enlargement of the Union, especially in combating the potential risks faced by women in new Member States, particularly those who are exposed to the adverse effects of economic and social restructuring, such as the increase of unemployment and the decrease of childcare provision.

²³ The Commission's guidelines for evaluation of STRUCTURAL FUNDS operations "Working Paper 8: The Mid-Term Evaluation of the Structural Funds Interventions" (December 2000) emphasise the need to assess the extent to which the gender dimension has been integrated into the forms of assistance.