

**CEEP response to the consultation on  
the follow-up strategy to the Roadmap for Equality between Men and Women**

**Introduction**

Equal treatment between men and women is one of the underlying goals of the European Union, laid out in Articles 2, 3 and 13 of the Treaty. But **equality between men and women** is not just a fundamental goal, but it is **necessary if the EU is to meet its objectives of growth, employment and social cohesion**. The participation of women in the labour market significantly contributes to economic development and the sustainability of social protection systems as well as ensuring women's economic independence. In addition, it has also been shown more (gender) diverse workplaces are more innovative and productive. Women's ability to progress in their chosen careers and to receive equal pay and their ability to reconcile work and family life are strongly linked and are **important to prevent poverty and social exclusion in old age**. The priorities being discussed for the new roadmap should be a **key part of the post-Lisbon programme**, including the mainstreaming of gender equality throughout all policy priorities.

**Specific responses**

***Do you think the Roadmap 2006-2010 has made a difference and contributed to more equality between men and women?***

The Roadmap set six priority areas for action:

- Equal economic independence for women and men
- Reconciliation of private and professional life
- Equal representation in decision making
- Eradication of all forms of gender related violence
- Elimination of gender stereotypes
- Promotion of gender equality in external and development policies

*Equal economic independence for women and men, enhancing the reconciliation of work, private and family life, elimination of gender stereotypes and equal representation in decision making*

These three priority areas are reviewed together as CEEP considers them to be very closely linked and must be considered together in order to make process in each individual area.

Over the past decade, the female employment rate in the EU increased from around 51% to around 59%, nearly reaching the Lisbon target of 60%. However, significant differences remain between Member States, ranging between around 38% and 74%. Data show that there has been no discernable difference in the overall annual growth rate of female employment since the agreement of the Roadmap in 2006, so it is difficult to discern the effective difference policy initiatives under the Roadmap have made to this overall picture. **More detailed analysis would be required** on the impact, for example of the initiatives taken to support female entrepreneurs (e.g. network of female entrepreneurs and Regulation on extending the granting of State Aid in particular to new enterprises created by women and the impact of the ESF funds which were intended to integrate equality objectives).

In terms of overall employment levels, one of the key challenges over the short-to-medium term will be **tackling the impact of the economic crisis**. Figures gathered so far indicate that traditionally male employment sectors have been more affected by the recession and as a result the gap in unemployment rates has virtually disappeared for the time being. However, there are also early indications that future job losses could be more likely in more female dominated sectors. CEEP is particularly **concerned about increasing trends and future predictions of job losses among public service staff** resulting from the need to control public finances and reduce public spending deficits. Not only are such developments likely to **disproportionately affect women** (as they predominate in public service employment), **but this also likely to have a negative impact on the economic recovery and social inclusion**.

Ensuring that progress made in increasing female employment rates in recent years is not undermined must therefore be among the priorities of any new roadmap. Similarly, new initiatives should **focus on mutual learning** to help understand and tackle the significant differences remaining in the employment rates of women in the Member States.

One of the key issues on which more emphasis is to be placed and more efforts expended in order to increase female labour market participation is **access to high quality, affordable childcare and flexible working options**. In this context it is important to note the report emphasising the shortcomings in many member States with regard to childcare provisions. This Commission report, published on the 3 October 2008 highlights that most countries have missed the targets for childcare provision – for 90% of children between three and school age and 33% of children under three – that EU leaders set themselves at Barcelona in 2002. CEEP would underline the report's conclusions that "there is a direct link between childcare provision and access for parents to paid employment. Across the EU, more than 6 million women aged 25-49 say they are forced into not working, or can only work part-time, because of their family responsibilities. For more than a quarter of them, lack of childcare facilities – or their cost – is the main problem". As employers as well as providers of childcare services in many countries, CEEP would like to point to the importance of considering funding issues at governmental level as a matter of priority – not only for childcare, but also other care facilities, as Europe's population is ageing.

Regarding more flexible working arrangements, the social partners have made their own significant contribution in this regard through the formulation and implementation of the autonomous framework agreement on telework and the recent agreement of revisions of the social partner framework agreement on parental leave which provides for the right to request flexible working. The follow up reports to the social partners Framework of Actions on Gender Equality (which also highlighted the importance of improving work life balance measures) show the multitude of initiatives which have already been taken in this field. Social partners are currently in the process of evaluating the impact of the Framework of Actions with a view to assessing whether a review of priorities is necessary. CEEP considers

that further opportunities should be provided to share information on the initiatives reported in the annual reports and to disseminate successes.

CEEP considers that the **stricter monitoring of the Barcelona childcare targets** and the sharing of information on successful work-life balance initiatives is more important, and indeed more suited to achieve the goal of increasing female labour force participation than measures which have been suggested to extend family leaves, which can serve to sever the link between parents and the labour market.

Among the other key priorities to achieve the goal of greater economic independence for women and men was tackling the gender pay gap. This was also among the priorities of the European social partners' 2005 Framework of Actions and again initiatives and process in this area have been reported in the follow up report. CEEP fully supports this goal and welcomes the recognition, in the campaign this year launched by the European Commission, that the remaining pay gap has many different causes. We would re-emphasise our view, expressed in our response to the 2007 Commission Communication on tackling the gender pay gap, that key strategies to achieve this need to revolve around reducing gender stereotypes in education and career choices and measures to help individuals reconcile work and family life. Education also has a key role to place in informing societal choices regarding the distribution of domestic responsibilities. It is our view that future priorities in this area should steer away from any review of the existing legislative framework for equal pay, but should instead focus on the implementation of the acquis and the **promotion and dissemination of initiatives designed to reduce vertical and horizontal segregation in the labour market** – this is something which, with the exception of initiatives to promote female entrepreneurship, does not appear to have been given sufficient priority during the implementation of the current roadmap. Actions have focussed on emphasising the need to tackle stereotypes in various funding programmes, which is to be supported in itself, but little is currently known as to the extent to which this has succeeded in the implementation of suitable projects showing a real impact on the ground. CEEP would support suitable assessments to be carried out to demonstrate the impact of this policy focus.

The goal of reducing vertical segregation in the labour market (more women in decision making) is also included in the social partners' Framework of Actions and the follow up reports show that many initiatives have been taken in this area. Despite improvements the representation of women in higher management remains too low and process in this field must be sustained and accelerated following the path set out in the Framework of Actions. Support for the sharing of good practices presented in the follow up reports would be welcome in order to enhance peer learning among social partner organisations. The Commission's initiatives in this field have largely focussed on research and the setting up of networks of women in political and economic decision making. While these initiatives are valuable, again little is known about their impact and successes.

#### *Promotion of gender equality in external and development policies*

CEEP supports the initiatives being taken by the EU to promote gender equality outside the EU in its development policies. CEEP would also like to see Commission **support for policies which allow and encourage the use of equality criteria in procurement processes**. Particularly in the light of recent ECJ judgements touching on the question of social clauses in procurement (such as the Rüffert case) which generate uncertainty among procurers of goods and services, a **joined-up approach from different Commission services** could assist in achieving greater clarity in this regard and to promote the use of equality criteria.

### *Eradication of gender related violence*

CEEP fully supports Commission initiatives to tackle gender related violence and human trafficking and where acting as public service provider in relevant fields is keen to participate in such measures.

### ***What are in your view the main medium and long-term challenges that a new strategy for gender equality should address?***

CEEP agrees with the Commission that the challenges regarding the main inequalities facing men and women have not fundamentally changed, as many of them result from cultural and societal stereotypes and policy failures and inadequacies which take a significant period of time to change. However, as indicated above, we also concur that the economic crisis and need to deal with demographic and climate change have recently or continuing to change the economic landscape in a way which needs to be addressed in the priorities of the new roadmap. Thus, for example, as well as emphasising general anti-crisis measures, steps must be taken to monitor the impact of the crisis on existing gender gaps to ensure that its fallout does not serve to undermine progress (and to support appropriate measures to counteract such negative impacts). In addition, the **welcome Commission emphasis on skills development, new skills for new jobs and new skills for green jobs needs to ensure that in developing such initiatives gender considerations are mainstreamed and suitable actions taken to reduce stereotyped career choices in relevant professions.** Similarly, the economic crisis must not result in a reversal of positive trends in the participation of older workers in the labour market which is so critical not only to the future competitiveness of the EU, but also the sustainability of pension and social security systems and for the avoidance of poverty and social exclusion in old age.

Further emphasis should also be placed on the promotion and dissemination of initiatives designed to reduce vertical and horizontal segregation in the labour market.

### ***Are the six priority areas defined in the Roadmap still relevant? Which new priorities should be considered?***

Resulting from the above observation we consider that the **priority areas outlined in the current roadmap remain valid.**

### ***How can gender mainstreaming and specific actions be made more effective?***

Gender mainstreaming should underpin all Community actions, but work remains to be done in the most important field – ensuring the inclusion of **gender budgeting** principles throughout the EU budget which would be a significant step towards the realisation of this ideal. In order to achieve this, it is important for the Commission, Eurostat, the Gender Institute and the Member States to work towards the collection of **better, comparable, gender disaggregated statistics.** It is not possible to mainstream gender equality throughout the policy cycle without the availability of such high quality statistics.

As indicated above, ensuring that progress made in increasing female employment rates in recent years is not undermined must therefore be among the priorities of any new roadmap. Similarly, new initiatives should focus on mutual learning to help understand and tackle the significant differences remaining in the employment rates of women in the Member States.

Among the key issues on which more emphasis is to be placed and more efforts expended in order to increase female labour market participation is access to high quality, affordable

childcare and flexible working options. CEEP considers that the stricter monitoring of the Barcelona childcare targets and the sharing of information on successful work-life balance initiatives is important in this regard. Further information sharing is also required on measures to reduce vertical segregation.

To maximise gender mainstreaming and the promotion of gender equality, CEEP would also support an initiative by the Commission to clarify the legislation position regarding the use of equality criteria in public procurement.

***In what policy areas could new gender targets be defined? Which targets should be quantified?***

It is our view that targets such as that relating to the provision of childcare should be more strictly monitored and recommendations issued to those countries not meeting these targets. As mentioned above, CEEP also calls for the integration of gender considerations throughout the EC's budget which would also require the closer monitoring of gender impacts of different EU policies.

***How can complementarities and synergies between the Commission's initiatives, the actions by the Member States, the actions by Social Partners and organisations representing civil society, both at European and national level be achieved?***

The involvement of the social partners in the implementation of the Roadmap - and the role played by social partner actions in achieving its goals is currently insufficiently articulated. A relevant steering group could be set up at EU level to rectify this situation. More regular reporting and analysis could feed into the Advisory Committee on Equal Opportunities which brings together the Commission, Member States and Social Partners (see also our comments below on reporting and monitoring).

***What types of improvements should be aimed at concerning the monitoring and the reporting on progress made?***

In CEEP's view, more detailed analysis is required of the impact of the different actions proposed, and implemented under the Roadmap. The mid-term progress report was short on such detail, something which should be rectified by the final implementation report and for the next period of the Roadmap.

Similarly, it is our feeling that **publicity and social partner involvement around implementation of the Roadmap is poor** and could serve to increase its impact. While there are annual reports on equality between women and men (which we welcome) there are no annual reports regarding the outcomes and successes of the Roadmap. As the roadmap's Annual Work Programme is impenetrable to anyone but the most dedicated EU equality policy insider, another tool is needed to reflect progress and highlight key achievements and policy learning, as well as successful stakeholder interaction. This could be achieved through an electronic newsletter and dedicated annual equality event. In addition, a suitable mutual learning process covering the areas of the roadmap and involving all stakeholders could be envisaged