



Gender Equality: a step ahead A Roadmap for the future

Report from the conference organised by the European Commission on 4 and 5 May 2006



European Commission

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European Commission

Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities
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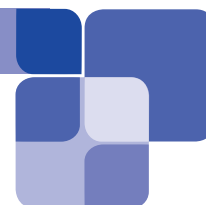
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Gender Equality: a step ahead. A Roadmap for the future

On 4 and 5 May 2006, the Commission presented its Roadmap for the period 2006–2010 to all European stakeholders involved in equality between women and men. This was a major event which brought together a panel of ministers and representatives of the European institutions, along with academic experts and field players. The aim was to debate main challenges in this field with representatives from social partners, civil society, Member States and administrations.

The point was made at the opening session that even if gender equality has been a priority for the European Union since 1957, and even if the legislative body is constantly being strengthened, many forms of inequality nevertheless still persist. This situation is unacceptable because equality is a key factor in meeting the economic, social and demographic challenges the European Union must face up to, and is essential to social cohesion, sustainable growth and the development of a quality society. The European Pact for Gender Equality, adopted at the Spring Council at the initiative of Sweden, is in this respect an emblematic act which strengthens the Member States' commitment to equality.

The Roadmap represents the Commission's commitment to accelerate progress towards equality in partnership with all stakeholders. Building on the experience of the Framework Strategy for equality between women and men (2001–2005), it combines the launch of new actions with the strengthening of well-established ongoing activities. The Roadmap also reasserts the dual approach to equality: *gender mainstreaming* and the adoption of specific measures. It introduces better governance for equality at all levels: EU institutions, Member States, parliaments, social partners and civil society. But as stressed by **VLADIMÍR ŠPIDLA**, Member of the European Commission with responsibility for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, the implementation of effective policies for equality depends on political commitment by the Member States and regular meetings between the ministers responsible for equality, following up the

European Pact for Gender Equality. The setting up of the European Gender Institute, which the Commission hopes can take place quickly, will be an invaluable instrument to the implementation of European policies on equality.

The Roadmap sets out six priority areas for EU action on gender equality for the period 2006–2010: equal economic independence for women and men; reconciling professional life with private and family life; equal participation in decision-making; eradication of all forms of gender-based violence and trafficking; elimination of gender stereotypes; promotion of gender equality in external and development policies.

The three speakers for the opening session highlighted the particular importance of some of these issues. In her dual capacity as Minister for Health and Women, **MARIA RAUCH-KALLAT** spoke of the work carried out by the Austrian Presidency in the areas of gender mainstreaming in health matters, violence against women stemming from traditional attitudes and practices, and the elimination of the gender pay gap. The minister stressed the problem of the male role model: the family can no longer be considered as the main responsibility of the mother. Schools and learning establishments should be places for boys and girls from kindergarden right up to higher education, in order to offer young boys male models that are different from those they see on television and in video games. Maria Rauch-Kallat stressed the determining role of the social partners in meeting this challenge. This fundamental stance was echoed by several speakers during the conference.

ANNA ZÁBORSKÁ, Chairwoman of the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality at the European Parliament, laid emphasis on addressing the problems of violence against women and human trafficking, pleading for a zero tolerance policy and reiterating Parliament's essential role in the 'red card' campaign

of 8 March against forced prostitution on the occasion of sporting events. She proposed a European Year dedicated to this particularly important theme. Lastly, she announced a report at the initiative of the European Parliament which would include tangible proposals for implementing the Roadmap.

men, and reconciliation of private and professional life (session 1); equal participation in decision-making and elimination of gender stereotypes (session 2); eradication of all forms of gender-based violence and human trafficking (session 3); promotion of gender equality outside the European Union (session 4).



Introducing the first session, Vladimír Špidla stressed that most inequalities stemmed from the problem of reconciling private and professional life for both men and women alike. It was also a major obstacle to the desire to have a child and thus contributed to Europe's demographic deficit. It was time to consider ambitious reconciliation policies which, as well as setting up the relevant facilities, dovetailed properly with a healthy and safe working environment, flexible working arrangements and mobility policies guaranteeing appropriate access to services. Reconciliation policies directed at men and women alike and designed to promote a better sharing of private and professional tasks were the key to achieving equality in the European Union.

The conference of 4–5 May set out to examine these different areas in four sessions: equal economic independence for women and



Equal economic independence for women and men and reconciliation of private and professional life

Gender equality is essential in order to attain the objectives of growth, employment and social cohesion under the Lisbon process, but is also a key policy in terms of the demographic challenge. **TUULA HAATAINEN**, Minister for Social Affairs and Health in Finland, chaired the first session which focused in particular on female employment, the reconciliation of working and private life, the role of men and flexible organisation of work, giving examples of best practice and examining the relevant legislation.

Despite the very different historical backgrounds and cultures of the speakers, full employment for women and reconciliation of private and working life are considered by everyone as fundamental for promoting economic development and sustainable growth. The first session highlighted the way in which, in each country, the forms of inequality, the challenges to be faced and the tangible strategies to be introduced are closely linked to a very specific cultural, economic and social context. Speakers' views differed on the merits of introducing binding measures accompanied by sanctions, rather than incentives, and also on the importance given to the role of men.

The Chair pointed out that, for the implementation of the European Pact for Gender Equality, the Finnish Presidency would be giving priority to the contribution of men to achieving equality and their participation in private and domestic tasks. As in the case of other Member States, Finland saw this as a precondition for any further progress on gender equality. Finland itself had recently increased benefits and financial assistance to encourage men to take up parental leave.

However, as illustrated by reference to the Irish example, for **FRANK FAHEY**, Irish Minister of State at the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform (with special responsibility for Equality

Issues), this concern was still some way off being shared by all Member States. The participation of women represented an upheaval of traditional society and was considered to be a key factor in the economic development of Ireland. Irish women were talented, qualified, but still remained not sufficiently known and acknowledged as a driving force for change. One of the sticking points to their participation in the employment market was the fact that 30% of them worked part-time and had no wish to increase their working time. This situation had admittedly brought an improvement in their economic independence, their social protection and their quality of life, but it did give rise to discrimination and an important loss of human capital if well-educated women choose to work part-time only. In actual fact, although Ireland now accepted that women worked, there was still no question of encouraging men to share the family tasks that women continued to shoulder. Public policy therefore focused on the aid likely to lighten the domestic responsibilities of women.

Describing the situation in Slovenia, **MARUŠA GORTNAR**, representing the Slovenian Republic's Government Bureau for Equal Opportunities, spoke about a particularly successful democratic transition in terms of gender equality. After the socialist period, although there had been a substantial risk that the economic and political transition would lead to a deterioration of the situation of women, the participation of women in the employment market had remained high in Slovenia, more so than in other post-communist countries. The reason for this was Slovenia's commitment to gender equality, which was considered from the early 1990s as a fundamental democratic principle written into the constitution and underpinned by the first gender equality government institution. Slovenia had attained one of the Lisbon objectives, with a 60.5% employment rate amongst women and a male employment rate of 70%. Women worked roughly the same number of hours each week as men. The percentage of women in part-time work was one of the lowest in Europe (11%)

and the gender wage gap was falling (9.5%). Nevertheless, despite these noteworthy performances, a traditional distribution of domestic tasks still prevailed — women still devoted twice as much time as men to family responsibilities in addition to their full-time jobs. Henceforth the accent, as in Finland, was on encouraging men to take on their share of family tasks. Since 2003, men are entitled to non-transferable paternity leave of 90 days, 15 of which are on full pay and to be used during the mother's maternity leave. In 2003, over 60% of fathers took up this possibility, a proportion which was close to 70% in 2004. Lastly, Marisa Gortnar stressed the importance of keeping women in the employment market on a full-time basis, as being part-time increased the risk of economic dependence. She saw this as a major challenge for the social partners, who should promote working conditions conducive to reconciliation, but also for men in general, who should do their share on the home front.

TÉRÉZIA BOROSNÉ BARTHA, Director for International Matters in the Hungarian Employers' and Industrialists' Confederation, and Chairwoman **VIVIANE GOERGEN**, of the Women's Committee of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC), then presented the joint framework of actions on gender equality adopted by the social partners to contribute to implementing the Lisbon strategy, to economic growth, to the creation of more and better jobs, to social cohesion and to the European legislative framework for gender equality. ETUC and UNICE had identified four priorities which they asked the national players to achieve in concrete terms over the next five years: acting to eradicate stereotypes and traditional gender roles, getting women into the decision-making process, encouraging a balance between work and private life, and reducing the salary gap. This framework of actions should make a useful contribution to achieving the objectives of the Roadmap.

Térézia Borosné Bartha illustrated the relevance of measures in the framework of actions by referring to Hungary where many more women than men were inactive. The decline in female employment in the 1990s had been accompanied by a more conservative trend in attitudes to women working, including amongst women

themselves. One of the reasons for female inactivity was the Hungarian system whereby generous family benefits were paid to people looking after a dependent member of their family. Although these benefits did not *a priori* discriminate against men, the prime beneficiaries were women, who then spent protracted periods away from the labour market, subsequently generating problems for getting back into work, particularly for the lesser qualified women. One way of countering this difficulty would be to further improve Hungary's already well-developed system of child-care facilities.

Viviane Goergen was concerned by the turn the Lisbon strategy had taken. She wanted emphasis to be placed on the quality of work and on equal treatment, on trade unions being more closely involved in the process and on the real acceleration of progress. The Roadmap highlighted a number of trade union concerns, including the reduction of the wage gap. The forthcoming presidencies should nevertheless continue to consult with the social partners on these matters, particularly given the all too often absence of due consideration to gender issues in national policies. Lastly, ETUC stressed that the modernisation of working time should not be achieved to the detriment of women and reconciliation — particularly by inordinate lengthening of working hours — and that the participation of men and the fight against stereotypes were, in this field, determining elements in terms of progress on equal treatment.

RENALDAS VAISBRODAS, President of the European Youth Forum, stressed that combating stereotypes was a central concern for the forum: everyone should be free to develop and seek fulfilment with regard to competencies and aspirations. In 2005, the forum unanimously adopted a document asking for equality to be considered as one of its priority themes. Accordingly, an analysis of the internal mechanisms of participation by women and men was requested in order to correct the imbalance observed within the forum. The European Union's Joint Employment Report for 2005 showed that for the period 2000–2004, more young women entered the labour market, but in unstable jobs restricted to certain sectors. In addition, these young women were frequently the victims of discrimination which sometimes had a major impact on their

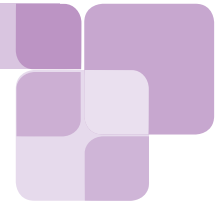


personal fulfilment. Against this background, the European Youth Forum welcomed the Roadmap and would support its implementation.

The audience welcomed the Roadmap and the merits of the choice of priority themes, but also expressed concern with regard to follow-up and implementation. Several participants stressed the need for more binding measures (e.g. with regard to parental leave) accompanied by a system of sanctions or penalties against Member States or companies which failed to implement the relevant legislation or objectives set out in the Roadmap.

Several experts and representatives of civil society present also stressed the importance of combining incentives and constraints, the latter to be accompanied by sanctions, and asked the Commission to take resolute action in this direction during the implementation of the Roadmap, and also of the Lisbon objectives. Another point was that the best practices developed within the framework of the Structural Funds should be identified and better utilised and disseminated. Lastly, the growing risk that gender equality policies would be watered down in 'diversity' policies was mentioned.

Vladimír Špidla closed the session by stressing that a holistic approach combining legislation, social dialogue and *peer reviewing* was necessary in order to make progress on equality. Although there was a danger of diversity taking precedence over gender equality, equality remained a priority theme for the Commission.



Equal representation in decision-making and the elimination of gender stereotypes

A balanced participation by women and men in politics is essential in any democratic society. The presence of women in the economic decision-making process contributes, as already stated in the first session, to a more productive and innovative working environment, to a high-performing economy and increased competitiveness. The second session was chaired by **LISA PAVAN-WOOLFE**, Director at DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities. The speakers focused on the different ways of promoting the presence of women in posts of responsibility in politics and in the business world, and on the importance of eliminating stereotypes. Speakers' views diverged when it came to the merits of a quota strategy to promote equal participation of women and men in decision-making.

NEELIE KROES, Member of the European Commission with responsibility for competition, stressed that it was essential for achieving the Lisbon objectives to use all the talent available and not only a part of that talent. Experience and research showed that mixed groups were better at solving problems than mono-sex groups. All the more reason therefore to involve very qualified women to a greater extent around the decision-making tables. The fact was that a mere 11% of women were present on the boards of the 50 biggest European companies, although it had been clearly shown that companies which had substantial female participation on their boards turned in higher profits than the others. The Commissioner felt that the fundamental problem was an enterprise culture which remained very male-dominated and tended to discourage the presence of women. Given the rate women were making headway in decision-making bodies, it would take over 50 years to achieve parity. The Roadmap should be seized upon as an opportunity to convince people of the added value of female participation with regard to economic growth. Neelie Kroes, in answer to a question from the floor, said she felt that supporting female applications did not jeopardise competition, but was a praiseworthy endeavour to promote talent wherever it was to be found. The courageous

decision of President Barroso when he recruited seven or eight female members of the Commission illustrated the success and advantages for everyone of this type of strategy.

ZITA GURMAI, Vice-Chairwoman of the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality at the European Parliament, said it was no chance matter that the Roadmap had chosen the themes of female participation in the decision-making process and the elimination of stereotypes. The fight against vertical segregation needed effective implementation of anti-discrimination legal provisions, but also training and incentives. Education at the earliest possible age, the training of teachers, the media, awareness-raising campaigns and exchange of best practice all had a determining role to play in countering stereotypes. Political commitment is essential in this context, as was shown by the example of the Spanish Government's composition. Zita Gurmai welcomed the Commission's initiative to establish in 2007 an EU network of women in economic and political decision-making positions in order to support awareness-raising activities, the exchange of good practices and research, in reference to the European database on women and men in decision-making. The creation of this network was a pragmatic approach, which was particularly welcome looking ahead to the 2009 European elections.

METTE SENECA NIELSEN, Deputy Head of the Danish Gender Equality Department, spoke of the experiment launched by Denmark in getting 200 companies to embark upon an ambitious programme of promoting women to posts of responsibility. Policies to increase female leadership have a twofold objective: to give more women the opportunity to fulfil their potential, but also to contribute to competitiveness and economic growth. The government's role is to draft a comprehensive legal framework, particularly in terms of prohibiting discrimination, a policy framework with targets in order to keep the issue on the agenda,

and lastly a practical framework of tools, documentation and research capable of highlighting the causes of and remedies to inequality. The companies concerned could set ambitious and realistic targets (e.g. 40% of women on the board), introduce human resource policies conducive to reconciliation, to gender-neutral recruitment and to combating traditional roles, and lastly build up female capacity. Both men and women could, through education and via their networks, place emphasis on female management and leadership.

BENOIT BRUNET, from the Directorate for Human Relations and Resources at PSA Peugeot Citroën, refocused the session on the actual situation in that company. In 2003, an enterprise agreement was concluded at Peugeot to promote female employment and equal opportunities. This agreement set out to recruit a number of women which reflected the percentage of female applicants, and to promote women in proportion to their numbers in the company at the outset. It made provision *inter alia* for eliminating all forms of discrimination, and for maternity and parental arrangements for men and women alike, including the development of child care facilities. Recently, a world agreement signed by the group enshrined and reiterated these same principles. The French legislation which reinforces the social dialogue concerning equal treatment at the workplace has undoubtedly influenced this process. The deep-seated motivation behind these agreements stem from awareness of the demographic challenges, from the image the company wishes to project to its environment and to its customer base, particularly women, from recent management trends within the group and, lastly, out of a concern to fall in with new management methods in major international groups.



Eradication of all forms of gender-based violence and human trafficking

Violence against women and human trafficking are breaches of the fundamental right to life, safety, freedom, dignity and physical and emotional integrity. They are also an obstacle to the achievement of gender equality. Speakers during this third session, chaired by **CATHERINE VAUTRIN**, the French Minister with responsibility for Social Cohesion and Parity, examined ways of eradicating gender-based violence and human trafficking. The session stressed increasing convergence in national policies on violence against women — and the common observation of the lack of reliable indicators — but also the different approaches in the fight against human trafficking and trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation. Countries differed according to whether they introduced policies designed to prevent and to empower (countries of origin) or to repress (countries of arrival). They also differed in how they viewed prostitution (regulatory countries or abolitionist countries), and also in how they viewed the customer (a player in prevention or an offender) and the female victim of trafficking (victim or offender).

Catherine Vautrin stressed that violence in all its forms against women affected all classes. A recent French survey of actual incidents, based on figures from the police forces, showed that one woman out of ten was a victim of domestic violence and that every four days the death of a woman as a result of domestic violence was recorded. In 50% of cases these were repeat incidents; 30% of fatalities occurred during separations. Whatever the form of violence, prevention through education and training and through support for women were essential platforms for action. On 4 April 2006, France passed a legal text making provision *inter alia* for a plan to support the victims of violence, which was directed at victims and perpetrators alike. The victims were proposed removal from the perpetrator of domestic violence, the possibility for a shelter in a host family, and a programme of physical and

psychological care. The perpetrators were given group therapy — at this stage it was still a pilot experiment. Lastly, communication and awareness-raising campaigns, particularly on television, had been proposed. When it came to prostitution, France, unlike other countries in Europe, stressed not only action against procurers but also on criminal action against the customers of vulnerable prostitutes. In addition, substantial support was given to associations providing aid to prostitutes.

FRANCISCO FONSECA MORILLO, Director in the Justice, Freedom and Security DG at the European Commission, stressed that the fight against violence to women had become a priority for the Commission because of its unacceptable cost in human, social and economic terms, but also because it undermined one of the pillars of the Union: the protection of fundamental rights and specifically the most fundamental of all these rights, the dignity of the human person. Even though the principle of subsidiarity prevailed here, the added value of European policies, which allow a common examination of shared problems, e.g. the exponential increase of single women in illegal immigration, had to be acknowledged. A directive on subsidiary protection for under-age females likely to be sent 'on holiday' afforded them special protection even when they slipped through the field of application of the Geneva conventions. Human trafficking nevertheless remained subject to the rule of unanimity and the EU had had to limit its action to adopting framework decisions, communications, action plans or resolutions proposing integrated approaches, including coordination and cooperation structures, the collection of reliable data, etc. The speaker failed to see on what basis the treaty could today allow the introduction of a common justice policy and particularly regretted the absence of common ratification of the Palermo protocol which decreed that the victims of human trafficking be considered as victims and not as criminals. A range of non-legislative

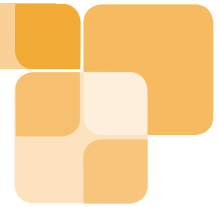
instruments also reflected the Commission's commitment to the endeavour to eradicate violence to women. The Commission was at the hub of an intelligent and ongoing exchange of information with regard to best practices. Comparable and verifiable statistics on organised crime, part of which concerned violence against women, would be available in 2007 in cooperation with Eurostat. Lastly the Daphne II programme had financed 500 projects over a period of seven years; half of these projects were transnational projects focusing on violence against women.

HANA ŠNAJDROVÁ, from the Czech Interior Ministry and member of the European Commission's Experts Group on Trafficking in Human Beings, drew attention to the fact that a gender-based approach was necessary if an adequate response was to be brought to the problem of trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation, a problem which mostly affected women. In concrete terms, the key to the prevention of trafficking, the protection of women and their subsequent reintegration was empowering them rather than casting them in the role of victims. This meant that an appropriate response should involve policies on education, employment, family matters, social protection, etc. While it was too early to evaluate the impact of enlargement on the exporting of women for sexual exploitation, it was clear that although exploitation and trafficking had substantially fallen since the 1990s, the number of women and young girls exported and assisted by Czech NGOs had risen since 2005. Rather than sanctioning the customer, the Czech Republic was endeavouring to create awareness and involve customers as full players in the fight against trafficking and exploitation. A campaign to inform the customer of the existence of trafficking and make him aware that the problem was not always easily identifiable was envisaged. Hana Šnajdrová ended her address by pointing out that the fight against trafficking was tending to focus on the sexual exploitation of women and neglected the sexual exploitation of men and other mixed forms of trafficking, e.g. in the construction industry and agriculture. It was urgent to address all these forms of exploitation which were crimes against and violations of human rights.

COLETTE DE TROY, coordinator at the Policy Action Centre on Violence against Women and member of the EWL (European Women's Lobby), discussed certain proposals made in the Roadmap. She stressed that when setting up a system of comparable statistics they should not limit themselves to measuring the activity of the police and the judiciary, and examine the best way of measuring gender-based violence. Accordingly, she wondered as to the reliability of the indicators to be developed by Eurostat: the hidden figures on domestic violence in the EU could only be derived from different types of surveys or studies and from other sources of information such as hospital emergency departments. She felt that national observatories would be useful in monitoring policies, compiling indicators and exchanging best practices. She went on to say that an EU programme was not enough to fight against gender-based violence and that a genuine common policy was needed. Considering that violence was an obstacle to equality and that equality was a vocation for the European Union, there was a need to identify a legal basis in the treaties whereby progress could be made in this direction. Lastly, the Roadmap envisaged an EU action plan on trafficking in human beings and, in this framework, she drew attention to the importance of recognition of the victims and the development of victim-help services.

One participant stressed that the economic costs of violence should be better identified and publicised: it was an effective argument for stepping up the fight against domestic violence.

The chair summarised three ideas mentioned by the speakers: removal to a distance from the home — the effectiveness of which was stressed in Belgium, France and Luxembourg — should be introduced on a more widespread basis; the lack of appropriate indicators to measure headway was a unanimous constant; lastly, with the World Cup drawing near, feelings were running high and the time was ripe for creating awareness and introducing a concerted response to the problem of trafficking in human beings.



Promotion of gender equality outside the EU

Gender equality is a goal in itself and is one of the fundamental rights, helping to reduce poverty. The European Union is a key player in international efforts on development and adheres to internationally recognised principles such as the Millennium Declaration on development and the Beijing Platform for Action. The promotion of gender equality outside the European Union implies the implementation of EU legislation in the acceding countries, candidate countries and potential candidate countries, and also the promotion of gender equality in the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), as well as external and development policies.

During the fourth session, chaired by **DOMINIQUE DELLICOUR**, Head of the 'Governance, Human Rights, Democracy, Gender' Unit at EuropeAid in the European Commission, the speakers discussed gender equality as a fundamental element in external development policies. While there was no denying the commitment of the Union and the Member States on this front, the accent was placed on the problems of introducing a transversal gender approach, the lack of consistency in external policies, ways of rationalising the use of financial resources — which were always insufficient — with a view to more effective action, and lastly on the need to develop a long-term regional approach.

In her introductory address, Dominique Dellicour stressed that, with regard to development, gender equality was henceforth considered to be a key indicator for progress and implementation of fundamental rights. Progress was slow and unequal, and there were still problems of access to education, healthcare, employment, participation in policy-making, and even certain fundamental rights (property, inheritance, etc.). The contribution by the EU and its Member States represented over 50% of the whole of external aid. The Union thus had a major lever which it operated according to a dual strategy: integration of the gender dimension in development cooperation actions and specific equality-targeted actions. In 2005 a total of 700 million euro had been spent on gender issues. The Roadmap included many actions intended to sustain and

strengthen this action. However, there were still many challenges ahead. More political commitment was needed at all levels and in all sectors, including non-traditional sectors (economy, finance, etc.), generating the need for information, knowledge and analysis of the problems of inequality, particularly in order to improve gender budgeting and gender mainstreaming.

ANGELA LANGENKAMP, senior policy adviser on gender and youth affairs at the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, stressed that the Roadmap was a useful support tool for the negotiations which the German Minister was seeking to have with the World Bank in order to introduce real gender budgeting in its policies and programmes. A sizeable but still insufficient budget was set aside under cooperation policies for the integration of equality or specific empowerment measures. Given the structural lack of resources, Germany was endeavouring to rationalise earmarking of funds and to guarantee the effectiveness of programmes. An original practice in this respect was the application of a gender policy-marker introduced by the OECD at the end of the 1990s and which programmes had to comply with if they were to receive funding. Under the millennium objectives, Germany would like to further harmonise its agenda with that of other donor countries in order to do more and better in regard to equality. Furthermore, German cooperation had led to the production of a brochure showing how the CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women), the Beijing Platform for Action and the millennium objectives converged and how the development aid programmes could simultaneously dovetail with these three instruments. Lastly, fresh aid arrangements had recently been developed for gender budgeting, both by ensuring joint local management of certain budgets and by training local non-economist players in the technique of gender budgeting. Generally speaking, however, Angela Langenkamp regretted that the debate remained limited to female circles, for it would be better to anchor the gender issue throughout the whole policy framework of international dialogue and cooperation.

NICOLE MALPAS, gender adviser for Belgian technical cooperation (CTB), focused what she had to say on the achievements and shortcomings in Belgium of gender mainstreaming in the execution of development cooperation projects. While the dual approach was incorporated in policy statements, law, strategic thrusts, the truth was that of 350 projects only six or seven actually had specific actions and only 20 or so incorporated the gender dimension. The project frequently failed to apply gender mainstreaming rigorously. This situation was also due to the lack of human, material and financial resources earmarked for the gender equality dimension, and also to the culture of the CTB: women were under-represented in the decision-making process. Lastly, considerable confusion still existed amongst players between gender as a sector of intervention and gender as a cross-cutting theme: they did not see the point or the feasibility of gender mainstreaming in most of the projects. Nicole Malpas felt that an obligation to provide a specific result was a precondition if headway was to be made with integrating equality into the projects funded by Belgium.

MEAGEN BALDWIN, Executive Director of the Women in Development Europe network and a member of the CONCORD Task Force on gender and development, expressed a number of reservations on the Commission's proposals. With regard to development aid, she was pleased that the Commission reiterated the dual approach but felt that the new financial perspectives tended to compartmentalise budgets, with no specific entry for gender. As Angela Langenkamp had already said 'what had not been counted was not taken into account'. The Chair nevertheless confirmed that specific funds were to be earmarked for gender issues within each budget heading. Lastly, Meagen Baldwin expressed serious concerns on the general consistency of the external policies pursued by the EU, and by the Commission in particular. The Roadmap omitted such strong means of intervention as commercial policy and programmes — e.g. the Doha agreements. In principle, this problem should find a solution through the mainstreaming of the different policy areas within the Commission, but unfortunately this result was still some way off. Meagen Baldwin therefore urged the Commission to greater coherence and synergy and suggested three tangible ways

to achieve this: the development of appropriate indicators, in conjunction with the NGOs, giving better consideration to the practices pursued by the Member States and the NGOs, and, on a more general level, greater consultation with the NGOs.

Several participants from the new Member States mentioned the distress felt amongst women after accession, as illustrated by the example of political representation of women in certain countries: while 40% of women had been elected in the legislative elections which had preceded accession, only 20% were elected at local level after accession. Looking ahead to new applications from the Balkan states, the participants stressed the importance of a regional approach by the EU: these countries were indeed encountering common problems which had nothing to do, for instance, with those of the Scandinavian countries. Lastly, one participant stressed how important it was to involve the NGOs closely in the negotiation of new agreements, e.g. with Russia.

Several participants thanked the Commission for this particularly substantive and constructive debate bringing together all the players concerned. This renewed confidence in Europe. They reiterated once again the need for harmonisation, consistency and effectiveness in external policies.



A Roadmap for the future: a new commitment to gender equality

The final session was focused on the involvement of all players in order to achieve gender equality through better governance and a new commitment. Speakers during this closing session showed how the work carried out by the different players could contribute to achieving the ambitious objectives of the Roadmap.

ASA REGNÉR, Chief Political Adviser to the Swedish Minister for Democracy, Metropolitan Affairs, Integration and Gender Equality, felt that priority should be given to the implementation of the European pact for Gender Equality in three essential areas: bridging the gender gap by addressing the problem of stereotypes, improving the balance between private life and working life, and implementing better governance and surveillance with regard to gender equality policies. Furthermore, even if the pact did not address the issue of violence, it was an essential area which was included in the Roadmap and to which Sweden gave its unfailing attention. If the pact was to be translated into tangible action, synergy was essential between all the players concerned. New instruments were needed to assess the implementation of the pact. Lastly, for Sweden, two new questions should be written into the European agenda: the integration of non-nationals in the European Union and a better link between gender and the situation of homosexuals.

JEANNE SCHMITT, Adviser to the Union of Industrial and Employers' Confederations of Europe (UNICE) presented the social partners' framework of actions on gender equality designed to contribute to broader initiatives such as the European Employment Strategy, the Roadmap or the European Pact for Gender Equality. The framework of actions identified four common priorities for the social partners over a four-year period and set them in a dynamic process of implementation (similar to the open method of coordination): eliminating gender stereotypes on the labour

market; bringing women into the decision-making process and entrepreneurship; encouraging reconciliation between private life and working life, and reducing the gender pay gap. Jeanne Schmitt stressed that this was no mere declaration of intent, but the implementation of a dynamic and adaptive process — the first follow-up report was expected in autumn 2006 — accompanied by tangible actions in a limited but essential area: the labour market.

CATELENE PASSCHIER, Confederal Secretary to the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) regretted that while gender issues featured strongly in trade union debates and trade unions were strategic allies for women, women were still very much under-represented in the trade union movement and gender mainstreaming was not much of a reality in negotiations. In order to move forward, trade unions needed external pressure from their European allies: Members of Parliament, women in various organisations, employers, European Women's Lobby, Member States, the European Commission. She felt the problem stemmed from the absence of gender mainstreaming in the European instruments concerning key areas for women where it should be applied as a matter of priority: flexicurity, working time or social security. She also regretted that the Roadmap did not go into the issue of immigrant women, who represented an increasing proportion of the population. Finally, Catele Passchier went back to the problem of trafficking which undoubtedly had a gender dimension. Nevertheless, it was important to remember that the persons affected were not only victims, but also persons entitled to form organisations to negotiate working conditions — the same observation was valid for immigrant women, who were very much concerned by matters to do with the quality of work. This matter was today the subject of a strong debate within the ETUC.

KIRSTI KOLTHOFF, President of the European Women's Lobby (EWL), suggested that a close link be established between the Roadmap and the European Pact for Gender Equality. The EWL identified three challenges for fulfilling the commitments of the Roadmap. The first was the need to involve all stakeholders, within and outside the Commission and to promote the necessary synergies. The second challenge was to make gender mainstreaming and gender budgeting a tangible and visible reality both within the Commission and in the Member States. The idea of sanctions against Member States which failed to properly implement gender mainstreaming should be envisaged. The success of the Roadmap would depend on the full comprehension of this strategy. The third challenge was to sustain specific actions. The EWL was thinking in particular of equal access for women to resources and responsibilities. The EWL gave priority to the situation of the new Member States following enlargement, to bolder and more binding legislation with regard to reconciliation, to zero tolerance with regard to violence and lastly the place of women in decision-making — the EWL wanted parity when the European Parliament and the European Commission were renewed. The Roadmap should lead to parity and equality in all walks of life. This implied strong leadership by the Commission and the support of the Member States, particularly with regard to funding and human resources.

The questions from the audience centred around two concerns. Immigrant women could not be left out of the implementation of the Roadmap if an increase in poverty was to be avoided and if the right to gender equality for everyone was to be taken seriously. It should not be forgotten that the participation of white men and women in the labour market was often conditioned by the clandestine work taken on by female migrants.

Another series of questions related to the implementation of the Roadmap, its monitoring and follow-up. The representatives of the youth forum stressed that failure to involve them in the definition and implementation of youth-related policies had produced a

divide between policy decisions and the expectations of young people, and this is what had sparked off recent events in France. In order to avoid such developments, it was essential for civil society to be closely associated in coordination and monitoring. A number of participants called for an annual report by all the players concerned, both with regard to the implementation of the Roadmap and on the structural funds.

LISA PAVAN-WOOLFE, Director at the Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities DG, said that in the Roadmap the question of monitoring was included under 'better system of governance'. The Commission was not keen on setting targets other than where they existed already (European Employment Strategy, open method of coordination). By contrast, the indicators would form the basis of the work to evaluate the Roadmap. She felt that there were enough markers in the Roadmap for proper supervision and monitoring, and these markers would be further supplemented by 2010 for the 12 critical areas of the Beijing Platform for Action. Furthermore, the Roadmap made provision for the definition in 2007 of a composite index of gender inequality. In addition to the indicators, there were other means of monitoring, e.g. regular meetings of the ministers responsible for equality which, in actual fact, sustained the peer reviewing process, particularly on the occasion of the examination of the two main reports in 2008 and 2010. The Commission asked the Member States, the social partners and civil society to contribute to monitoring the Roadmap; there were also mechanisms to guarantee that civil society was involved. Lastly, Lisa Pavan-Woolfe gave a further reminder that the Roadmap was a commitment for the whole of the Commission to integrate the gender dimension in a series of policies and was not therefore exclusively a matter of concern for the Unit responsible for equality between women and men.



LISA PAVAN-WOOLFE stressed that the matter of equal opportunities was henceforth a central feature of the European Union agenda. The ambitious objectives set in the Roadmap corresponded to challenges regarding the economy, social cohesion, demography and sustainable development, challenges which were fundamental in the Union, and for which equality was a key factor. The messages she would take with her from the discussions held over the two days were as follows.

Firstly, implementation of equality was indispensable in achieving the Lisbon targets. The economic independence of women and their access to the decision-making process were in the interests of the general public, but also of the economy and the whole of the European Union. Gender mainstreaming was an essential tool to achieve this, but it still had to be made a reality. Admittedly, certain results could already be pointed to (e.g. the figure of 75% for new jobs taken up by women), but there were persistent structural inequalities which needed to be eliminated in order to release the employment potential and productivity of women with a view to greater social cohesion and sustainability of our social protection systems.

Reconciliation of private and working life for men and women alike was crucial in reducing structural inequalities. In this respect, the social partners agreed that reconciliation policies were 'win/win' policies, that they create the flexible economy which makes full use of everyone's potential and makes it possible to meet recruitment needs. The keys to the success of these policies had been clearly identified during the conference: firstly, their inclusive nature — they must take due account simultaneously of work organisation, mobility, working time, leave, care facilities — and, secondly, the fact that they are intended for both men and women.

Gender equality was essential in responding to the demographic challenge and had to be taken on board for better management of the implications of an ageing society.

Gender equality and tackling the problem of violence against women were crucial in the context of sustainable development. The third and fourth sessions had shown that if we want to sustain a dynamic full-employment economy, and an educated society, with territorial and social cohesion, promotion of health and environmental considerations, we simply have to adopt a zero tolerance policy on violence and trafficking in human beings, and increase the consideration given to equality in the EU external policies. The Union has an essential role to play in the fight against violence and trafficking and its action should combine prevention, repression and assistance to victims. With regard to external policy, the means were available and it was a matter of stepping up their effectiveness so that the Union could continue to play a leading role on the world stage in fighting for greater equality between women and men everywhere.

So where to go from here? The conference had shown that there were great expectations. The point now was to convert the Roadmap into reality and tangible achievements, and the Commission at large was already involved in this process. On the occasion of the forthcoming meeting of the Commission Inter-Service Group on Gender Equality, all the Directorates-General would be examining what measures to adopt and implement. However, to attain this objective, the Commission needed the participation of all the players concerned by equality: the other EU institutions, the Member States, civil society, the social partners and administrations. Lisa Pavan-Woolfe thanked all those who had taken part in the conference for their constructive contribution and urged them to remind the Commission of its promises and commitments on gender equality.

European Commission

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