

Third action programme for equal opportunities for women and men  
at the European Community (1997-2000)



EUROPEAN COMMISSION  
Equal Opportunities Unit  
Directorate-General  
for Personnel and Administration





The essence of the policy of mainstreaming, formulated by the Commission and adopted by the Council in December 1995, is to integrate the gender issue into all Community policies and actions. This was also the message that the European Union delivered to the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in September 1995.



Why is it that we are quite capable of exploring the wealth of different national cultures in every aspect of our professional lives yet cannot reconcile our two different sexual identities: the feminine and the masculine? Why cannot we incorporate female values instead of subordinating them to male ones, as we have tended to do until now? Why are we unable to accommodate the different approach the sexes have to professional life?

These are the ideas and aspirations that underpin the Third Programme, which will obviously have to be given practical effect in the shape of a series of measures, some general, others more specific.

I firmly believe that the time has come to move from the "positive action" approach to the "mainstreaming approach", with all that this implies in terms of a profound change in mentality. The time has come to create a work culture that is sensitive to gender differences and with which both men and women can identify. I like to think that the results of this Third Programme will be up to my expectations.

E. Liikanen



# Background

---

① Equal opportunities for women and men is now recognized as a basic principle of democracy and respect for humankind. The Essen, Cannes and Madrid European Councils identified it, together with the fight against unemployment, as a priority task for the Union and its Member States, and the United Nations World Conference in Beijing in 1995 also recognized it as a priority.

② Promoting equal opportunities means more than just pursuing statistical equality. It is not solely concerned with measures to ensure equal opportunities for women - the "positive action" approach - but also with the systematic consideration of gender perspective and the conditions, situations and needs of women and men in all Community policies and activities: this

is the definition of the principle of "mainstreaming" adopted by the Commission. This principle is at the heart of the fourth medium-term Community action programme on equal opportunities for women and men (1996-2000) adopted by the Council in December 1995.

③ This comprehensive, across-the-board approach requires mobilization, which is why the Commission has set up, under the auspices of its President, a Group of Members of the Commission responsible for stimulating debate and ensuring that concern for equal opportunities is built into all Community activities. An interdepartmental group has also been set up to monitor the incorporation of this dimension into the policies and activities of the Directorates-General.



# Internal Commission Policy Assessment

---

④ It is the Commission's duty to implement in its own organization the policies it proposes to Member States. This is why it adopted a first positive action programme from 1988-90 and another from 1992-96. These two programmes have helped to identify areas where positive action was necessary, to make progress in others and to highlight areas to be developed. The challenge now facing the Commission is to incorporate equal opportunities into its own staffing policies by acting upon the systems of recruitment, promotion, training etc. to take account of the gender factor. This is consistent with the policy guidelines adopted by the Commission.

⑤ An evaluation carried out in 1996 on the impact of the two positive action programmes on achieving equal opportunities at the Commission revealed the progress which had been made and the positive effects of the policy:

▶ even though the principle of giving priority to women with equal qualifications and/or of equal merit in recruitment and promotion was not applied automatically, there have been significant changes in the situation of female staff in category A and management posts, particularly as a result of the annual targets adopted by the Commission which took account of the needs of enlargement. While women accounted for 11.5% of category A staff

in 1992, they represented 17% of staff in that category at the end of 1996. Women occupied approximately 9% of management posts in 1992, which rose to 12.5% at the end of the 2nd positive action programme.

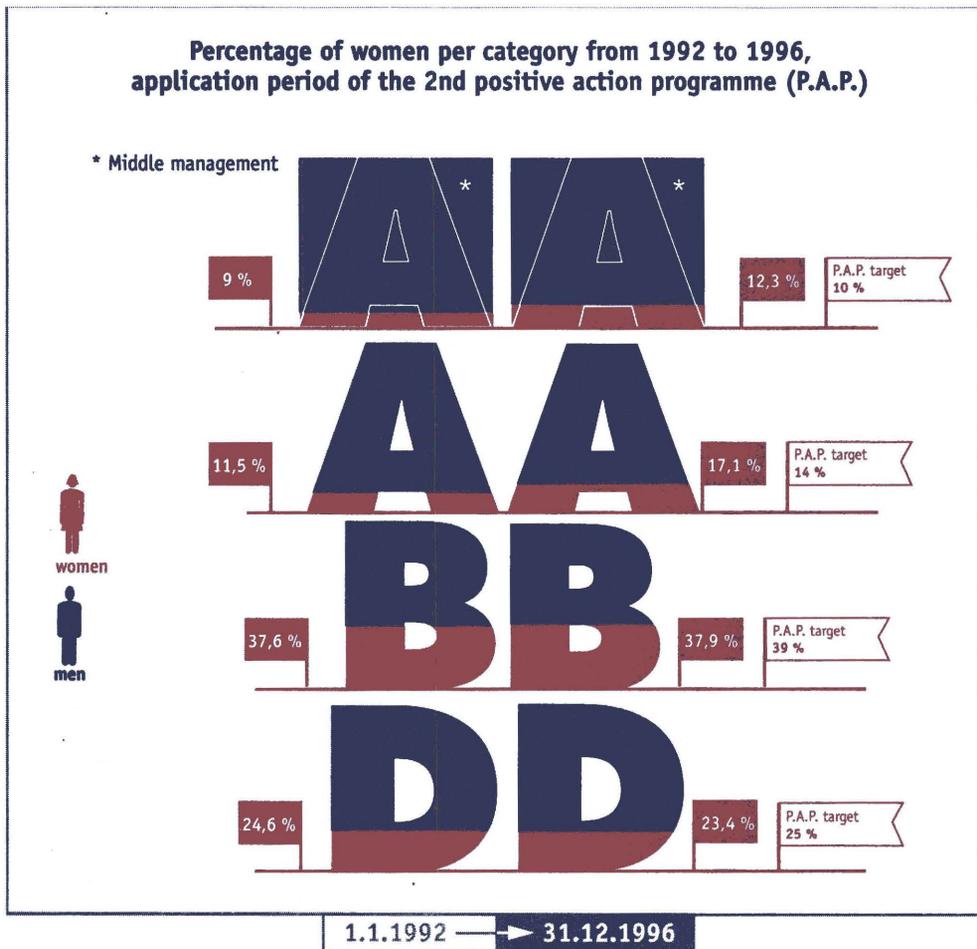
Increased recruitment of women to category A posts for the last five years had raised their representation in the starting grade of the category (A8) to 34.5% by the end of 1996. This strategy, combined with balanced promotion rates, should lead to higher numbers of women in posts of responsibility in the years to come;

- ▶ certain initiatives, such as the opening of a new creche in Brussels and the improvement of facilities in Luxembourg, were undertaken with the intention of generally helping staff to reconcile work and family commitments;
- ▶ a change is being made to Article 1 of the Staff Regulations of Officials and Conditions of Employment of Other Servants of the European Communities to enshrine the principle of equal opportunities alongside other basic principles;
- ▶ a guide to the protection of the dignity of women and men at work has been drawn up for all staff, thereby implementing within the Commission the code of practice it adopted in 1991 with respect to the Member States.

6 The assessment also highlighted some areas where the programme has had no impact, particularly in the B and D categories (the percentage of female staff has remained stable at 37.6% and 23% respectively) and with regard to the slightly increased imbalance in favour of female staff in categories LA6-LA7 and C. Finally, major obstacles to the effective application of equal opportunities at the Commission

were highlighted, particularly attitudes, a predominantly male working culture and a significant lack of involvement on the part of those responsible for implementing the policy.

In the light of the above, it is proposed that the Commission adopt a third action programme for equal opportunities for women and men for the period 1997 - 2000.



# 3rd Action Programme

## Overall Approach and Main Objectives

---

⑦ The 3rd action programme is set in the context of both the Union's policy on equal opportunities and the internal policy which has been pursued up until now. It should consolidate what has already been achieved and go further along the same lines.

Within this reference framework the 3rd action programme aims to develop a gender-sensitive work culture, that is, a work culture which takes account of female and male values, of differences in attitudes, in priorities, in working methods, as well as of gender specific needs.

This comprehensive approach requires an increased effort of sensitization and of awareness-raising of staff.

It requires adjustments in the organization of work to improve the compatibility with family responsibilities, and in the operation of personnel policies. It also requires an even share of responsibilities and increased involvement of women in decision-making, as well as their professional development throughout their career.



# Proposed Measures

---

8 Putting this general approach into practice will require a series of measures of different types but all mutually compatible and interactive, namely:

- ▶ across-the-board measures designed mainly to sensitize staff about gender-related issues including protection of the dignity of people at work and arrangements to help reconcile work and family commitments,
- ▶ structural adjustments to the operation of staff policies,
- ▶ specific initiatives tailored to the needs of each category.

These measures will operate within the context of decentralization: it is incumbent on the Directorate-General for Personnel and Administration to act in areas for which it has responsibility and on the other Directorates-General and departments to take action to ensure that the policy is carried out on the ground.

## Across-the-Board Measures

9 The proposed measures are aimed at:

- a) *enhancing staff awareness of the need to take account of equal opportunities at all times, through:*
  - awareness-raising and information of management by means of seminars/

meetings/lectures held in each Directorate-General,

- improving understanding of the problems by all staff through dialogue between men and women during targeted training courses,
- development of pilot projects in the Directorates-General and organization of the exchange of information on "good practices" applied in Directorates-General;

b) *development of a working environment to help staff to reconcile work and family commitments, through:*

- flexible work organization: for example, by promoting the sharing or rotation of tasks taking account of work practices and skills and by making better use of the possibilities offered by the new technologies,
- regularization of working hours: for example, by taking better account of "core time" in work organization and by making sure that meetings are not held late in the day,
- impressing on departments the necessity to replace people working part-time and/or on maternity leave by contractual staff,
- amending the Staff Regulations to include the right to parental leave and

laying down the implementing arrangements.

Implementation of part (a) and the first three indents of part (b) is the responsibility of individual Directorates-General. DG IX is responsible for the last indent of part (b) and for cooperation with the Directorates-General on other initiatives.

### Action at structural Level

⑩ This part of the programme falls within the general trend of mainstreaming: systematic consideration of a gender perspective in all Community policies. The proposed measures aim to refine existing mechanisms in the various areas of personnel management to ensure equality of treatment between men and women at each stage:

a) *selection procedures and open competitions:*  
DG IX will take action to:

- step up advertising and information campaigns for open competitions, targeting women applicants in particular, and ensure that a reminder of the Commission's equal opportunities policy appears in all notices of competition,
- ensure that the various tests are not discriminatory, and take account of gender diversity during interviews,
- train selection boards to make them aware of the principle of equal opportunities and of what it entails and ensure a balanced presence of women and men on selection boards;

b) *recruitment procedures, use of reserve lists:*

the Directorates-General and other departments will

- ensure that women are present on selection panels prior to recruitment,
- pay particular attention to the profiles of successful women candidates and submit balanced proposals for the recruitment of women and men;

c) *career development and training:*

- the Directorates-General and other departments and the promotion committees will draw up balanced promotion proposals,
- the Directorates-General and other departments will take account of the training needs of female staff when drawing up their training plans,
- DG IX will hold regular internal competitions for passage to a higher category, subject to budgetary constraints, and will encourage female staff to take part,
- DG IX will hold training courses aimed at developing the potential of female staff (management, budgetary management, office automation, administration etc.) according to the needs of the various categories. DG IX will take account of staff working on a part-time basis when organizing training courses.

⑪ Following the *Kalanke* case (October 1995), the possibility still exists of giving priority to women in the fields of

recruitment, promotion and access to management posts in cases of equal merits and/or qualifications, particularly in categories and/or jobs where they are under-represented. However, this will not be an automatic right, but will be one of a number of factors which may be taken into account by the appropriate authority in the field concerned.

## Action Aimed at Specific Categories

12 Previous programmes have shown that the problems which arise and their solutions vary from one category to another. Consequently, it is the responsibility of DG IX to:

a) *correct the under-representation of women in category A and management posts by:*

- establishing annual targets, to be attained wherever possible, for the recruitment of female staff subject to budgetary constraints and for their appointment to middle and senior management posts, and to management posts in the Language Service,
- continuing efforts to encourage women to apply for posts throughout their careers so as to increase the number of female staff who may take up management posts;

b) *monitor the career development of both male and female staff on a permanent basis, and to that effect:*

- identify the various tasks carried out by category C staff, to take account of the changes which have occurred as a result of technical progress in the fields of office automation and information

technology (a survey is under way and the results will be available in April/May 1997),

- clearly publicize the nature of the specialized tasks involved when advertising category C posts (archiving, computer help desk assistant, secretariat of meetings, etc.) to help select the best candidates and to attract more applications from men,
- carry out studies on the changes in the functions of category B and D staff, and determine appropriate measures with a view to securing a gender mix in the various functions.

## Implementation

13 The implementation of the third action programme for equal opportunities at the Commission is the responsibility of:

a) *the Directorate-General for Personnel and Administration, with regard to:*

- the proposal of policy guidelines on the various objectives and aspects of the programme,
- the introduction of ongoing monitoring and assessment systems,
- the dissemination of information on the programme's progress and raising awareness among staff;

b) *all Directorates-General and other departments, with regard to:*

- the definition of specific actions and objectives for each DG which, in the overall framework of the Commission

programme, will help to make the issue of gender part of everyday management. To this end, the DGs will designate officials at management level to ensure that these measures are carried out, in cooperation with DG IX.

## **Monitoring and Assessment**

14 Each year, in order to inform the Commissioners, the Directorates-General and other departments will give account of the progress made in the implementation of their own action plan by means of a short report.

At the end of 1998, a mid-term assessment will be made by the administration on the progress in the implementation of the programme in the institution as a whole. The final report will be drawn up by the administration at the end of the programme, on the basis of the individual assessments of the Directorates-General and other departments, and will be sent to the Secretary-General of the Commission.

Under the mandate conferred on it by the Commission, the Joint Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men (COPEC) will carry out regular assessments of the programme and will give its opinion before the adoption of any report on the programme by the Commission.

# **Scope of the Third Action Programme**

---

15 The above programme applies to all staff covered by the Staff Regulations, including temporary and auxiliary staff, under the administrative and research budget.

# Conclusions

---

- 16 In the light of the above, it is proposed that the Commission:
- ▶ adopt the third action programme for equal opportunities for women and men at the Commission for a period of four years (1997 - 2000);
  - ▶ instruct the Directorate-General for Personnel and Administration to incorporate a gender perspective in the various aspects of the Commission's staff policy;
  - ▶ instruct the Directors-General and heads of department to take into account the annual targets for recruitment and appointments of female staff adopted by the Commission;
  - ▶ instruct the Directorates-General and other departments, and the administration, to carry out the regular checks and assessments provided for in the programme and to communicate the results to the COPEC;
  - ▶ instruct the Secretary-General, in liaison with the administration, to call regular meetings of the Directors-General and heads of department to inform them of the overall progress being made.

