

**Opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee on the Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions A Roadmap for equality between women and men 2006-2010**

COM(2006) 92 final

(2006/C 318/29)

On 1 March 2006 the Commission decided to consult the European Economic and Social Committee, under Article 262 of the Treaty establishing the European Community, on the abovementioned proposal.

The Section for Employment, Social Affairs and Citizenship, which was responsible for preparing the Committee's work on the subject, adopted its opinion on 13 July 2006. The rapporteur was Grace Attard.

At its 429th plenary session, held on 13-14 September 2006 (meeting of 13 September 2006), the European Economic and Social Committee adopted the following opinion by 175 votes to 11 with nine abstentions.

## 1. Conclusions and recommendations

1.1 The EESC welcomes the Commission's political will to keep gender equality high on its agenda for the period 2006-2010. It appreciates President Barroso's personal commitment to its adoption and agrees with the importance of involving all stakeholders in the implementation of its priorities.

### 1.2 The EESC:

— acknowledges that common priorities in the coordination of employment policies are necessary to increase the female participation rate;

— finds that national governments, national equality bodies and the social partners of all Member States have a clear obligation to ensure that the pay systems they put in place do not lead to pay discrimination between women and men;

— recommends that with regard to women entrepreneurs, strategies should aim at improving women's access to bank credits and bank services;

— recommends that the national curricula should include entrepreneurship education at secondary and tertiary levels, especially among females, and that measures be taken to make more women graduate in scientific/technical disciplines in order to address the employment gender gaps that exist in technical areas like engineering and ICT-related services;

— proposes that strategies with regard to gender equality in social protection and the fight against poverty should be stepped up to ensure that taxation and social security systems address the needs of women at risk of poverty, particularly single mothers; there should also be concrete policy proposals aimed at encouraging single parents to

develop marketable skills and to facilitate their access to employment;

— believes that the national strategies for health and long term care should include integrated policies that address women health standards at work;

— calls for increased consideration, investigation and analysis of the impact of the demands for caring for others and the resulting drain on women's physical and mental health;

— submits that the open method of coordination should be applied to the field of health care and incorporate gender equality objectives;

— acknowledges the phenomenon of feminisation of migration and recommends that gender equality be fully mainstreamed into EU policy and actions at each stage of the migration process;

— recognises the importance of developing measures, including the setting of precise targets and indicators, to ensure the provision of care for children as well as for dependent elderly and disabled;

— recommends the introduction of targets and deadlines in order to increase female participation in all forms of decision-making;

— recommends the development of a European Action Plan on Violence Against Women;

— calls for Member States to ensure that measures are implemented in order to grant victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation increased rights and support;

— recommends the development of pan-European awareness actions on zero-tolerance for sexist insults and degrading images of women in the media;

- finds that Member States should ensure that audiovisual commercial communications do not include any discrimination on grounds of race, sex or nationality, as recommended in the Directive proposed by the Commission on the coordination of certain provisions concerning the pursuit of television broadcasting services <sup>(1)</sup>;
- recommends the introduction of gender training modules in media-training institutions and strong mechanisms aimed at gender balance at all decision-making levels within the media industry;
- recommends that the EU in the context of the EU Development Policy women should have adequate access to EU financial assistance channelled particularly through national projects carried out by women's organisations;
- calls for the European Commission Humanitarian Aid (ECHO) policy to prioritise aid and financial assistance for women in gender-based violence perpetrated during conflicts;
- believes that improving governance for gender equality is crucial to the success of the Roadmap; it recommends the strengthening of mechanisms for dialogue and consultation with organised civil society, in particular with women's organisations at national level;
- calls for the setting-up of a Gender Budgeting Working Group within the Commission's DG Budget and the carrying-out of a separate gender impact assessment of the EU budget on an annual basis.

## 2. Reasons

### 2.1 Gist of the Commission Communication

2.1.1 The EU has made significant progress in achieving gender equality, thanks to equal treatment legislation, gender mainstreaming, specific measures for the advancement of women, action programmes, social dialogue and dialogue with civil society. Nevertheless, inequalities remain and may widen, as increased global economic competition requires a more flexible and mobile labour force. This can impact more on women, who are often obliged to choose between having children or a career, due to the lack of flexible working arrangements and care services, the persistence of gender stereotypes, and an unequal share of family responsibilities with men.

<sup>(1)</sup> Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Directive 89/552/EEC on the coordination of certain provisions laid down by law, regulation or administrative action in Member States concerning the pursuit of television broadcasting activities (COM(2005) 646 final).  
URL: [http://ec.europa.eu/comm/avpolicy/docs/reg/modernisation/proposal\\_2005/com2005-646-final-en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/comm/avpolicy/docs/reg/modernisation/proposal_2005/com2005-646-final-en.pdf).

2.1.2 The Commission's roadmap outlines six priority areas for EU action on gender equality for the period 2006-2010:

- equal economic independence for women and men;
- reconciliation of private and professional life;
- equal representation in decision-making;
- eradication of all forms of gender-based violence;
- elimination of gender stereotypes;
- promotion of gender equality in external and development policies.

For each area, priority objectives and actions are identified. The Commission cannot achieve these objectives alone, as in many areas the centre of gravity for action lies at Member State level. Thus, the roadmap represents the Commission's commitment to driving the gender equality agenda forward, reinforcing partnership with the Member States and other actors.

2.1.3 In order to improve governance for gender equality, the Commission also sets out a number of key actions and commits itself to monitor progress closely.

### 2.2 General comments

2.2.1 The EESC welcomes the Commission's political will to keep gender equality high on its agenda for the period 2006-2010. It appreciates President Barroso's personal commitment to its adoption and agrees with the importance of involving all stakeholders in the implementation of its priorities.

2.2.2 Gender equality is a fundamental right, a value common to both the EU and its Member States and a necessary condition for the achievement of the EU's objectives of growth, employment and social cohesion, which also constitute the main bulwarks of the Lisbon Agenda. The EESC supports the Roadmap's strategy based on the dual approach of gender equality mainstreaming and specific actions.

2.2.3 Progress made by women, including in key areas such as education and research, are not fully reflected in women's position in the labour market. The EU simply cannot afford not to maximise on its human capital. At the same time, demographic change leading to low birth rates and a shrinking workforce are challenges that threaten the EU's political and economic role.

2.2.4 The EESC also welcomes the Commission's objective to address and eliminate gender-based violence and trafficking. These are barriers to the achievement of gender equality and a violation of women's human rights.

2.2.5 Moreover, the EESC supports the Commission's commitment to address global challenges and to safeguard and integrate women's human rights into all relevant EU external policies, actions and programmes.

### 2.3 *Specific comments to Part I: Priority Areas of Action for Gender Equality*

2.3.1 Success in tackling the priority areas identified by the Roadmap requires integrated strategies as well as ensuring that gender equality is explicitly addressed and included in all policies, at the appropriate EU and national levels. EU mechanisms and resources need to be strengthened to ensure effective gender mainstreaming at national level, as set out in the Gender Equality Pact agreed upon in the Spring Council 2006.

2.3.2 Concrete monitoring of the Roadmap needs to be done in cooperation with the Member States. Although indicators to monitor progress already exist, it is important to develop comparable data at EU level.

#### 2.3.3 Achieving Equal Economic Independence for Women and Men

##### 2.3.3.1 Reaching the Lisbon employment targets

2.3.3.1.1 The Lisbon employment targets call for a 60 % employment rate for women by 2010. Despite the commitments undertaken by the Member States with regard to the Lisbon Strategy, the Growth and Jobs Agenda and the existence of a binding set of EU rules concerning gender equality in employment, serious gender gaps still remain. There is a lower employment rate for women (55.7 % against 70 % for men) which is much lower (31.7 %) for older women between 55 and 64 years of age. Women also have a higher unemployment rate than men (9.7 % against 7.8 %). The gender dimension of the Lisbon strategy for jobs and growth must be strengthened.

2.3.3.1.2 The Commission focuses on compliance with equal treatment legislation, effective use of the new Structural Funds and making work pay in particular through the individualisation of rights linked to tax and benefit systems. The

EESC welcomes the setting up of the European Institute for Gender Equality, however adequate human and financial resources are necessary for its effective functioning <sup>(2)</sup>.

2.3.3.1.3 The Committee acknowledges that common priorities in the co-ordination of employment policies are necessary to increase the female participation rate. In assessing National Reform Programmes, the Commission needs to ensure that gender gaps are given priority and that the necessary action is taken.

2.3.3.1.4 The EESC believes that national governments, national equality bodies and the social partners of all Member States have a clear obligation to ensure that the pay systems they put in place do not lead to pay discrimination between women and men.

2.3.3.1.5 The Committee is concerned that certain new form of work organisation can result in exploitation of workers and in precarious jobs often carried out by women, and firmly believes that a balance should be struck between flexibility and security.

The EESC believes that gender based reliable and comparable data relating to obstacles to employment for women with disabilities is crucial for their integration in the labour market.

##### 2.3.3.2 Eliminating the gender pay gap

2.3.3.2.1 Despite EU legislation on equal pay, women earn an EU average of 15 % less than men <sup>(3)</sup> and this gap is decreasing at a much slower pace than the gender employment gap. Its persistence results from direct and indirect discrimination against women and structural inequalities, such as segregation in sectors, occupations and work patterns, career breaks for child and other family care, access to education and training, biased evaluation and pay systems and stereotypes. Technical, human and financial resources are not necessarily available in all Member States.

2.3.3.2.2 In its forthcoming communication on the gender pay gap and the involvement of social partners, the Commission should ensure that there is greater consistency in national legal provisions on equality rights, together with ease of access to avenues of redress.

<sup>(2)</sup> EESC opinion of 28.9.2005 on the 'Creation of a European Institute for Gender Equality', rapporteur: Ms Štečková (OJ C 24, 31.1.2006, pp. 29-33).  
URL: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/JOHtm1.do?textfield2=24&year=2006&-Submit=Search&serie=C>.

<sup>(3)</sup> Unadjusted gap.

### 2.3.3.3 Women entrepreneurs

2.3.3.3.1 Women constitute on average 30 % of entrepreneurs in the EU. They often face greater difficulties than men in starting up business and in accessing finance and training. The EU Entrepreneurship Action Plan needs to be further implemented and made more gender-sensitive. Promoting entrepreneurship, information and initial support to facilitate the creation and development of new firms using a variety of techniques including easier access to finance for start-ups are necessary. Strategies should improve access of women to bank credits and bank services. Furthermore, female entrepreneurs should be enabled to network with financial institutions in order to create tailor-made support packages, particularly with regard to micro-financing.

2.3.3.3.2 The national curricula should include entrepreneurship education at secondary and tertiary levels, especially among females to promote a culture of women's participation in setting up of innovative ideas in this area. However, not all women want to be self-employed. National curricula should, therefore, also inform students on their rights relating to employment and encourage them to take up work in 'non-traditional' sectors.

2.3.3.3.3 A specific, but integrated female entrepreneurship policy would serve in particular to address the employment gender gaps that exist in technical areas like engineering, ICT-related services and skilled jobs.

### 2.3.3.4 Gender Equality in social protection and the fight against poverty

2.3.3.4.1 Social protection systems should remove any disincentives for women and men to enter and remain in the labour market, allowing them to accumulate individual pension entitlements. Women should be able to benefit from pension rights and alternative models should be found to guarantee entitlement for women. Women are still more likely to have shorter or interrupted careers and therefore fewer rights than men. This increases the risk of poverty, especially for single parents, older women or women working in family-based business such as agriculture and fisheries and the retail and manufacturing sectors. Member States should also ensure the protection of migrant women from exploitation in these sectors.

2.3.3.4.2 Strategies should be stepped up to ensure that women at risk of poverty whether in the labour market or not develop marketable skills that will guarantee their future financial independence <sup>(4)</sup>.

<sup>(4)</sup> EESC opinion of 29.9.2005 on 'Poverty among women in Europe', rapporteur: Ms King (OJ C 24 of 31.1.2006, pp. 95-101).  
URL: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/OJHtml.do?textfield2=24&year=2006&Submit=Search&serie=C>.

2.3.3.4.3 The EESC proposes that strategies with regard to gender equality in social protection and the fight against poverty should be stepped up to ensure that taxation and social security systems address the needs of women at risk of poverty, particularly single mothers. There should also be concrete policy proposals aimed at encouraging single parents to develop marketable skills and to facilitate their access to employment. In particular, there is the need to overhaul the current low differentials between unemployment benefits plus supplementary allowances for dependents and the national minimum wage which is felt more acutely in some Member States.

2.3.3.4.4 In practice, the enhancement of work attractiveness should not be limited exclusively to the remuneration package but also to other non-fiscal incentives such as job flexibility and training opportunities for low-skilled workers. Adequately subsidised childcare facilities for those families — whether one- or two-parent families — at risk of poverty with two and more offspring should be provided.

2.3.3.4.5 The risk of poverty is highest among single parent households (35 % of the EU average), 85 % of which are headed by women. Women aged over 65 years are also at high risk of poverty. Low-skilled women are at risk of being forced out of work before retirement age.

### 2.3.3.5 Recognising the gender dimension in health

2.3.3.5.1 Women and men are confronted with specific health risks, diseases, issues and practices impacting on their health. This includes environmental issues such as chemicals, as tackled by the REACH proposal, and pesticides that are often transmitted through breast feeding. Current medical research and health and safety standards relate more to male-dominated work areas. Knowledge and research in this field and statistics and indicators should be further developed from the female perspective also.

2.3.3.5.2 In the context of action to improve women's occupational health and safety in areas where women are most numerous, the national strategies for health and long term care should include integrated policies that address health standards at work for women farmers and the health of women in farming families generally, as well as repetitive strain in industry. This should also include information and education for empowerment.

2.3.3.5.3 Furthermore, the EESC also calls for increased consideration, investigation and analysis of the impact of the demands for caring for others and the resulting drain on women's physical and mental health.

2.3.3.5.4 The EESC agrees with the EU gender equality objectives and submits that the Open Method of Coordination should be applied to the field of health care and incorporate gender equality objectives and include the strengthening of preventive programmes. In addition, there is the need to intensify gender-sensitive initiatives that address sexually transmitted diseases (including HIV/AIDS) and sexual and reproductive health issues.

#### 2.3.3.6 Combating multiple discrimination, in particular against immigrant and ethnic minority women

2.3.3.6.1 Women members of disadvantaged groups are often worse off than their male counterparts. They often suffer from multiple discrimination. The promotion of gender equality in migration and integration policies is necessary to ensure women's rights and civic participation to fully use their employment potential and to improve their access to education and training.

2.3.3.6.2 The EESC regrets that The Hague Objectives, adopted by the European Council to be implemented in the area of Freedom, Security and Justice during 2005-2010, do not address the specific situation of migrant women. It acknowledges the phenomenon of feminisation of migration and recommends that gender be fully mainstreamed into EU policy and actions at each stage of the migration process, in particular at the stage of admission and integration into host societies.

2.3.3.6.3 Transposition and implementation of existing asylum-related instruments, in particular temporary protection and minimum standards for reception conditions, are consistent with the obligations stemming from international conventions on human rights and the 1951 Geneva Convention. Moreover, asylum policies should reflect the nature of gender-based persecution of women who flee their country for this reason.

#### 2.3.3.7 The key actions set out by the Commission in this area

2.3.3.7.1 The EESC endorses the key actions set out by the Commission, in particular where it gives priority to monitoring and strengthening gender mainstreaming. It agrees with the initiatives to streamline the open method of coordination covering, inter alia, pensions, social inclusion, health and long term care. The main focus here must be on promoting equality between men and women <sup>(3)</sup>.

<sup>(3)</sup> Please see point 5.2.2 of the EESC opinion of 20 April 2006 on the Strategy for open coordination on social protection; rapporteur: Mr Olsson (OJ C 185 of 8.8.2006, p. 87).  
URL: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/jOIndex.do?year=2006&serie=C&textfield2=185&Submit=Search>.

#### 2.3.4 Enhancing Reconciliation of Work, Private and Family Life

2.3.4.1 The EESC recognises the importance of developing measures, including the setting of precise targets and indicators, to ensure the provision of childcare facilities from birth to mandatory school age and affordable and accessible care services for other dependent persons, as this impinges directly on female participation in paid work. After-school services for children throughout their school life, matching the parents' working hours should, also be introduced.

2.3.4.2 The EESC agrees with the importance of striking a balance between personal and professional life and acknowledges that the benefits of flexible working arrangements are still not as widely resorted to as they should be. The Committee is concerned that certain new forms of work organisation can result in exploitation of workers and in precarious jobs often carried out by women, and firmly believes that a balance should be struck between flexibility and security.

2.3.4.3 The EU has recognised the importance of achieving a balance in private and working life for women and men <sup>(4)</sup>. The gendered division of domestic and caring tasks in the home needs to be changed to achieve an equal sharing between men and women. The role of men within the household needs to be enhanced. Moreover, within the context of the current discussions on the revision of the working time Directive, there is the need to establish working timetables which are socially compatible with family responsibilities.

The EESC recognises the importance of developing measures, including the setting of precise targets and indicators, to ensure the provision of care for children as well as for dependent elderly and disabled.

#### 2.3.5 Promoting Equal Participation of Women and Men in Decision-Making

2.3.5.1 The under-representation of women in politics, economic decision-making and in science and technology is still not being effectively dealt with. The proposed key actions of the Commission aim to address this undemocratic situation. However, commitment by Member states to take the necessary measures is still very weak. Segregation is visible in both the public and private sectors. Women are under-represented in top level and decision-making posts in both the public and private sector.

<sup>(4)</sup> Resolution of the Council and of the ministers for employment and social policy of 29 June 2000 on the balanced participation of women and men in family and working life (2000/C 218/02).  
URL: [http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/pri/en/oj/dat/2000/c\\_218/c\\_21820000731en00050007.pdf](http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/pri/en/oj/dat/2000/c_218/c_21820000731en00050007.pdf).

2.3.5.2 The Committee is therefore recommending the introduction of targets and deadlines for the attainment of equity in order to increase female participation in all forms of decision-making, since it believes that these could effectively boost the representation of women in political leadership, economic decision-making, science and technology.

2.3.5.3 Furthermore, all European institutions should effectively implement positive action measures at all levels where women are under-represented in decision-making in accordance with Article 1d (77) 96 of the Staff Regulations of Officials of the European Communities of 1.5.2004 (<sup>7</sup>). The outcome of such positive action measures should be regularly monitored and published.

### 2.3.6 Eradicating Gender-based Violence and Trafficking

2.3.6.1 The Commission is committed to combat all forms of violence. Women are the main victims of gender-based violence. The EESC has recently addressed this issue in an own-initiative opinion on domestic violence against women (<sup>8</sup>). Domestic violence against women hinders their social inclusion and in particular their inclusion in the labour market, resulting in marginalisation, poverty and financial and material dependency. There is the need for the development of a European Action Plan on Violence against Women.

2.3.6.2 Trafficking in human beings cannot be dealt with on its own. It is an integral component of organised crime and requires the cooperation of all Member States for a more consistent security policy and a common legal framework to be able to operate effectively in this field. The Hague programme (<sup>9</sup>) and the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organised Crime (<sup>10</sup>) define the objectives of the EU in this area. The EESC has adopted an opinion, which stresses the importance of an effective security protecting citizens in a free and open society within a framework of justice under the rule of law (<sup>11</sup>).

(<sup>7</sup>) See: [http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/dgs/personnel\\_administration/statut/tocen100.pdf](http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/dgs/personnel_administration/statut/tocen100.pdf).

(<sup>8</sup>) EESC opinion of 16.3.2006 on 'Domestic violence against women', rapporteur: Ms Heinisch (OJ C 110 of 9.5.2006, p. 89). URL: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/JOIIndex.do?year=2006&serie=C&text-field2=110&Submit=Search>.

(<sup>9</sup>) See [http://ec.europa.eu/justice\\_home/news/information\\_dossiers/the\\_hague\\_priorities/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/justice_home/news/information_dossiers/the_hague_priorities/index_en.htm).

(<sup>10</sup>) See [http://www.unodc.org/unodc/crime\\_cicp\\_convention.html](http://www.unodc.org/unodc/crime_cicp_convention.html).

(<sup>11</sup>) EESC opinion of 15.12.2005 on the 'Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament: The Hague Programme: Ten priorities for the next five years — the Partnership for renewal in the field of Freedom, Security and Justice', rapporteur: Mr Pariza-Castaños (OJ C 65 of 17.3.2006, pp. 120-130). URL: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/JOIIndex.do?year=2006&serie=C&text-field2=65&Submit=Search>.

2.3.6.3 Trafficked women should not be subjected to involuntary deportation, as they may be in danger from traffickers in their home countries if they are forced to return. Instead they should be granted right of residence in the country to which they have been brought, with due safeguards against possible abuse of such a right being introduced.

2.3.6.4 The Committee calls for Member States to insure that measures are implemented in order to grant women victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation increased rights and support. There is the need to address the escalating demand for sexual services by increasing awareness campaign especially targeting clients. This should be part of a wider educational initiative to expand people's access to alternative jobs and finance.

2.3.6.5 Consideration should be given by Member States to the criminalisation of the buying of sexual services or, at the very least, to the greater protection of trafficked or otherwise unwilling participants in the sex trade.

### 2.3.7 Eliminating Gender Stereotypes in Society

2.3.7.1 The EESC agrees with the Commission that the media play a key role in forming attitudes and behaviour. The proposed actions covering the elimination of gender stereotypes in education, in the labour market and in the media deal with these issues and provide direction for Member States.

2.3.7.2 While acknowledging that, in the case of women, access to the media and especially to decision-making positions in the media is still lacking, the EESC agrees that policies need to be formulated in relation to gender equality and the media. The EESC therefore recommends:

- (a) The development of pan-European awareness actions on zero-tolerance for sexist insults and degrading images of women in the media.
- (b) As recommended in the Directive proposed by the Commission on the coordination of certain provisions concerning the pursuit of television broadcasting services, Member States should ensure that audiovisual commercial communications do not include any discrimination on grounds of race, sex or nationality (<sup>12</sup>).
- (c) Encouraging the introduction of gender training modules in media-training institutions, while developing strong mechanisms aimed at gender balance at all decision-making levels within the media industry.

(<sup>12</sup>) COM(2005) 646 final. See footnote 2.

(d) The development of public broadcasting as an independent media tool with a public service mission to safeguard human rights and gender equality.

2.3.7.3 The EESC agrees with the proposed action to raise awareness through the Commission's plan for 'Democracy, Dialogue and Debate' <sup>(13)</sup> ('Plan D'), as well as the activities related thereto that are organised by its respective Representation Offices in the Member States.

### 2.3.8 Promoting Gender Equality outside the EU

2.3.8.1 The EESC supports the Commission's role in advancing women's rights in an international context.

2.3.8.2 EU external and development policies must reflect the fact that women play a key role in the elimination of poverty, and that their economic, educational, political and sexual empowerment affects not only them, but their families and the community.

2.3.8.3 The EU must, furthermore, guarantee that women's needs and perspectives are mainstreamed and monitored, at both national and EU level, and ensure that women have adequate access to EU financial assistance in the context of the EU Development Aid Policy.

2.3.8.4 In situations of crisis intervention, there is the need to mainstream a gender perspective in the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) in line with UN Resolution 1325 <sup>(14)</sup> and the European Resolution on the participation of women in peaceful conflict resolution of November 2000.

2.3.8.5 The European Commission Humanitarian Aid (ECHO) policy should prioritise aid and financial assistance for women in gender-based violence perpetrated during conflicts periods and to seek redress through the mechanisms of international law in the aftermath of armed conflict.

Brussels, 13 September 2006.

### 2.4 Part II: Improving Governance for Gender Equality

2.4.1 Gender equality can only be achieved with a clear commitment at the highest political level. The Commission promotes gender equality within its own ranks <sup>(15)</sup> and supports a number of structures working on gender issues, which have led to significant progress. However, major progress still has to be achieved in the key areas identified in the Roadmap and this requires better governance at all levels: EU institutions, Member States, parliaments, social partners and civil society. At national level, the support of gender equality Ministers is essential.

2.4.2 The EESC recommends the reinforcement of existing structures at Commission level to promote gender equality, through improved consistency and networking systems, as well as the strengthening of mechanisms for dialogue and consultation with organised civil society. There should be more support with and recognition of women's organisations at national level, as well as enhanced synergies based on the principle of participative democracy.

2.4.3 Furthermore, the EESC advocates the setting up of mandatory gender mainstreaming and gender awareness training within the EU's institutional set-up.

2.4.4 The EESC also recommends the setting up of a Gender Budgeting Working Group within the Commission's DG Budget and the carrying out of a separate gender impact assessment of the EU budget on an annual basis.

2.4.5 The EESC believes that monitoring progress in the implementation is crucial to ensure that the objectives set out in the Roadmap are reached. The mid-term review to be carried out in 2008 should also serve to further develop appropriate measures, if necessary, other than those in the policy areas so far identified, leading up to 2010 and the follow-up of this Roadmap.

The President  
of the European Economic and Social Committee  
Anne-Marie SIGMUND

<sup>(13)</sup> Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions — The Commission's contribution to the period of reflection and beyond: Plan-D for Democracy, Dialogue and Debate (COM(2005) 494 final).  
URL: [http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/lex/LexUriServ/site/en/com/2005/com2005\\_0494en01.pdf](http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/lex/LexUriServ/site/en/com/2005/com2005_0494en01.pdf).

<sup>(14)</sup> See <http://www.peacewomen.org/un/sc/1325.html> (adopted on 31 October 2000).

<sup>(15)</sup> Annex III to the Communication.