



Opinion on
**The Revision of the Integrated Guidelines for
Growth and Jobs**



Advisory Committee
on
Equal Opportunities for Women and Men

The opinion of the Advisory Committee does not necessarily reflect the positions of the Member States and does not bind the Member States.



Table of Contents

Introduction	4
Gender Mainstreaming	5
Recommendation One	6
Recommendation Two	6
Recommendation Three	6
Recommendation Four	6
Recommendation Five	7
Recommendation Six	7
Recommendation Seven	7
Recommendation Eight	7
Recommendation Nine	8
Conclusion	8

Introduction

The Advisory Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men welcomes this opportunity to contribute an Opinion on the revision of the integrated guidelines for growth and jobs.

The European Strategy for Growth and Jobs is the key shared policy platform for the development of the European Union and the well being of its citizens. The success of the strategy for growth and jobs depends on the involvement and contribution of both men and women across the European Union. The achievement of gender equality is key to unlocking this involvement and contribution. The Advisory Committee brings this focus on gender equality to the current revision of the integrated guidelines for growth and jobs on the basis of the centrality of gender equality to the success of the strategy for growth and jobs.

This Opinion is based on previous opinions of the Advisory Committee – in particular opinions on the employment strategy, on gender mainstreaming and on gender budgeting. This Opinion also seeks to reflect both the Lisbon Strategy and the Barcelona targets, the progress made in the Roadmap for equality between women and men adopted by the European Commission in March 2006 and the European Pact for Gender Equality adopted at the 2006 Spring Council.

The Annual Progress Report 2006 on the Strategy for Growth and Job underlines the need for this Opinion. It makes little reference to gender equality issues in reporting on the macro-economic dimension and on the micro-economic dimension. In relation to the employment dimension, the Annual Report highlights that:

- gender gaps remain wide which calls for stronger commitment to the European Pact for Gender Equality. Availability of affordable childcare is a problem in a number of Member States which makes it more difficult to reconcile work and family life;
- through the European Pact for Gender Equality, Member States were asked to include a perspective on gender equality when reporting on implementation. In spite of this, the promotion of employment for women and systematic gender mainstreaming of policies are rarely emphasised.

The Advisory Committee notes with concern a negative trend in the focus on gender equality in the employment dimension since the removal of the targeted equal opportunities guideline. The Advisory Committee is also concerned to note the lack of reporting by the Member States in their National Reform Programmes on gender mainstreaming and the absence of any focus on gender mainstreaming by the European Commission and Council in the Annual Progress Report and in the Joint Employment Report.

The Advisory Committee is cognisant of the pressure on those responsible for the revision of the guidelines and the volume of material they must consider. For this reason, the Advisory Committee presents a brief and focused opinion. However the Committee would be happy to further elaborate on the ideas put forward if this were to be of assistance.



Gender Mainstreaming

The Advisory Committee has, in previous opinions, emphasised the significant contribution that has been made and still needs to be made to gender equality through gender mainstreaming. The Committee has also previously expressed concern that the commitment to gender mainstreaming was being given a diminished priority at European Union level and that there were significant deficiencies in the implementation of gender mainstreaming at Member State level. This compromises the capacity to achieve gender equality and the contribution that gender equality can make to the success of the Strategy for Growth and Jobs.

It is important to acknowledge that significant gender inequalities persist across the European Union. These are evident in the segregation of women into low paid and low skill areas of the economy and occupations, the gender pay gap, the over representation of women in part-time employment, the limited presence of women in senior management positions, under-representation in lifelong learning, inadequate access to childcare and family friendly working arrangements, the unequal sharing of caring and domestic responsibilities between women and men and the low numbers of women entrepreneurs. These inequalities hamper the effective implementation of the Strategy for Growth and Jobs.

It is important to maximise the economic benefits to be gained by retaining women in the labour market when they have started a family. Similarly to capitalise on investment in female human capital, highly skilled and well educated women should be enabled to progress to the highest levels within enterprises.

It is important to acknowledge the centrality of gender equality to the success of the Strategy for Growth and Jobs. This is highlighted in the Roadmap for equality between women and men which states that:

“Gender equality is a fundamental right, a common value of the EU, and a necessary condition for the achievement of EU objectives of growth, employment and social cohesion”.

The Roadmap, valuably, commits the European Commission to monitor and strengthen gender mainstreaming in the Integrated Guidelines for Growth and Jobs. The new European Institute for Gender Equality will also create new possibilities for effective gender mainstreaming.

The European Pact for Gender Equality underlines the contribution of gender equality to an effective strategy for growth and jobs in highlighting the need to “close the gender gaps in employment and social protection, thus contributing to making full use of the productive potential of the European labour force”. The Pact also commits to ensuring “gender equality effects are taken into account in impact assessments of new EU policies”.

Currently, gender mainstreaming is only identified as part of the employment dimension of the guidelines where it is stated that “Equal Opportunities, combating discrimination and gender mainstreaming are essential for progress”. Both the Roadmap and the Pact would reinforce the need to expand the gender mainstreaming focus in the integrated guidelines.



Recommendation One

It is recommended that the European Commission commissions and conducts a series of studies to make more explicit the centrality of gender equality to the success of the Strategy for Growth and Jobs.

Recommendation Two

It is recommended that a requirement should be introduced into the integrated guidelines to conduct gender mainstreaming in all of the integrated guidelines across the macro-economic, micro-economic and employment dimensions.

Recommendation Three

It is recommended that the Employment Committee would stimulate and support peer learning between the Member States on approaches to gender mainstreaming.

Specific Gender Equality Issues

The Roadmap for equality between women and men reaffirms “the dual approach of gender equality based on gender mainstreaming (the promotion of gender equality in all policy areas and activities) and specific measures”. The Advisory Committee supports the need for such an approach. For this reason, the following recommendations are designed to focus on specific issues within the integrated guidelines and should be developed along with the gender mainstreaming approach recommended above.

Recommendation Four

- Under the macro-economic dimension guideline number three asks Member States to promote an effective allocation of resources. It is established that gender equality is necessary for the success of the strategy for growth and jobs. As such, an effective allocation of resources requires a focus on gender equality impact. The guideline should be developed to require Member States to implement gender budgeting and to conduct a gender impact assessment of budgets for public expenditure.
- Under the macro-economic dimension, guideline number four asks Member States to ensure that wage developments contribute to macro-economic stability and growth. As stated above, there is a link between gender equality between men and women and growth. There continues to be significant gender inequalities in this area of wage development as evident in the gender pay gap. The guideline should be developed to encourage Member States to implement gender budgeting and to promote national wage increases, and labour costs consistent with price stability, THE GOAL OF GENDER EQUALITY and THE ELIMINATION OF THE GENDER PAY GAP and the trend in productivity over the medium term.
- Under the micro-economic dimension, guideline number fifteen, asks Member States to promote a more entrepreneurial culture and create a supportive environment for SMEs. The Roadmap for equality between women and men highlights that women constitute on average 30% of entrepreneurs in the EU and commits the European Commission to promote female entrepreneurship. The guideline should be developed to require Member States to have due regard to the particular barriers experienced by



women entrepreneurs and to identify and develop supports to increase the number of women entrepreneurs.

Recommendation Five

Under the employment dimension, guideline number eighteen asks Member States to promote a lifecycle approach including a focus on taking resolute action to eliminate gender gaps in employment, unemployment and pay. This guideline should be further developed to require Member States to take POSITIVE action to eliminate gender gaps in employment, unemployment and pay. The guideline should also require Member States to stimulate and support planned and systematic approaches at enterprise level to workplace equality and to family friendly workplaces. This latter change would reflect the wording of the amended Gender Equal Treatment Directive.

Recommendation Six

Under the employment dimension it would be valuable to reflect the dual strategy that includes a specific targeting of gender equality issues alongside a gender mainstreaming approach. A new guideline should be introduced with a specific equal opportunities focus that would require Member States to identify actions to address areas such as segregation of women into low paid and low skill areas of the economy and occupation, the gender pay gap, the over-representation of women in part time employment, the limited presence of women in senior management positions, inadequate access to childcare and family friendly working arrangements, the unequal sharing of caring and domestic responsibilities between women and men and the low level of women entrepreneurs.

Recommendation Seven

Under the employment dimension, guideline number twenty asks Member States to improve matching of labour market needs. This guideline includes a focus on modernising and strengthening labour market institutions. This guideline should be developed to require Member States to support labour market institutions, in particular employment services, to develop planned and systematic strategies and measures to ensure gender equality in the provision of and outcomes from their services.

Targets

The establishment of targets and timescales within which to achieve progress and gender equality has been effective at both EU and Member State level. It would be useful to further extend this approach.

Recommendation Eight

The European Commission should work to reintroduce targets and timetables for the elimination of the gender pay gap. Targets and timetables could usefully be developed to address current occupational and sectoral segregation by gender and for the provision of high quality, accessible and affordable care services for those who need care. Targets should also be established for school age childcare to complement the Barcelona targets for pre-school childcare. Progress in all these targets could be reported on and monitored through the National Reform Programmes.



Consultation

The involvement of specialised gender equality bodies and non governmental organisations representing and articulating gender equality issues in the preparation of National Reform Programme would be valuable in supporting an effective gender equality focus.

Recommendation Nine

The European Commission should require Member States to consult with specialised gender equality bodies and non governmental organisations representing gender equality interests in the preparation, monitoring and review of National Reform Programmes.

Conclusion

The Advisory Committee hopes that there can be a positive response to these recommendations and looks forward to progress on gender equality through the development of a successful strategy on growth and jobs.

Finally, the Advisory Committee wishes to recommend that a more formal approach could be developed as part of the Spring European Council to focus on gender equality as a key component for the success of the EU Strategy on Growth and Jobs. This would enhance the priority afforded to gender equality in the considerations of the Spring European Council. This approach could also, as appropriate, inform the June Council.