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**Progress report from the Commission  
on the follow-up of the Communication:**

**“Incorporating equal opportunities  
for women and men into all Community  
policies and activities”**

(presented by the Commission)



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## SUMMARY

The new Treaty of Amsterdam, still to be ratified, substantially strengthens the legal basis for Community action in favour of equality between women and men. Articles 2 and 3 of the new Treaty formalise the Community commitment to gender mainstreaming, by establishing equality between men and women as a specific task of the Community as well as a horizontal objective affecting all Community tasks. The Treaty is therefore of major importance as a legal basis and incentive to further develop the gender mainstreaming policy.

Since the adoption, two years ago, of the Commission Communication on "Incorporating equal opportunities for women and men into all Community policies and activities"<sup>1</sup> a new structure has been put in place under the aegis of the Group of Equality Commissioners with a view to systematically incorporating the equal opportunities dimension in all Community policies and activities. Each Directorate-General is responsible for mainstreaming equal opportunities into its policy areas, and a collaborative inter-service structure of key officials supports the process.

This Communication presents the first progress report to date, based on the contributions of 18 DGs and horizontal services on their equal opportunities activities. It indicates what barriers and shortcomings remain. The outcome in terms of policy is most tangible in the field of external relations, including development co-operation and women's human rights; in the fields of employment policy and the Structural Funds; education, training and youth policies; and in Commission staff and information policies. This is hardly surprising, taking into account that these sectors have more solid traditions than others for taking equal opportunities between women and men into account. There has been a move in these policies and sectors away from isolated measures in favour of women to a more integrated approach, as exemplified by the Third Action Programme on Equal Opportunities for women and men in the European Commission (1997-2000); the Medium-term Community Action Programme on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men (1996-2000); and by the adoption and implementation of the Council Resolutions on mainstreaming of equal opportunities into the European Social Funds and on integrating gender issues in development co-operation. The inter-service co-operation and comprehensive mainstreaming of the equal opportunities dimension in the on-going revision of the European Structural Funds General Regulation merits special mention.

Whereas progress is considerable, the **barriers and shortcomings** are no less apparent. In spite of the large number of activities that are carried on with a view to promoting equality between women and men, the majority are isolated measures without major impact on the overall situation with regard to gender equality. Neither do these activities seriously influence the orientation of mainstream Community policies. While specific measures of positive action will remain crucial in the foreseeable future, as part of a dual approach, **mainstreaming demands an altogether more comprehensive approach**. The **main barriers** to further progress are the following:

- lack of awareness of gender issues at the decision-making levels.
- lack of human and budgetary resources allocated to these tasks;
- lack of gender expertise;

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<sup>1</sup> COM(96)67 final of 21 February 1996

The following steps should be taken in order **to overcome the barriers and improve the organisational and methodological framework** for gender mainstreaming:

- awareness-raising, targeting as a priority senior and middle management;
- large-scale training to develop the necessary gender expertise;
- gender impact assessment of policies as a regular procedure;
- gender proofing to guarantee the quality of any legislative proposal and other policy document or Community activity, in terms of the equal opportunities objective.<sup>2</sup>

Looking at the **policy implications** of the political priorities set out in the Commission's Work Programme 1998<sup>3</sup>, a number of policies are singled out in this Communication for specific attention:

- close monitoring of the achievements in the field of employment policies, to ensure that the equal opportunities pillar of the Employment Guidelines is fully implemented, and that the equal opportunities dimension is incorporated into the implementation and monitoring of the three other priorities;
- ensuring that equal opportunities in the on-going reform of the European Structural Funds is fully entrenched and made operational in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation process;
- ensuring that the achievements in the fields of education, training and youth policies are further developed and expanded in the "new generation" of Community programmes that are being prepared;
- the equal sharing of work and family responsibilities between women and men needs to be encouraged as part of schemes promoting part-time work, flexibility and new forms of work organisation;
- desegregation of the labour market to promote equal opportunities and the smooth functioning of the Single Market, by eliminating rigidities caused by vertical and horizontal gender segregation;
- assessing the gender impact of EMU and the EURO with a view to ensuring that women and men benefit equally;
- ensuring that women participate fully and benefit equally with men from the opportunities offered by new technologies and the Information Society;
- addressing the requirements as well as the impact of the enlargement process on equality between women and men;
- full attention should be paid to equality between women and men in the internal reform programme undertaken by the Commission;
- continued monitoring of the gender mainstreaming policy and regular reporting on the progress achieved.

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<sup>2</sup> in accordance with Article 3 of the new Treaty of Amsterdam

<sup>3</sup> COM (97) 517 final of 15 October 1997

## INTRODUCTION

On 21 February 1996 the European Commission adopted a Communication on “Incorporating equal opportunities for women and men into all Community policies and activities”<sup>4</sup>, defining the “mainstreaming” policy, as a policy “not restricting efforts to promote equality to the implementation of specific measures to help women, but mobilising all general policies and measures specifically for the purpose of achieving equality.”<sup>5</sup>

Systematic efforts at promoting mainstreaming throughout the Commission services got under way in early 1997, as the Inter-service group on equal opportunities agreed on a Strategy Paper outlining concrete steps for follow-up to the Commission Communication on Mainstreaming<sup>6</sup>. Following a formal request by the Secretary General of the Commission to the Directors General for the implementation of the Strategy Paper<sup>7</sup>, 29 services<sup>8</sup> have nominated officials with the express mandate to promote gender mainstreaming in their respective Directorates General. A working group consisting of these “gender mainstreaming officials” has been set up with a mandate to implement the Strategy Paper and serve as a support structure for the DGs in the mainstreaming process. Among the first tasks to be achieved by the *Group of gender mainstreaming officials* was the preparation of a tool for the promotion of gender impact assessment of policies. *A Guide to gender impact assessment*<sup>9</sup> is now available in three languages.

Regular monitoring of equal opportunities activities and measures to integrate the equality dimension is crucial for the success of a mainstreaming strategy. Progress reports involving all the Commission services were foreseen in the Strategy Paper<sup>10</sup>. This is the first progress report to be made on the follow-up to the Commission Communication (COM(96)67) of February 1996.

The Report which follows is in two parts. Part I looks at how mainstreaming works – the methodology to be adopted. It draws lessons from three areas of the Commission Services where there has been noteworthy progress to date.

Part 2 considers the policy implications of the mainstreaming approach. Using the Commission's 1998 Work Programme, it discusses areas of policy where the gender dimension has already been taken into account or where it could be considered.

It should finally be mentioned that purely DG-internal activities aimed at implementing the Third Action Programme for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men in the European Commission are considered to fall **outside** the scope of the present document. Equal opportunities for men and women Commission staff and a gender balance at all levels of decision-making are important indicators of how far we have come towards equality between women and men. Progress in these areas will be monitored in a separate reporting exercise.

### Part I. THE METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

<sup>4</sup> COM(96)67 of 21 February 1996

<sup>5</sup> *ibid* p.2

<sup>6</sup> COM (96)67 final of 21 February 1996

<sup>7</sup> Doc. SEC(97)692.

<sup>8</sup> SG, CdP, SJ, PP, SCIC, SdT, CCR, DG I, DG IB, DG III, DG IV, DG V, DG VI, DG VII, DG VIII, DG IX, DG XC, DG XI, DG XII, DG XIII, DG XIV, DG XV, DG XVI, DG XX, DG XXI, DG XXII, DG XXIII, ECHO, OPOCE, OS

<sup>9</sup> Available DG V/D/5

<sup>10</sup> Strategy Paper on Mainstreaming a follow-up strategy to COM (96) 67 final, agreed by the Inter-Service Group on equal opportunities in February 1997

## 1.1 Embedding the mainstreaming strategy

The contributions from the services reveal that progress has been made in embedding the mainstreaming policy. Both measures at the organisational level and at the level of policies have been achieved. Placing responsibility for the mainstreaming process with specific officials in the services is a significant step forward, as is the regular contribution of these gender mainstreaming officials to the inter-service co-operation on this issue. Additional steps taken in some services or policy sectors include the allocation or re-allocation of human resources with a view to strengthening co-operation inside the services and strengthening the gender dimension in programmes and activities. Three examples merit special mention here, because of what they reveal of how the methodology of mainstreaming works; DG IB/VIII development co-operation; DG V employment, industrial relations and social affairs; and DG XXII education, training and youth policies.

### *Development co-operation*

Following the adoption in 1995 of the Commission Communication (COM (95) 423) and Council Resolution (of 20 Dec. 1995) on *integrating gender in development co-operation*, the integration of gender issues in this field has advanced considerably. It includes measures such as the selection of pilot countries for intensive attention to gender integration; further development of existing procedures of gender impact assessment; provision of specialist personnel on gender integration at regional and country levels; and programmes of internal training and sensitisation to gender issues, with a view to creating trained advisory functions where gender mainstreaming is considered relevant. Specific attention is paid to the sensitisation of civil servants dealing with issues such as gender in structural adjustment, sectoral and macro economic policies. Awareness-raising aims to show the positive relationship between the mainstreaming of gender equality and the effectiveness of development assistance. New financial proposals as well as ongoing projects are reviewed in DG VIII and DG IB in order to improve their gender orientation.

If adopted, the proposal for a Council Regulation on integration of gender issues in development co-operation<sup>11</sup> would contribute to further institutionalising gender mainstreaming throughout development co-operation policies.

### *Employment, social and industrial relations*

In the field of employment and social affairs, Directorate General V has launched an internal pilot project on gender mainstreaming. An awareness-raising seminar chaired by the Director General, and targeted at senior and middle management, was organised in July and was well attended. The Directors have been given specific responsibility for the integration of the equality dimension in their respective policies. The work programmes of all Directorates are being analysed with a view to determining the relevance of the gender perspective and certain policies have been selected for specific attention. Gender-proofing of documents (checking their content in view of the gender and equality dimension) is on the agenda. Following the new Treaty of Amsterdam, employment policy is an obvious priority for the systematic integration of equal opportunities. The Guidelines for Member States Employment Policies for 1998 were adopted by the Council on 15 December 1997 following a Commission

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<sup>11</sup> COM(97)265 final

proposal which was discussed at the Extraordinary Council in Luxembourg on 20-21 November 1997. They include equal opportunities among the four main pillars of action and already represent a significant result in terms of mainstreaming in employment policy.

### *Education, training and youth policies*

DG XXII has made an organisational effort involving the nomination of "gender focal points" in each unit and involving both management and executive staff. The idea is to make the equality dimension an issue of strategic policy planning and co-ordination at the DG level, and to influence implementation at the executive levels. In each unit an officer has been nominated to be in charge of gender mainstreaming. A network of these gender focal points further reinforces the organisational structure. Equal opportunities are well incorporated into programmes in the fields of education, training and youth policies (SOCRATES and LEONARDO DA VINCI, *YOUTH FOR EUROPE* and *EUROPEAN VOLUNTARY SERVICE*). The equality dimension is incorporated into the calls for tender, the guidelines issued and the application forms, and finally among the selection criteria.

The LEONARDO DA VINCI programme merits particular mention, as the equality dimension is visibly integrated at all levels of the programme objectives, as defined in the Council Resolution,<sup>12</sup> in the horizontal regulations, as well as among the specific (vertical) objectives of the programme.

## **1.2 Progress in terms of certain assessment criteria**

As these examples show, mainstreaming entails a comprehensive approach to ensure that the Community objective of promoting equality between women and men in all its tasks is met.

It is crucial to keep in mind that certain elements are indispensable and certain conditions need to be in place for a successful outcome. Among these are the following:

- high-level commitment
- awareness-raising
- a dual strategy: programmes, positive action measures and budget lines/budgetary allocations specifically targeted on equal opportunities should complement the mainstreaming approach
- co-operation structures
- clear assignment of responsibilities,
- gender expertise (gender impact assessment and gender proofing)
- monitoring and evaluation.

### *1.2.1 High level commitment*

The Community mainstreaming approach is comprehensive and systematic. It involves, in principle, all the services and every Community policy or activity. This would not have been possible without the strong commitment of the EU institutions and Member States.

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<sup>12</sup> Council Decision of 6 December 1994 establishing an action programme for the implementation of a European community vocational training policy.

The proactive role of Member States and the European Community at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, 1995, in successfully advocating the mainstreaming approach to equality between women and men, is an important factor to explain the subsequent Community commitment.

The European Parliament has played an instrumental role in pressing for more systematic integration of equality issues in Community policies. In its resolution<sup>13</sup> on the Commission Communication on Mainstreaming the European Parliament is very much in line with the steps taken by the Commission to implement to gender mainstreaming, both in terms of institutional measures and the selection of priority policy areas. The resolution (paras 7 and 39) recommends that proper co-ordination structures are set up to further the mainstreaming process in the Commission services. Paras 14, 43 and 45 mention the need for guidelines for gender impact assessment and to make sure that all future legislative proposals take account of the gender dimension (gender proofing). The need for a dual strategy is highlighted (para 11). The resolution also points to some specific policy sectors that need strengthening in terms of gender mainstreaming, *inter alia* the enlargement process (para 46), the internal market and EMU (para 31) and the need for improved sex-disaggregated data and statistics (para 38).

The commitment of the Commission is manifest at the level of the College, and in the continued vigilance of the Group of Commissioners on Equal Opportunities, initiated and chaired by the President of the Commission. The adoption in February 1996 of the Commission Communication on Mainstreaming was a strong signal of the intention and will of the European Commission to promote equality between women and men, not only by means of isolated measures, but by making all general policies work towards this end.<sup>14</sup> At the level of the Commission services, the intervention of the Secretary General to the Commission, requesting the appointment by all Directors General of a high-level official who would carry the main responsibility for developing gender mainstreaming in each DG, further testifies to this solid commitment<sup>15</sup>.

### 1.2.2 Awareness-raising

Awareness-raising is crucial as a means to achieving commitment. A Commission-wide seminar on gender mainstreaming was organised in April 1997 and was addressed by external experts presenting the experiences of other international bodies and Member States<sup>16</sup>. As mentioned in para 1.1, internal awareness-raising activities were undertaken in DG5.

At the level of the Commission, International Women's Day is being used as an opportunity to sensitise Commission staff to gender-relevant issues beyond those relating purely to equal opportunities for Commission staff, including the field of international solidarity.

The publications of the DG X Women's Information Section; the *Women of Europe newsletter* and the *Women of Europe dossier* reach a wide audience throughout the EU and world-wide.

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<sup>13</sup> EP resolution A4-0251/97 of 16 September 1997 on the Commission Communication COM(96)67: "Incorporating equal opportunities between women and men into all Community policies and activities".

<sup>14</sup> COM(96)67 final, p.2

<sup>15</sup> Doc. SEC (97) 692

<sup>16</sup> A draft report of the seminar has been drawn up, and is available from V/D/5.

Internal awareness-raising and training activities need to be given high priority by the Gender mainstreaming officials, who, are expected to play a pivotal role in terms of gender sensitisation in their own DGs.

### *1.2.3 The dual strategy*

It is argued by some that «mainstreaming» has been used as an excuse for eliminating specific budget lines or withdrawing human resources with a specific mandate to promote the advancement of women.

In the field of higher education the commitment to gender mainstreaming existed on the one hand in the framework of the SOCRATES programme<sup>17</sup> and on the other hand in a target allocation under a special budget line<sup>18</sup>. Until 1996 this budget line gave the possibility for specific equality-oriented projects, such as gender sensitisation in the field of education, addressing the gender stereotypes of school materials and promoting non-typical educational choices of girls and boys/women and men. In the wake of the new emphasis on a mainstreaming approach, the specific allocation in favour of equal opportunities in this budget line was deleted.

Special mention of the obligation to respect the principle of equal opportunities for women and men was introduced in the 1998 Guidelines for applicants. No specific provisions however, appear to have been made in order to ensure that the overall effect of these changes is positive from an equal opportunities standpoint. Careful evaluation of the impact of these new developments need to be undertaken with a view to implementing any necessary adjustments.

It is crucial to keep in mind that mainstreaming should mean a **strengthening** of efforts and an enhancing of the scope and impact of equal opportunities policies. Specific measures and budgets may be necessary. This may entail, as appropriate, the reallocation of resources.

### *1.2.4 Co-operation structures*

The Inter-service group was set up in 1995 to support the Group of Commissioners on Equal Opportunities, as a preparatory body for the Group and as a vehicle for gender mainstreaming in the Commission services. This Group has considerably strengthened the awareness in the services of Community policies on equal opportunities and facilitated the agreement of follow-up actions to the Commission Communication on Mainstreaming<sup>19</sup>. The Group further serves as a forum for exchange of information and best practice in the field and for discussion on equality-relevant Community policies.

Inter-service co-operation on equal opportunities was further strengthened in 1997 by the setting up of the Group of gender mainstreaming officials. This is a working group, reporting to the Inter-service group on equal opportunities, with a specific mandate to develop and implement the mainstreaming policy.

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<sup>17</sup> Decision no. 819/95/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 March 1995 establishing the Community action programme "Socrates"- OJ No. L87/10 of 20.4.1995..

<sup>18</sup> B3 1000 Preparatory measures for reinforcing co-operation in the field of education

<sup>19</sup> COM(96)67 final

Additional sub-groups, along the lines of the Working Group on Equal Opportunities in the European Structural Funds, may be set up in the framework of the inter-service co-operation on equal opportunities, when appropriate. The ad-hoc working group on Community preparations in advance of each annual meeting of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) is another example. These smaller and more focused working groups are extremely useful for accomplishing concrete objectives or tasks.

Gender mainstreaming essentially requires an integrated policy approach and the co-operation of the services. The successful development of DG-internal gender mainstreaming means that equality between women and men should regularly appear on the policy agenda of the DGs management team, and that there should be more or less formal networks or co-operation structures. The role of these structures is to train and motivate the "gender focal points", who will increasingly serve as spearheads for gender mainstreaming at the levels of Directorate and unit. The example of DG XXII (see 1.1) is pertinent here. Similar networking activities, also involving gender focal points operate in the fields of development co-operation and staff policy (DG IB, DG VIII and DG IX), .

### *1.2.5 Assignment of responsibilities*

In 29 Directorates General and horizontal services, gender mainstreaming officials have been appointed. A number of them are sufficiently high level to be able to influence decision-making processes in their own DGs. The next step would be to decentralise responsibility inside DGs, by allocating responsibilities to gender focal points in all relevant Directorates and units, and defining the responsibilities of the middle and senior management. The examples cited from DG XXII, DG V and DGs IB and VIII are relevant.

Those very few remaining services that do not take part in the inter-service co-operation on equal opportunities are being encouraged to nominate a DG representative.

### *1.2.6 Gender expertise*

Mainstreaming means that each and every service carries a responsibility for analysing the implications for women and men respectively (gender impact assessment) of their policies and activities, and for amending their policies where necessary. Policy proposals need to be checked at the various levels of the decision-making process in order to ascertain that the gender dimension has been duly taken into account (gender proofing). The Gender mainstreaming officials are key personnel. Their efforts are needed to adapt and disseminate the measures agreed at the inter-service level to the conditions and needs of each DG and policy area. In order to fulfil their tasks, they need, as discussed, the support of management, including the necessary time, human and budgetary resources. In addition, they need training in the use of relevant tools, such as gender impact assessment and gender proofing.

Training in gender analysis of relevant staff has already been accomplished in DGs IB and VIII the field of development co-operation policies.

External expertise may be drawn upon in certain instances, in order to undertake studies of gender relevance in policy areas where this is not well understood, or where the potential impact is considered particularly complex or important. DG V launched in 1997 a call for expression of interest for expertise and consultancy in its various areas of concern, indicating gender-relevance in each area.

### *1.2.7 Monitoring and evaluation.*

Regular monitoring is indispensable to ensure progress, evaluate results and adjust the strategy where necessary. In the Strategy Paper of February 1997, regular reporting involving all the services is prescribed. This Report is the first such policy review.

At the level of specific policies, evaluation and monitoring is also being carried out. In the framework of the implementation of the Council Resolution on integrating gender in development,<sup>20</sup> DG IB and VIII have prepared a first progress report which clearly sets out the measures taken at an institutional level and the results in terms of gender integrated projects in the field.

An assessment is being carried out of the ESPRIT programme (DG III) to evaluate the current level of participation of men and women. Assessment of the impact on equal opportunities for women and men is also a priority for the mid-term evaluation of the rural development programmes of the Structural Funds.

Through the Targeted Socio-economic Research Programme a research project on "Predicting the impact of policy: gender auditing as a means of assessing the probable impact of policies initiatives on women" is being financed by DG XII. The objective of this two year research project which started in December 1997 is to develop a procedure for gender-auditing of policies.

### **1.3 Barriers to progress**

Several of the contributions to this report mention the lack of high-level backing as an important obstacle to progress in the field of gender mainstreaming. A much higher level of **awareness-raising** is crucial to the future success of the gender mainstreaming strategy, as pointed out by DG VIII in their contribution. They also point to the related constraints in terms of:

- internal gender expertise being a limited resource;
- limited budgets for hiring external expertise;
- lack of awareness of gender issues in policy decision-making.

The role of Directors General, Directors and Heads of Unit is crucial as they have the mandate and power to ensure that a gender perspective is incorporated from the very beginning of the policy-making process and to ensure that necessary resources are allocated. Measures need to be taken to ensure the full and active support of higher management.

#### *1.3.1 Awareness-raising targeting the DG hierarchies*

The gender mainstreaming officials were nominated at the formal request of the Secretary General to the Commission addressing all the Directors General. The Directors General were called upon to ensure sufficient time and human and budgetary resources are allocated to the gender mainstreaming process in each DG. Their further commitment can only be counted on if they are convinced of the potential of gender mainstreaming for improving the quality and

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<sup>20</sup> Council Resolution of 20 December 1995 on integrating gender in development co-operation

efficacy of policies. Their commitment and support may be further developed by awareness-raising activities, which should draw on the best expertise available in the field.

Awareness-raising activities should aim at increasing knowledge of gender relations and Community policies aimed at “eliminating inequalities and promoting equality between women and men.”<sup>21</sup> Both the fairness and quality aspects of gender-integrated policies should be addressed. Once convinced of their obligations and of the potential of gender mainstreaming for improving the quality and efficacy of policies, the DGs' management teams may be expected to instruct the middle and lower level management. The DG V initiative of incorporating gender mainstreaming in the (voluntary) work contract of Directors is an example of good practice.

#### **1.4 The next steps in terms of methodology**

On the basis of this review, it may be concluded that the process of embedding the gender mainstreaming strategy is on track. It needs, however, to be consolidated and further developed, and to encompass services and policy sectors that so far have remained untouched. It should further be noted that progress to date is rather **piecemeal**. Numerous activities have been carried out, but the overall impression is that isolated measures are still the norm. An altogether more systematic approach is needed, including the application of gender impact assessment of policies, gender proofing procedures and a large-scale training programme to develop gender expertise. The dual approach must not be abandoned. Specific measures of positive action will continue to play a vital part in the promotion of equality for women and men in the foreseeable future.

Below are listed some priority steps that need to be taken

##### *1.4.1 Introducing gender impact assessment of policies*

Gender impact assessment is used to establish whether a policy proposal is likely to affect either sex adversely, and how, conversely, a given policy could, for example, impact positively on the overall objective of equality between women and men. The assessment could show that specific measures will be needed to address existing inequalities, or that the policy proposal needs to be amended or changed in order to accommodate the equality dimension. Gender impact assessment of all forthcoming legislative proposals, by analogy with the existing impact assessments on SMEs and the environment, has been recommended by Parliament.<sup>22</sup>

The availability of good comparative sex-disaggregated statistics and gender relevant data is indispensable for the implementation of gender impact assessment. The Statistical Office has a crucial role to play in providing such statistics in all relevant areas. It is envisaged that the necessary steps will be taken to ensure the collection and analysis of such data at the European level.

A Guide to gender impact assessment was developed by the Group of gender mainstreaming officials in 1997. The Guide may be further developed by adding concrete examples from a wide spectrum of policy fields and sectors, to facilitate the identification of gender relevance

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<sup>21</sup> Treaty of Amsterdam, Article 3.

<sup>22</sup> EP Resolution A4 0251/97 (paras 43 and 45) on the Commission Communication - Incorporating equal opportunities for women and men into all Community policies and activities - “mainstreaming” (COM(96)0067)

in policy areas that have traditionally been considered gender neutral. The Guide would be a useful tool for all Commission officials who are involved in policy-making. The development of gender expertise in the services would facilitate its use. External expertise may be useful in some instances. A database or list of relevant gender experts could be established by each DG.

#### *1.4.2 Setting up gender proofing procedures*

Gender proofing means ensuring that before any decision is taken, (a gender impact assessment) has been made. The idea is to make sure that no policy is proposed that may have a negative effect on the overall objective of gender equality. The long-term objective would be that all legislative proposals and other policy documents of the Commission are "proofed" checked in advance. Each DG will need a procedure to do this internally. Whenever the gender proofing has a negative outcome, for example, if gender relevance has not been considered or taken into account as appropriate, the proposal should be returned to the responsible service for revision; if necessary, external gender expertise should be consulted. Those in charge of the gender proofing will need some training to enable them to exercise their functions.

#### *1.4.3 Developing DG-internal gender expertise*

Training in gender analysis and gender impact assessment will be organised in the course of 1998 by DGIX for key personnel, such as the gender mainstreaming officials and/or their assistants. The aim will be to facilitate the identification of gender relevance, inculcate knowledge of gender relations and equal opportunities policies, and to develop an understanding of how general policies impact on gender relations and equality between women and men. Each DG may need more than one gender expert. Hopefully, a multiplier effect of this training can be expected. The longer term objective is to enable all officials working on policy-preparation and implementation/evaluation to assess gender relevance and contribute to making Community policies gender-sensitive.

## **PART 2. THE OUTCOME IN TERMS OF POLICY: ACHIEVEMENTS AND CHALLENGES**

The following section examines the degree to which gender issues can be seen as being integrated in the priorities of the **Commission Work Programme for 1998**<sup>23</sup>. After listing the achievements, a list of sectors and policy priorities where the gender perspective may need to be given more attention has been drawn up.

### **2.1 The policy achievements**

#### *2.1.1. "Employment: Acting together"*<sup>24</sup>

- In the **Guidelines for Member States' Employment Policies** which were adopted by the Council in December 1997, equal opportunities for women and men is listed among the four main pillars. The equal opportunities dimension will likewise form an integrated part

<sup>23</sup> The Commission's Work Programme for 1998. The political priorities (COM(97)517 final) of 15 October 1997.

<sup>24</sup> All the headings marked in cursory in chapter 2 are copied directly from The Commission's Work Programme for 1998.

of the implementation and evaluation of results in the three other pillars. The implementation of the employment guidelines by the Member States will be reviewed annually by the Commission and by the Council. A detailed analysis of the current Multiannual employment programmes of Member States has revealed that equal opportunities need to be given a much higher profile in the future. The high profile of equal opportunities in the new Employment Guidelines is a result of this.

- Equal opportunities for women and men has been promoted within the framework of the European Social Fund since 1993, with a particular emphasis on: the areas where women are under-represented; women without vocational qualifications, and women returners to the labour market. Among the specific measures targeting women, are various kinds of training, apprenticeships, employment aids and recruitment subsidies, promotion of female entrepreneurship, continuous learning in SMEs, guidance, counselling and placement services, and, in some countries, child-care and other measures aimed at facilitating the reconciliation of family and work responsibilities. Member States have either taken a mainstreaming approach or have adopted specific equal opportunities measures.
- The role of the European Social Fund within the revised Structural Funds will take as its starting point the new Employment Chapter of the Amsterdam Treaty and the Employment Guidelines for Member States. Within the framework of the proposal for a new regulation from 2000 onwards, it is foreseen that ESF activity will concentrate on five policy fields<sup>25</sup>, including improving participation of women in the labour market, career development, access to new job opportunities and entrepreneurship and desegregation (vertical and horizontal) of the labour market. In addition, a mainstreaming approach will be implemented through all policy fields. To facilitate the implementation of this dual approach, the Commission services are preparing appropriate tools and training.
- In the Commission proposal for a new regulation of the European Regional Development Funds (ERDF) the promotion of equality between women and men is foreseen, and will give priority to business creation and the reconciliation of work and family life.
- The 1997 Employment in Europe Report addressed aspects of the promotion of equal opportunities for women and men and the reduction of women's unemployment, and other follow-up to the European Council (Essen) recommendations. Equal opportunities are also treated in the annual "Tableaux de Bord" prepared in collaboration with the European Employment Observatory which reviews all national labour market policies and measures.
- The Green Paper on Partnership for a new **organisation of work**<sup>26</sup> discusses the integration of an equal opportunities perspective and how to adapt the social infrastructure to promote a better reconciliation of work and family responsibilities. The Commission and the Luxembourg Presidency jointly organised a conference in October 1997 on the integration of equal opportunities in the organisation of work. These issues will be further developed in the coming year.

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<sup>25</sup> active labour market policy, promotion of social inclusion, lifelong learning, anticipating and facilitating economic and social change and equal opportunities for men and women.

<sup>26</sup> "Partnership for a new organisation of work (COM(97)128 final)

- In the framework of the **Social Dialogue** the most important recent developments are the framework agreements leading to the Directives on parental leave<sup>27</sup> and part-time work<sup>28</sup>. The aims of the Directive on part-time work are to prevent any form of discrimination against part-time workers; to improve the quality of part time-work; and to facilitate the development of part-time work on a voluntary basis and in doing so to contribute to a flexible organisation of working time. It will be important in this respect, to encourage a more equal distribution of part-time employment between women and men, in order to avoid that economic inequalities between women and men are further entrenched.
- The social dialogue has been selected as one of the DG V policies for particular attention in connection with this DG's pilot project on gender mainstreaming. The Commission supports equality-relevant social dialogue also at the sectoral level, through studies and conferences. In the framework of the Medium-term Community Action Programme on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, the participation of the Social Partners is encouraged, and an information meeting was organised in Brussels on 5th February 1998, with UNICE, ETUC and CEEP – the Union level employer and labour organisations - with a view to encouraging joint proposals for equal opportunities activities. A study on "Women's working conditions in different sectors of the European economy"<sup>29</sup>, focusing on the reconciliation of work and family life, has been commissioned, with a view to stimulating debate in the sectoral social dialogue.
- The 1997 Demographic Report<sup>30</sup> has developed a comprehensive analysis on the renewal of the population of working age. Demographic effects coupled with differences in economic activity between the sexes are clearly marked. In this context a study on the future of European labour supply has been undertaken which focuses on the potential for increasing the female activity rate<sup>31</sup>.
- The 1997 Communication from the Commission on modernising and improving social protection in the European Union emphasises the need to make social protection more employment-friendly and to adapt it to the new gender balance in working life and to changes in family structures.<sup>32</sup>
- The Commission has issued a Report<sup>33</sup> on the state of women's health in the European Community, linking women's health inter alia to socio-economic factors particularly affecting women. As required by Directive 92/85/EEC guidelines are being prepared on the assessment of the chemical, physical and biological agents and industrious processes considered hazardous for the safety and health of pregnant workers, workers who have recently given birth or are breast-feeding. A Commission report on the implementation of the Directive on pregnant workers (92/85) will be published in 1998.

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<sup>27</sup> Council Directive 96/34/EC of 3 June 1996 on the framework agreement on parental leave concluded by UNICE, CEEP and the ETUC

<sup>28</sup> "Council Directive 97/81/EC of 15 December 1997 concerning the Framework Agreement on part-time work concluded by UNICE, CEEP and CES.

<sup>29</sup> An information collection study by Ecotec research and Consulting Ltd.

<sup>30</sup> Demographic Report 1997 COM(97) 361 final of 9 July 1997

<sup>31</sup> "The future of European labour supply" by Jill Rubery and Mark Smith, European Work and Employment Centre, Manchester School of Management, UMIST November 1997

<sup>32</sup> COM (97) 102 final

<sup>33</sup> Report to the Council, to the European Parliament, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions of 22 May 1997 (COM(97)224 final)

### 2.1.2 *"The Euro: Entering the home straight"*

- Since 1996 the Commission has been organising a communications programme on the euro as part of the PRINCE/Priority Information Actions. This has been aimed at all sections of society including consumers, thus benefiting women at least as much as men. A number of actions have been taken to ensure a harmonious changeover to the euro. The Commission will, for example, make recommendations on fair banking charges and, to help with familiarisation, dual display of prices. Lastly, two conferences entitled *L'Euro et les Femmes* and *Femmes - Europe - Information* have been held recently in Italy and France respectively. A publication entitled *Women and the EMU: Information, experience and perspectives* was co-financed by the Finnish EU Representation.

### 2.1.3 *"Agenda 2000: embarking on reform"*

#### *"Making the single market operate more smoothly"*

- A Study has been undertaken on the Impact of the Single Market on the Development of Women's Employment<sup>34</sup>. According to its conclusions, active policies to promote the equal sharing between women and men of work and family responsibilities are needed to avoid that women are harder hit than men by the cuts in public spending caused by convergence policies in Member States, increased competition, added pressure on wages and social standards and the deregularisation of employment.

A Commission Communication "Action Plan for the Free Movement of Workers"<sup>35</sup> has been adopted which addresses the gender balance in the labour market and offers an assessment of the impact of free movement on families and children.

#### *"A competitive economy as the foundation for growth"*

The promotion of women's entrepreneurship is incorporated as an objective of the Third Multiannual Programme for **small and medium-sized enterprises**<sup>36</sup> (SMEs) in the European Union (1997-2000). Among the issues which have been addressed are access to financing and training of women entrepreneurs. In The European Observatory for SMEs Report for 1996 certain conclusions are drawn with regard to how the representation and situation of women entrepreneurs and assisting spouses of the self-employed may be improved. The need to develop statistics regarding both women entrepreneurs and assisting spouses is argued, with a view to enable the Commission to base the policy of equality between women and men on a sound statistical analysis of the situation. As regards assisting spouses, the need for adequate social security provisions and a reform of the relevant laws is stressed.

#### *"Promising sectors for the future"*

Community programmes in the field of **education, training and youth** have a long tradition of promoting equal opportunities for women and men and this aspect has been further strengthened in recent years, as attested to above, in para. 1.1. Young women are, increasingly, equally, or even better, educated than young men, and their potential should be fully used. It is however necessary to make an effort to improve the access of women to the

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<sup>34</sup> V/1734/96

<sup>35</sup> COM(97)586 final

<sup>36</sup> Council Decision of 9 December 1997

opportunities and benefits offered by new technology and The **Information Society**. One of the objectives of the Commission Communication "The Social and Labour Market Dimension of the Information Society: People First - Next Steps"<sup>37</sup> is to raise awareness of the gender dimension. The use of new technologies tend to be highly gender segregated, with women making up the majority among the home workers and teleworkers in routine and low-paid jobs.<sup>38</sup> Further research into this and related areas is currently being conducted by the Institute for Prospective Technological Studies (JRC). The Commission will initiate consultations with the Social Partners on the possible need for Community action on the protection of teleworkers, the majority of whom are women. Further research will be done on the working conditions of teleworkers.

A number of activities related to sensitising women to the opportunities offered by Information Society have been organised. Under the joint DGIII/XIII Information Society Project Office (ISPO) a number of projects addressing women-specific issues related to Information Society and working life were funded in 1997. Concern was expressed by the European Parliament<sup>39</sup> that the aims and objectives of gender research were not spelled out among the priorities of the proposal for a Fifth Framework Programme of the European Community for Research, Technological Development and Demonstration Activities (1998-2002). The modified proposal adopted by the Commission on 14.01.1998 (COM (98) 5 final) addresses this concern and states in one of its recitals that the Community policy on equal opportunities must be taken into account in the implementation of the Fifth Framework Programme.

With a view to promoting equal opportunities for men and women in research, the Commission will convene a conference on "Women and Science, in Brussels on April 28 and 29, 1998 in conjunction with the European Parliament. Beyond the promotion of equal opportunities for men and women in the research sector, where women are traditionally under-represented, there are two specific reasons for seeking greater involvement of women in research activities in Europe :

- The benefits to be derived from harnessing the enormous potential of half the population for research and scientific excellence;
- The key contribution which women can make, given the growing trend to focus the European Union's and Member States' research policies on meeting economic and social needs.

*"Adapting in order to advance"*

Equal opportunities for women and men are to some extent already incorporated into Community economic and social cohesion **as it has been an explicit objective of the European Structural Funds since 1993**. Equal opportunities for women and men were incorporated in 1996 into the Commission guidelines for the adjustment of Structural Funds programmes (to the end of 1999); into the second phase of objective 2 programming, and have since been incorporated also in objectives 1, 5b and 6 programmes. Support for the creation and development of SMEs and co-operatives by women figure among the concerns. Resource centres for women, women as players in regional development and women and

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<sup>37</sup> COM(97)390

<sup>38</sup> V/641/96 "Teleworking and Gender"

<sup>39</sup> European Parliament Opinion of 24 September 1997 from the Committee on Women's rights to the Committee on Research, Technological Development and Energy.

entrepreneurship are among the central issues in this regard. Evaluation criteria and a new monitoring mechanism for mainstreaming equal opportunities in Structural Funds interventions are being developed, the intention being to set up the framework for a monitoring report, including indicators of success. An internal assessment guide for European Structural Funds programme managers will be prepared before summer 1998.

A European level conference on the "Structural Funds and Equal opportunities" will be organised jointly by the Commission and the Portuguese authorities in September 1998. The focus will be on:

- the state of play on Structural Funds implementation
- the assessments undertaken (European and national level studies and evaluations)
- the current reform of the structural policies

The follow-up to the Madrid Council commitment to equal opportunities, the new Treaty of Amsterdam and the Council resolution of 2 December 1996<sup>40</sup> have all called upon the Commission and on Member States to make a continued, deepened and determined effort to mainstream the principle of equal opportunities for women and men into operations supported by the Structural Funds. In the preparation of the proposal for the **new General Regulation** one of the goals is to eliminate inequalities and to promote equality between women and men in economic and social activity through a mainstreaming approach. The mainstreaming strategy will permeate the whole implementation process, from the programming phase to reporting. Additional specific actions for women or men may still be needed to redress particular disparities.

At all levels and stages of the process, evaluation and reporting on gender equality objectives - including the collection and use of pertinent information desegregated by gender and commonly agreed indicators - will be required. At all phases of decision making the aim is to have a balanced participation of women and men and to ensure the commitment of competent authorities and bodies to promoting equality between women and men.

In **agriculture, women's situation as farmers** or assisting spouses has been analysed, and a study has been launched on the remuneration of women in the sector. Among numerous information and awareness-raising events, a European Women Farmers Conference, including policy workshops and exhibitions, was held in Brussels in September 1996, which was attended by Commissioner Fischler and the Council of Agricultural Ministers. Training for women in new technologies and innovation and public relations has been carried out within the framework of the rural development programmes. Under the LEADER initiative many projects have been launched by women in the fields of tourism, small and medium-sized enterprises, crafts and regional products. Experience to date under the various rural development programmes indicates that the participation of women is crucial to the success of the Community's rural development policies. The launch of a 20 Million ECU tender for pilot and demonstration projects, focused on encouraging and developing the role of women in rural areas, underlines the Commission's commitment to securing greater participation of women.

The importance of equal opportunities was also underlined in the mid-term evaluation of the rural development programmes of the Structural Funds. In the *fisheries* sector, a pilot

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<sup>40</sup> Council resolution on mainstreaming equal opportunities for men and women into the European Structural Funds (96/C 386/1)

programme was launched in 1997 in favour of small-scale fisheries in the coastal regions. Appr. 50 per cent of the project proposals and of the selected projects, embracing business creation or the "social economy" (co-operatives, associations etc), training activities and exchange of best practices, relate to fishermen's wives.

#### 2.1.4 *"The Union in the World: A position and a role to assert"*

The promotion and safe-guarding of equal opportunities for women and men is part of an **integrated approach to external relations**, including the **human rights** dimension and **development co-operation**. The European Community has a long-standing commitment to the promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms, and has intervened in various international forums in support of the principle of non-discrimination and equality of all human beings. This is in keeping with the United Nations Charter and the principles set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international and regional human rights instruments, and with the reaffirmation of the World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna in 1993 that the fundamental rights of women and girls are an inalienable, integral and indivisible part of universal human rights. This principle guided the European Union's position at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995. The Commission Communication of November 1995 on the EU and the External Aspects of its Human Rights Policies<sup>41</sup> was an important achievement and serves as a basis for Commission activities for the promotion of women's and girls' human rights. The Communication specifically mentioned women among the vulnerable groups in need of special protection, but also highlighted the dynamic potential of women as indispensable actors in the promotion of true democracy. Equal opportunities for women and men, with a particular focus on increasing the representation of women in decision-making positions, form part of most bi-lateral and multi-lateral dialogues and agreements entered into by the EU. The advancement and empowerment of women are key concepts in Community development co-operation policies and are pursued both by a mainstreaming approach and by specific targeted actions.

As part of EU efforts "to **bring peace**, stability and prosperity to the continent of Europe and the world at large schemes aiming at promoting the participation of women in the peace process in the Balkan region are being supported. The bringing together of women thinkers from warring countries with European politicians and members of international organisations and the establishment of networks and discussion of conflict-resolution through non-violent means, are supported. Women's needs as victims to war and armed conflict are equally being addressed. Gender-sensitivity is in the process of taking centre-stage in the activities of the Humanitarian Office of the European Community (ECHO).

Community activities combating gender based violence and **organised crime**, such as **trafficking in human beings**, mainly in women and children for sexual exploitation, are being reviewed in the Community preparations for the 42nd session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women and the UN monitoring of the implementation of the Global Platform for Action adopted at the Beijing Fourth World Conference on Women.

The STOP Programme and the DAPIINE Initiative implemented by the Task Force on Justice and Home Affairs deserve mention. In this context, the STOP Programme, a multi-annual programme (6,5 Million Ecu over 5 years (1996-2000) aims to encourage practical co-

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<sup>41</sup> Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament (COM (95) 567 final "The European Union and the external dimension of human rights policy

operation between Member States authorities for action against trafficking in human beings and the sexual exploitation of children. It finances activities involving judges, public prosecutors, police departments, immigration officials, civil servants and other concerned public services. Focussed on NGOs rather than the Member State authorities, the DAPHNE initiative (3 Million Ecu each year in 1997 and in 1998) emphasises prevention of violence, protection against violence and rehabilitation of victims, including those who have been subject to trafficking.

## 2.2 Policy challenges

This review based on the Commission Work Programme for 1998 demonstrates that gender issues are already, to some extent, incorporated in many of the political priorities for Community action in 1998. The high gender profile, most noticeably in employment and structural policies, in the field of external policies, and the Commission-internal management reform programme should be continued and, indeed, further developed and expanded. The review reveals, on the other hand, that there remain significant gaps - core policies and sectors which are hardly touched by the gender mainstreaming policy. These gaps need special attention in the coming year. In conclusion, a number of policies are listed which merit special attention from an equal opportunities point of view:

### *Employment and labour market policies*

- The achievements in the field of employment policies need follow-up; ensuring that the equal opportunities pillar of the Employment Guidelines is fully implemented, and that the equal opportunities dimension is incorporated into the implementation and monitoring of the three other priorities;
- The equal sharing of work and family responsibilities between women and men needs to be encouraged as part of the new schemes promoting part-time work, flexibility and new forms of work organisation;

### *Cohesion and regional policies*

Vigilance is needed to ensure that the high profile of equal opportunities in the on-going reform of the European Structural Funds is fully entrenched and made operational in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation process.

### *EMU, the EURO and the Single Market*

It is argued in the EP resolution<sup>42</sup> on the Commission Communication on Mainstreaming, that "women's position and situation in society should be taken more into consideration when advancing policies to support the internal market, and not least policies to support EMU". All necessary steps should be taken to ensure that EMU and fiscal consolidation have a positive impact on equality between women and men.

An effort is needed to ensure that the establishment of a single market that "boosts growth, competitiveness and employment", is not hampered by inflexibilities caused by the entrenched patterns of job segregation in the labour market. Dedicated measures should be

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<sup>42</sup> EP resolution A4-0251 of 16 September 1997 on the Commission Communication COM (96) 67; "Incorporating equal opportunities between women and men into all Community policies and activities", "Mainstreaming" para. 31

taken to speed up the desegregation process, in particular promoting diversity and the full use of women's capacities and potential in management positions and decision-making<sup>43</sup> in the public and private sectors.

In view of the demographic changes associated with the ageing of the population in Europe, the future labour supply becomes increasingly important<sup>44</sup>. It is stated in the Commission's Work Programme for 1998 that "existing tax arrangements have a negative effect on employment" and that "the Commission will propose initiatives aimed at gradually correcting these shortcomings". It could be relevant to consider individualisation of taxation as an employment incentive. As women are increasingly equally, or even better, qualified as compared to men, this would increase the pool of qualified labour supply and could enhance the smooth functioning of the Single Market.

### *Research Policy, New technologies and The Information Society*

It is of vital importance that women are not left behind in the process of fostering knowledge and skills. Women's full participation is needed in the shaping of an Information Society that is gender-sensitive and benefits women and men equally. Numerous more or less one-off Community-sponsored activities are being undertaken. Nevertheless, men and a male perspective still prevail in this field. Women continue to be under-represented at the highest academic levels and in the field of research and innovation. A coherent gender approach to the implementation of the Fifth Framework Programme of the European Community for research, technological development and demonstration activities (1998-2002), and to other Community action in this field is needed. There are important benefits to be derived from harnessing the full potential of both women and men for research and scientific development, with a view to the enrichment and synergy of the combined male and female perspectives on scientific research and the development and use of new technologies. Given the growing trend to focus the EU and Member States' research policies on meeting economic and social needs, women can make a key contribution.

### *The enlargement process*

There is a strong need to address more systematically the requirements as well as the impact, in terms of equality between women and men, of the enlargement process. The Community acquis in the field of equal opportunities between women and men must be fully incorporated in the strengthening of the present pre-accession strategy. Equality between women and men should be made an explicit issue by:

- incorporating a gender perspective into mainstream programmes, in addition to earmarked means for equal opportunities objectives, where needed;
- encouraging the participation of the applicant countries in Community programmes addressing equal opportunities for women and men, including the Medium-term Action Community Programme on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men (1996-2000).

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<sup>43</sup> Cfr. the Council Recommendation on the balanced participation of women and men in the decision-making process (96/694/EC)

<sup>44</sup> Demographic Report 1997 (COM (97) 361 final of 9 July 1997. See also Jill Rubery and Mark Smith "The future of European Labour supply, European Work and Employment Research Centre, Manchester School of Management, UMIST, November 1997.

*Europe of the citizens*

Eurobarometer Surveys reveal that women and men perceive issues surrounding European integration differently. Women are in general more sceptical than men. The full implications of these gender disparities<sup>45</sup> need to be analysed, with a view, if necessary, to adjusting Community policies. The equal support of women and men respectively should be a yard stick for assessing the success of European integration.

*Modernising the Commission's administration*

The promotion of equal opportunities is an important element of the Commission's on-going programme to modernise its **administration** and decision-making machinery (MAP 2000). Work efficiency and organisation are and will be addressed as a means inter alia to improve the reconciliation of work and family commitments. A Third Action Programme for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men in the European Commission (1997-2000) has been adopted and aims to develop a gender-sensitive work culture which takes account of female and male values, of differences in attitudes, priorities, working methods, as well as of gender specific needs. The setting of annual targets for the recruitment and the appointment of women, as well as the monitoring of women's representation at all levels of the Commission structure form part of this exercise

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<sup>45</sup> Eurobarometer 44.3 of December 1996

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