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REPORT

on the objectives of equality of opportunities between women and men in the use
of the Structural Funds
(2002/2210(INI))

Committee on Women's Rights and Equal Opportunities

Rapporteur: María Antonia Avilés Perea

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PROCEDURAL PAGE

At the sitting of 24 October 2002, the President of Parliament announced that the Committee on Women's Rights and Equal Opportunities had been authorised to draw up an own-initiative report, pursuant to Rule 163 of the Rules of Procedure, on the objectives of equality of opportunities between women and men in the use of the Structural Funds.

The Committee on Women's Rights and Equal Opportunities had appointed María Antonia Avilés Perea rapporteur at its meeting of 18 June 2002.

It considered the draft report at its meetings of 3 December 2002, 22 January 2003 and 19 February 2003.

At the last meeting it adopted the motion for a resolution by 21 votes to 1, with 1 abstention.

The following were present for the vote: Anna Karamanou, chairperson; Marianne Eriksson, vice-chairperson; Jillian Evans, vice-chairperson; María Antonia Avilés Perea, rapporteur; Regina Bastos, Johanna L.A. Boogerd-Quaak (for Marieke Sanders-ten Holte pursuant to Rule 153(2)), Armonia Bordes, Lone Dybkjær, Ilda Figueiredo (for Geneviève Fraisse), Lissy Gröner, Mary Honeyball, María Izquierdo Rojo (for María Rodríguez Ramos), Karin Jöns (for Helena Torres Marques), Astrid Lulling, Maria Martens, Christa Prets, Amalia Sartori, Miet Smet, Patsy Sørensen, Joke Swiebel, Feleknas Uca, Elena Valenciano Martínez-Orozco and Sabine Zissener.

The report was tabled on 24 February 2003.

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

European Parliament Resolution on the objectives of equality of opportunities between women and men in the use of the Structural Funds (2002/2210(INI))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to Articles 2, 3(2) and 141(4) of the EC Treaty,
- having regard to Council Regulation (EC) No 1260/1999 of 21 June 1999 laying down general provisions on the Structural Funds¹,
- having regard to Regulation (EC) No 1784/1999 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 12 July 1999 on the European Social Fund²,
- having regard to Regulation (EC) No 1783/1999 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 12 July 1999 on the European Regional Development Fund³,
- having regard to Council Regulation (EC) No 1257/1999 of 17 May 1999 on support for rural development from the European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund (EAGGF) and amending and repealing certain Regulations⁴,
- having regard to the Council Resolution of 2 December 1996 on incorporating equal opportunities for men and women into the European Structural Funds⁵,
- having regard to European Commission Technical Paper No 3 entitled ‘Mainstreaming equal opportunities for women and men in Structural Fund programmes and projects’ of March 2000,
- having regard to Council Decision No 2001/51/EC of 20 December 2000 establishing a Programme relating to the Community framework strategy on gender equality (2001-2005)⁶,
- having regard to the conclusions of the Lisbon European Council of 23 and 24 March 2000,
- having regard to the conclusions of the Stockholm European Council of 23 and 24 March 2001,
- having regard to the conclusions of the Barcelona European Council of 15 and 16 March 2002,
- having regard to its resolution of 25 April 2002 on the Report from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on equal opportunities for men and women in the European Union - 2000⁷,
- having regard to its resolution of 13 June 2002 on the 12th annual Commission report on the Structural Funds (2000), the annual Commission report on the Cohesion Fund (2000) and the annual Commission report on the instrument for structural policy for pre-accession (ISPA)

¹ OJ L 161, 26.6.1999, p. 1.

² OJ L 213, 13.8.1999, p. 5.

³ OJ L 213, 13.8.1999, p. 1.

⁴ OJ L 160, 26.6.1999, p. 80.

⁵ OJ C 386, 20.12.1996, p. 1.

⁶ OJ L 17, 19.1.2001, p. 22.

⁷ P5_TA (2002) 0206.

(2000)¹,

- having regard to the Third European Seminar on ‘Equal opportunities for women and men in the Structural Funds’, held in Santander (Spain) on 14 and 15 June 2002,
 - having regard to the Commission communication to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions entitled ‘Implementation of gender mainstreaming in the Structural Funds programming documents 2000-2006’ (COM(2002) 748),
 - having regard to Rule 163 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report by the Committee on Women’s Rights and Equal Opportunities (A5-0059/2002),
- A. whereas the gender equality requirements laid down in the EC Treaty, which provide both for the incorporation of equal opportunities objectives into all Community measures and programmes under a horizontal approach and for the adoption of specific measures in favour of women, were transposed into the new Structural Funds regulations for the period 2000-2006 at the time the Structural Funds were reformed,
- B. whereas Regulation (EC) No 1260/1999 laying down the general provisions on the Structural Funds, which applies to programmes covered by any of these funds, makes equal opportunities for men and women a key objective of Structural Fund measures by incorporating equal opportunities objectives into operations co-financed by the Funds,
- C. whereas the incorporation of equal opportunities objectives into the Structural Funds implies automatically taking the differences between the situation of women and men into account at the various programming, implementation, monitoring and evaluation stages of all the measures and operations cofinanced by the Structural Funds, as well as taking into account the impact of these measures and operations on the respective situations of women and men,
- D. whereas, despite a relative improvement in the programming for the period 2000-2006 in comparison to the preceding programming period (1994-1999) the implementation of equal opportunities in operations cofinanced by the Structural Funds is far from satisfactory, and whereas most programming documents concerning the ESF provide for a dual approach in which the horizontal mainstreaming of equal opportunities can be combined with specific measures in favour of women,
1. Notes that, as in the preceding programming period, the ESF continues to play a more prominent role than the other Funds vis-à-vis the equal opportunities objective, in that the majority of ESF programmes target the field of employment and human resources; regrets that in other important areas such as infrastructure, transport, the environment, local and urban development, rural development, fisheries, enterprise policy, the information society, research and technological development, further development and education, etc., the programmes only touch on the issue of equal opportunities; calls on the Commission, therefore, to develop specific guidelines on ‘equal opportunities’ in all these areas by the end of 2003;
 2. Notes that measures under the ESF, in particular, tend to focus on enhancing women’s

¹ P5_TA (2002) 0320.

participation in the labour market, education and vocational training, and that little attention is awarded to reducing the horizontal and vertical segregation of the labour market or pay inequalities, or to promoting the role of women in the fields of information and communication technologies, entrepreneurship, new employment opportunities and the decision-making process; requests the Commission, therefore, to take more specific measures to remedy these shortcomings

3. Takes note of the undertaking entered into by the Member States to include the objective of the horizontal incorporation of equal opportunities objectives into the Community Support Frameworks (CSFs) and into Single Programming Documents (SPDs), but regrets that this undertaking has been poorly implemented in the programme complements in terms of the concrete measures taken; calls on the Commission, therefore, to take the appropriate steps to improve the situation in this case in the approval procedures of the underlying CSFs and SPDs;
4. Regrets therefore that the majority of Structural Funds programmes do not include an analysis of economic and social inequalities between women and men or an estimation of the expected impact of the measures on men and women; stresses that even when such an analysis is included, the strategy to be pursued and the measures to be implemented, on the basis of precise or quantified objectives, with a view to reducing inequalities, do not always conform to the analysis; this state of affairs demonstrates a genuine lack of political commitment on the part of the Member States vis-à-vis the objective of promoting equal opportunities in the context of the Structural Funds
5. Takes note of the progress made in the field of the development of gender-specific statistics, but emphasises that greater efforts should be devoted to this as statistics are a necessary tools in the establishing of monitoring indicators; draws the attention of the authorities responsible for programming to the need to develop statistics, both at national level and at regional and local level, in order to better illustrate the respective situation of women and men, and to ensure that these statistics cover all aspects of equal opportunities in each programme and that they are available to programme managers at every level; emphasises that statistics are also a key factor in establishing the proportion of women and men in each socio-economic bracket;
6. Notes with concern that no progress has been made in relation to the preceding programming period with regard to the establishing of monitoring indicators; emphasises that the introduction and systematic use of gender-specific qualitative and quantitative indicators are crucial to the monitoring and evaluation of programmes with an eye to assessing the effectiveness of Structural Funds measures in terms of the equal opportunities objective, and particularly with a view to the 2003 mid-term evaluation and the potential revision of the measures and to the allocation of the performance reserve;
7. Invites the Member States to endeavour to ensure:
 - systematic mainstreaming of equal opportunities at every stage of the programming and implementation of measures, and reporting their achievements to the Commission periodically; reinforcement of specific measures aimed at women, particularly those faced with major problems in the labour market, such as women with disabilities, immigrants and heads of one-parent families;
 - the participation of the bodies responsible at local, regional and national levels for promoting equal opportunities, including NGOs, and involvement of the economic and

social partners in the work of the managing authorities and the monitoring committees;

- balanced participation by both women and men in decision-making, selection and monitoring bodies, at local, regional and national level;
 - systematic training, in the field of mainstreaming equal opportunities, for members of the managing authorities and monitoring committees, evaluators and members of the paying authorities;
 - information for applicants (project initiators) and project management staff showing them how equal opportunities can be most effectively built into planned measures;
8. Invites the Member States to make full use of existing opportunities in the field of the programming of the various types of Structural Funds measures with a view to promoting the mainstreaming of equal opportunities and to supporting specific equal opportunities policies or measures; asks the authorities responsible for managing the programmes to endeavour to ensure that adequate funds are available for this; asks the Commission to support technical assistance measures in all areas concerning development of the mainstreaming of equal opportunities, during the preparation and the implementation of programming; also asks the Commission to take steps to disseminate and develop good practices, which are very useful tools for improving, in particular, monitoring and evaluation;
 9. Invites the Member States to include a financing plan in Structural Fund plans and programmes, setting out the appropriations available for individual measures and programmes to improve equal opportunities, so that an assessment of the effectiveness of each of the measures can be made;
 10. Invites the Member States to promote more extensive use of the Structural Funds for the purpose of making it easier to combine work and family life, not least by developing childcare facilities and facilities for other dependent persons such as the elderly, sick or disabled, and by promoting the reorganisation of working time and arrangements for returning to work after long absences; stresses that the Structural Funds should be used to raise awareness of the need for an equal division of tasks between women and men in families; emphasises the need to develop measures targeting employers with a view to reorganising working time for men as well as women;
 11. Draws the attention of the managing authorities to the importance of establishing relevant equal opportunities criteria for the selection of projects in order to ensure that measures cofinanced by the Structural Funds contribute to the pursuit of the equal opportunities objective; asks these authorities to penalise projects which fail to satisfy the requirement of mainstreaming equal opportunities by rejecting project proposals or returning them to applicants for revision before any financing can be considered;
 12. Invites the Commission and the Member States to ensure that the 2003 mid-term evaluation establishes not only the extent to which the objective of mainstreaming equal opportunities has been taken into account in the Structural Funds measures, but also the extent to which this objective has been achieved, which financial resources are allocated to specific equal opportunities measures and whether resources have been put to appropriate use; on the basis of this evaluation, to make any necessary amendments to the programming of the measures for

the remainder of the programming period as regards achieving the objective of incorporating equal opportunities, and to implement those amendments;

13. Calls on the Member States to do everything possible to provide the population groups concerned and the bodies responsible for equal opportunities issues with information on the structural funds regulation and the possibilities for financing equality initiatives and to encourage them to put forward proposals for projects;
14. Emphasises the particularly important role that the Structural Funds can play in combating the adverse effects that economic and social restructuring has on women in many of the candidate countries, not least from the point of view of rising unemployment and the decrease in childcare facilities enabling work and family life to be combined; asks the governments of the candidate countries and the Commission to ensure that adequate financial support is provided to the NGOs concerned with equal opportunities and that they are involved at every stage of programming and implementing measures; calls for specific measures for women in the candidate Member States who have specific problems staying in, or re-entering, employment, having received much, if not all, of their education and vocational training under the 'old' economic/ political system;
15. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the candidate countries and the Commission.

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

The concept of equal opportunities for men and women was introduced into the Community's economic and social cohesion policy in 1994, and has been a priority objective of the Structural Funds since then. One year after that, the Action Platform adopted at the Fourth International Women's Conference in Beijing called on governments and other bodies to introduce gender mainstreaming into all their policies and programmes, with a view to obtaining an analysis of its effects on both women and men prior to the taking of decisions.

However, it was the Treaty of Amsterdam that created a legal basis for the Community's commitment to equal opportunities and to the mainstreaming thereof. The amended Articles 2, 3(2) and 141(4) of the EC Treaty define gender equality as a specific responsibility of the Community and as a horizontal objective affecting all its measures and programmes, and authorise the Member States to adopt or continue positive measures in favour of women in the field of work.

The changes introduced by the Treaty of Amsterdam institute a two-pronged approach comprising the introduction of equal opportunities (gender mainstreaming) into all Community policies, plus specific measures for women.

Subsequently, in the context of the reform of the Structural Funds, the equality commitments of the Treaty of Amsterdam were transposed into the new Regulations for the Structural Funds for the period 2000-2006.

The new equal opportunities provisions incorporated into the Regulations for the Structural Funds¹ are of particular importance given that they constitute both the legal framework and the necessary incentive for implementing equal opportunities policy in the context of the Funds. Moreover, one of the objectives of the Community framework strategy for gender equality for 2001-2005 is to promote equal opportunities policy with a view to better use of the Funds.

According to the general Regulation on the Structural Funds², gender mainstreaming is also to be introduced into the four Community initiatives³. That Regulation defines gender equality as a priority objective and states that measures cofinanced under the Funds shall take account of that dimension. Ten of its 52 articles make explicit reference to gender equality.

As is well known, the objective of the Structural Funds is to promote the economic and social development of regions and States with a view to eliminating development gaps between the Member States. However, the effectiveness of that development will depend to a large extent on whether or not gender mainstreaming is factored into the objectives to be attained. The theme of equality is therefore of particular importance in the context of the Structural Funds.

During the Third European Seminar 'Equal opportunities for women and men in the Structural Funds', held in Santander during the Spanish Presidency, the Commission undertook to present a Communication on equal opportunities in the Structural Funds by the end of the year.

¹ The ESF (European Social Fund), ERDF (European Regional Development Fund) and EAGGF (European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund).

² Council Regulation (EC) No 1260/1999 of 21 June 1999 laying down general provisions on the Structural Funds.

³ EQUAL, Interreg III, URBAN II and Leader Plus.

Your rapporteur hopes that this Communication, which will undoubtedly provide a very useful basis for the 2003 interim evaluation of the Structural Funds, will also serve to remind programme managers and political authorities in the Member States of the need to pay greater regard to gender mainstreaming since, although some progress has been made, there is still a long way to go.

Persisting problems include:

View that equality solely relates to the field of employment

Of all the Structural Funds, the European Social Fund remains crucial as regards financial intervention. It is only natural that this Fund should play a decisive role, but it is unreasonable for the other Funds to rarely be the subject of mainstreaming and for the Member States to pay little or no regard to them.

Equal opportunities must be extended to other Funds, as there is still much to be done in the fields of the environment, transport, rural development and fisheries, etc. This is a fundamental issue, because if the objective is indeed that of mainstreaming, then minimal progress has been made.

The Commission should take this into account in the 2003 interim evaluation, and try to make the 'equality' dimension more horizontal, in order to overcome the one-dimensional and almost exclusively Social Fund approach and to spur the Member States to make a greater commitment.

Absence of gender mainstreaming at the various programming levels

While the aim may sometimes be to mainstream gender equality into horizontal measures, when it comes to the actual programming of these measures this comes in the so-called 'programme complement', and there is very little gender mainstreaming in the substance of the programming itself.

Preparation of the programmes

Article 41 of the Regulation requires the Member States to carry out ex-ante evaluations of the gender dimension. However, studies show that these evaluations were only carried out in half of the measures for Objectives 1 and 2, and that a third of all Member States do not carry them out. The situation is somewhat more encouraging with regard to Objective 3.

Lack of a real commitment at Member State level

Although the Member States have made a formal commitment on their role in the process of mainstreaming, this has proved insufficient, since the data show that this commitment continues to be poorly implemented in practice.

Minimal participation of the partners

80% of the Objective 1 programmes (which account for 70% of financing under the Structural Funds) make no mention of the mandatory consultation of cooperation organisations in general and of gender equality organisations in particular. Therefore, despite the rules being extremely propitious, very little progress has been made.

As regards Objective 2, there was no consultation at all in 40% of the programmes, even though Objective 2 covers far more and much easier neighbourhood programming than Objective 1.

Inequality in the monitoring committees

The 50-50 balance recommended for the monitoring committees was not guaranteed either in half of the said committees or in the programmes and, once again, was only achieved in Sweden, Austria, Germany, Denmark, the United Kingdom, Italy and Spain.

Indicators

There is cause for satisfaction as regards Objective 1, as half of the Objective 1 programmes include indicators, which constitutes progress. There are no indicators in a third of the Objective 2 programmes. On the other hand, they are all explicitly provided for in the Objective 3 programmes.