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**COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION  
TO THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT,  
THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE  
AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS**

**TOWARDS A COMMUNITY FRAMEWORK STRATEGY ON  
GENDER EQUALITY  
(2001-2005)**

## 1. INTRODUCTION

This Communication sets out the Commission's ideas towards a strategy on gender equality over the next five years. Its purpose is to establish a framework for action within which all Community activities can contribute to attain the goal of eliminating inequalities and promoting equality between women and men, as set out in Article 3(2) of the Treaty.

In order to prepare this Communication, the Commission analysed the following key aspects of policy at Community level in this area over the past years:

- the legislative *acquis* in the area of equal opportunities and the relevant case-law of the European Court of Justice;
- the Community commitment and follow-up to the Platform for Action adopted at the Fourth UN World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995;
- the implementation of the past Community programmes on equal opportunities for women and men and, in particular, of the medium-term Community action programme (1996-2000), which reinforced the gender mainstreaming strategy;
- the Structural Funds' contribution to gender equality over the last ten years through specific actions, in particular the NOW initiative, and the new regulations (2000 - 2006), as well as the valuable contribution of the European Employment Strategy since 1997;
- the initiatives in the field of external relations, development cooperation policies as well as the promotion and protection of the human rights of women;
- the fresh impulses provided by the European Parliament and the Council; and
- the strengthened provisions of the Amsterdam Treaty on equality between women and men<sup>1</sup>.

### **Gender equality today: towards an inclusive democracy**

Democracy is a fundamental value of the European Union, Member States, EEA States and applicant countries. It is also a key part of external development policy in the Union. Its full realisation requires the participation of all citizens women and men alike to participate and be represented equally in the economy, in decision-making, and in social, cultural and civil life.

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<sup>1</sup> Article 2, Article 3, Article 13 and Article 141 of the Treaty of Amsterdam amending the Treaties establishing the European Communities, signed at Amsterdam, 2 October 1997.

The EU has a long-standing commitment to promoting gender equality, enshrined in the Treaty since 1957. The Community legal framework ensures that women and men are equal before the law. The promotion of gender equality is an important element of the European Union's external relations and of its development cooperation policies and, in particular, the promotion and protection of women's rights is an integral part of the EU's human rights policies in third countries. Moreover, equal treatment legislation is a firmly established integral part of the *acquis communautaire* that countries applying for EU membership have to respect.

Considerable progress has been made regarding the situation of women in the Member States, but gender equality in day-to day life is still being undermined by the fact that women and men do not enjoy equal rights in practice. Persistent under-representation of and violence against women, *inter alia*, show that there are still structural gender inequalities.

This situation can be tackled efficiently by integrating the gender equality objective into the policies that have a direct or indirect impact on the lives of women and men. Women's concerns, needs and aspirations should be taken into account and assume the same importance as men's concerns in the design and implementation of policies. **This is the gender mainstreaming approach, adopted in 1996 by the Commission<sup>2</sup> which the Commission intends to operationalise and consolidate through this proposal.**

In parallel to gender mainstreaming, persistent inequalities continue to require the implementation of specific actions in favour of women. The proposed framework strategy is based on this dual-track approach.

## **2. THE STRATEGY**

### **2.1. A gender equality framework strategy to embrace all policies and a programme in support of the framework strategy**

Future Community work towards gender equality will take the form of a comprehensive strategy, which will embrace all Community policies in its efforts to promote gender equality, either by adjusting their policies (pro-active intervention: gender mainstreaming) and/or by implementing concrete actions designed to improve the situation of women in society (reactive intervention: specific actions).

This integrated approach marks an important change from the previous Community action on equal opportunities for women and men, mainly based on compartmental activities and programmes funded under different specific budget headings. The Framework Strategy on Gender Equality aims at coordinating all the different initiatives and programmes under a single umbrella built around clear assessment criteria, monitoring tools, the setting of benchmarks, gender proofing and evaluation.

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<sup>2</sup> Commission Communication of 21 February 1996 'Incorporating equal opportunities for women and men into all Community policies and activities' COM(96) 67 final.

**The new approach will raise the profile of the wide range of existing Community activities for the promotion of gender equality, ensure their global consistency by identifying overlaps thus optimising their efficiency and rendering them visible inside and outside the Commission. A framework global strategy will also ensure that results can be monitored and disseminated better.**

In order to develop the horizontal and coordinating actions (such as networking, awareness-raising, analysis and assessment tools, monitoring, reporting and evaluation) required to implement successfully the framework strategy, the Commission is proposing a supporting programme, financed under budget heading B3-4012. This Programme, to be adopted by a Council Decision, is based on Article 13 of the Treaty establishing the European Community<sup>3</sup>.

## **2.2. Subsidiarity and complementarity**

While Member States, EEA States and applicant countries are pursuing gender equality policies, important discrepancies remain in implementation. This is true for legislation, institutional mechanisms, specific initiatives (e.g. for positive action) and public awareness. Past programmes and initiatives at Community level have assisted Member States and NGOs in developing more effective gender policies (added value).

The Community however will not aim to pursue those activities that, by reason of nature and/or extent, can be better performed at national, regional or local level.

Complementarity amongst the different Community actions and between the Framework Strategy and Member State's activities will be ensured to avoid overlaps<sup>4</sup> and to draw maximum benefit from the results obtained.

## **3. SETTING THE OBJECTIVES**

In order to deliver its full potential, the Community Framework Strategy will address the challenges of bringing about the structural change required for achieving gender equality. The Commission has identified five inter-related fields of intervention for the framework strategy. Within each of them operational objectives will be pursued to chart the course towards gender equality over the next five years. Under the framework strategy, all Community gender related initiatives will be explicitly linked to one or more of the following areas of intervention: economic life, equal participation and representation, social rights, civil life and gender roles and stereotypes.

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<sup>3</sup> The Commission has already announced its intention to propose a new programme on gender equality, with a specific budget, in its Communication on Article 13 (COM(1999) 564 final of 25.11.1999).

<sup>4</sup> For example, the Community Programme to combat discrimination (2001-2006), the Community initiative programmes, Structural Funds, rural development programmes, the Fifth RDT Framework Programme, other Union and Community programmes, such as SOCRATES, LEONARDO and YOUTH).

Gender equality dimension in the enlargement of the European Union as well as in the Community external relations and development cooperation policies will permeate all areas of intervention of the framework strategy.

The next section describes operational objectives and target actions as a non-exhaustive illustration of the potential of the Framework Strategy. The actions will be implemented by the Commission, the Member States and key actors (NGOs, social partners), as appropriate.

### **3.1. PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY IN ECONOMIC LIFE**

The European Council of Lisbon<sup>5</sup> invited the Commission and the Member States to further all aspects of equal opportunities in employment policies, including reducing occupational segregation and helping to reconcile working and family life, in particular by setting a new benchmark for improved childcare provision. Furthermore, the Lisbon European Council set quantitative targets of the utmost importance for achieving gender equality in economic life, such as that of raising women's employment rate from the average figure of 51% today to more than 60% by 2010. In this context, particular attention should be paid to the full integration of women into the new economy. It is also essential to foster and mainstream ways of giving women equal access to the knowledge-based economy as well as helping them to participate in it as information and communication technologies (ICT) are affecting employment in all sectors more and more

Structural funds constitute the Community's main financial instrument for fostering cohesion, improving employment prospects and promoting sustainable development. They already serve as an important tool for promoting gender equality. The new regulation of the Structural Funds<sup>6</sup> already provide for greater weight of gender equality in the process of programming, implementing, monitoring and evaluation.

#### *3.1.1. Operational objective: Strengthen the gender dimension in the European Employment Strategy*

##### **Actions:**

With a view to deepening the Luxembourg employment process, the framework strategy will:

- Encourage the review of tax benefit systems in view of reducing disincentives for women entering the labour market.

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<sup>5</sup> Presidency conclusions (Lisbon 23 and 24 March 2000): <http://ue.eu.int/en/Info/eurocouncil/index.htm>.

<sup>6</sup> Council Regulation (EC) No 1260/1999 laying down general provisions on the Structural Funds, OJ L 161, 26.6.1999, p. 1-42.

- Encourage lifelong learning and access to active labour market measures for women.
- Promote the employability and the access of women to IT jobs, particularly by enhancing participation of women in relevant education and training.
- Support further development and coordination of national statistical systems where required, in order to allow for better monitoring of gender related issues in the European Employment Strategy (supporting programme).
- Support an expert group on gender equality in the economy to assist the Commission in these tasks (supporting programme).

3.1.2. *Operational objective: Improve the use of the Structural Funds for the promotion of gender equality*

**Actions:**

- Propose a Commission communication on the implementation of gender mainstreaming in the new programming documents, including highlighting of best practice.
- Improve gender mainstreaming in the Structural Funds and their Community initiatives (EQUAL, Interreg, Urban, Leader). Strengthen cooperation mechanisms within the Commission in order to monitor the implementation of gender mainstreaming.
- Provide support at Community level and encourage Member States to provide support for information and awareness-raising actions to promote equality between women and men in the framework of the Structural Funds. Develop links between the actions funded by the Structural Funds and the rural development measures funded by the Guarantee section of the EAGGF, and other Community policies that also promote gender equality.
- Support desegregation of the labour market, in particular, via the human resource Community initiative EQUAL.
- Support the setting up of a network of persons responsible in the Member States for issues concerning equality in the Structural Funds.

3.1.3. *Operational objective: Develop strategies to encourage gender mainstreaming in all policies which have an impact on the place of women in the economy, (e.g. fiscal, financial, economic, educational, transport, research and social policy)*

## **Actions:**

- Propose a Commission communication on social issues in public procurement.
- Integrate gender analysis in development cooperation policy into the design, implementation and evaluation of measures, especially those relating to macro-economic policies and poverty reduction.
- Develop dialogue with the top management of enterprises operating in Europe, in particular in cooperation with the social partners, on their contribution to gender equality in economic life.
- Create a European label (equality prize or certificate) to be awarded annually to enterprises which have developed good practice to promote gender equality (supporting programme).

### **3.2. PROMOTING EQUAL PARTICIPATION AND REPRESENTATION**

The persistent under-representation of women in all areas of decision making marks a fundamental democratic deficit which requires Community level action.

Along these lines the EU Council adopted on 22 October 1999 conclusions<sup>7</sup> on the subject of gender balance in all decision-making processes and took note of the set of indicators for measuring gender balance in political decision-making. The Commission's report on the implementation of the Council Recommendation on the balanced participation of women and men in decision-making<sup>8</sup> concluded that the overall outcome of the policies applied since 1996 was positive. However it did not match the expectations set out in 1996 and, therefore, further action was required.

In the Commission, the first concrete steps to set binding targets date from February 1999, when the Commission Communication<sup>9</sup> "Women and science - Mobilising women to enrich European research" was adopted, which set a target of at least 40% for women's participation on the panels, consultative committees and in fellowship programmes of the fifth Community Framework Programme for Research and Development. In its Decision on gender balance in expert groups and Committees set up by the Commission of May 2000, the Commission states its intention to have at least 40% of each sex in each of its committees and expert groups. To help meet this target, the Commission requests Member States to present candidates of both sexes for membership in those bodies.

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<sup>7</sup> Conclusions of the 2208th Council meeting, Luxembourg, 22 October 1999.

<sup>8</sup> COM(2000) 120 final of 7.3.2000.

<sup>9</sup> COM(1999) 76 final of 18.2.1999.

In its relations with third countries, and more particularly its human rights policies, the Community actively promotes the equal participation of men and women in civil society, in economic life and in politics and promotes the participation of specific groups, particularly women, in the electoral processes.

*3.2.1. Operational objective: Improve the gender balance in political decision-making*

**Actions:**

- Encourage the development of networking of elected women at European, national, regional and local levels, by encouraging the networking of Parliamentary committees on equal opportunities for women and men in the EU Member States and in the European Parliament (supporting programme).
- Promote awareness of gender discrimination and the need for a gender balance in civic education.
- Assess the influence of electoral systems, legislation, quotas, targets and other measures on gender balance in elected political bodies (supporting programme).
- Support schemes to enhance developing countries' institutional and operational capacities for integrating gender issues at national and local level and in civil society, including legislative and administrative actions on equal rights for women and men.
- Monitor improvements in the gender composition of committees and expert groups set up by the Commission; promote the implementation of Council Recommendation 96/694 and monitor its follow-up.
- Conduct awareness-raising activities addressed to citizens on the need for a gender balance both in elected public bodies and inside the political parties' structures as well as to encourage women to become politically active with a particular view to the European Parliament elections in 2004 (supporting programme).

*3.2.2. Operational objective: Improve the gender balance in economic and social decision-making*

**Actions:**

- Monitor and evaluate the transition from education and training to working life, recruitment and career development of potential female top managers.
- Establish and maintain a full set of regularly updated statistics on women in decision-making positions in the economy and society with data on management, industries' and social partners' organisations as well as major NGOs (supporting programme).

### 3.2.3. *Operational objective: Improve the gender balance in the Commission*

#### **Actions:**

- Monitor the results of the Commission departments efforts to promote a gender balance in decision-making positions, including the development of timetables, indicators and benchmarks.
- Develop strategies, as part of the Commission Reform, for improving use of time and organisation of work at all levels, including management level.
- Continue and enhance gender-specific training, awareness raising and information in all Commission departments, in particular at decision-making level and in Commission delegations, and introduce gender issues as a regular element of other management training.
- Gender-assess and improve the present systems for recruitment and promotion in Commission departments, in particular by ensuring that there is a gender balance in juries and on selection boards and by examining the content and methodology of the entrance competitions for possible gender bias.

### **3.3. PROMOTING EQUAL ACCESS AND FULL ENJOYMENT OF SOCIAL RIGHTS FOR WOMEN AND MEN**

Equal access and full enjoyment of social rights are among the pillars of democratic societies. Yet, many women do not have equal access to social rights either because some of these rights are based on an outdated male breadwinner model or they do not take into account that women predominantly carry the burden of having to reconcile family and professional life. This is evident in many social protection systems, which in turn is one of the explanations of the feminisation of poverty in the European Union (career-breaks, part-time work, lack of education and training). In many cases, women just do not access or have access to the proper information about existing social rights. Some of these rights have already become European legislation. The actions will aim at improving the application of Community legislation in particular on social protection and in the areas of parental leave, maternity protection and working time. In addition, the actions will include better information dissemination.

Women in developing countries often experience discrimination in access to nutrition, health care, education, training, decision making, and property rights. The Council Regulation on integrating gender issues in development co operation<sup>10</sup> underlines that redressing gender disparities and enhancing the role of women are crucial for both social justice and development.

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<sup>10</sup> OJ L 354, 30.12.1998.

3.3.1. **Operational objective:** *Improve the knowledge and monitor the relevant Community legislation in the social sphere (parental leave, maternity protection, working time, part-time and fixed-term contracts)*

**Actions:**

- Propose a directive based on Article 13 of the Treaty to ensure equal treatment for women and men in matters other than occupation and employment.
- Ensure the follow-up and assessment of implementation in the Member States of existing legislation in the social sphere.
- Support awareness of the EU legislation in the social area and the case-law amongst NGOs, the social partners, labour inspectorates and the legal professions (supporting programme).
- Support information and dissemination activities regarding EU social legislation, aimed at EU citizens (supporting programme).

3.3.2. **Operational objective:** *Monitor the integration of a gender perspective in the design, implementation and evaluation of Community policies and activities influencing the daily life of women and men, (such as: transport, public health, external relations, including human rights policies and the Community programme to fight discrimination based on Article 13 of the Treaty).*

**Actions:**

- Mainstream gender equality within the area of social protection and in respect of all objectives of social protection identified by the Council.
- Mainstream a gender perspective in all Community measures to prevent and combat social exclusion, particularly in view of the increasing feminisation of poverty.
- Improve the knowledge and understanding and, if required, propose new Community legislation in the social field
- In the area of development cooperation, support actions and programmes which facilitate equal access of women and men to nutrition, education, health care, reproductive rights, property and justice.
- Support national awareness-raising campaigns that promote care as a task for both men and women (supporting programme)

### 3.4. PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY IN CIVIL LIFE

The aim of promoting equality in civil life relates to the question of the full enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms by both women and men, regardless of race or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation. It also relates to strengthening and furthering the development of the enforcement mechanisms of the equal treatment legislation, together with better awareness of and training on equality rights and the human rights of women.

Actions will include training on equality legislation for the legal professions as well as informing NGOs on this legislation. Moreover, particular attention needs to be paid to women who are subject to multiple discriminations (such as migrant women or women with disabilities, older women, women at risk of social exclusion, etc) or who face violence and/or sexual exploitation.

The European Union has developed a European-wide policy to combat violence against and trafficking in women. One central instrument is the STOP<sup>11</sup> programme, set up to reinforce cooperation against trafficking in women and children. This was followed by the DAPHNE initiative and the new DAPHNE programme (2000-2003), both aiming at improving information and protection of victims of violence. An awareness-raising campaign to combat domestic violence against women was launched in 1999. A survey carried out by the Commission<sup>12</sup> shows the need for further action in the area at EU level.

*3.4.1. Operational objective: Monitor Community law and case law on equal treatment of women and men and, if required, propose new legislation.*

#### Actions:

- Review Directive 75/117 and explore possibilities for its improvement, in particular, look at the functioning of legal remedies and call on the Member States to reinforce the role and powers of the labour inspectorate bodies with regard to equal pay legislation.
- Conduct research and collect data on the gender dimension of health and safety at the workplace. On the basis of it, explore the need for adapting legislation.
- Support specific information and training on equality legislation and the human rights of women aimed at the legal professions, labour inspectorates and social partners in the EU and in the applicant countries (supporting programme)
- Monitor the development of structures in support of the implementation of the *acquis communautaire* in gender equality matters in the applicant countries (supporting programme).

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<sup>11</sup> Joint Action of 29 November 1996 adopted by the Council - OJ L 322, 12.12.1996.

<sup>12</sup> Eurobarometer 51.0 of June 1999.

- Support a network of legal experts in the Member States and the applicant countries to assist the Commission in the implementation of the tasks related with this objective.
- Support information activities targeted at NGOs to increase awareness on Community legislation on equal treatment for women and men (supporting programme).

#### 3.4.2. *Operational objective: Promote women's rights as human rights*

##### **Actions:**

- Support awareness-raising actions and campaigns in the EU and in the applicant countries aimed at empowering women by enforcing their human rights, in particular women facing multiple discrimination (especially migrant women and women from ethnic minorities).
- Support networking in order to systematically collect comparable data on gender-related violations of human rights and sex discrimination cases in the Member States and in the applicant countries (supporting programme).
- Strengthen cooperation and exchanges of information on human rights of women, with relevant NGOs and international organisations, within the European Union, the applicant countries and in the context of development cooperation.
- Support awareness-raising of gender-related violations of human rights in armed conflict situations.
- Promote that the specific needs and/or particular situations of women are duly taken into account, where relevant, within initiatives in the field of asylum and in the field of entry and stay of third country nationals on the territory of the Member States.

#### 3.4.3. *Operational objective: Fight gender-related violence and trafficking of human beings for the purpose of sexual exploitation*

##### **Actions:**

- Strengthen and support the fight against and prevention of violence against women, in particular through the DAPHNE and STOP programmes.
- Support information campaigns in the countries of origin, transit and destination outside the EU, in particular the applicant countries, as well as within the EU itself in cooperation with national authorities and NGOs.
- Promote training and awareness raising of the police and judiciary; support their cross-border cooperation and the exchange of information and best practices

within the EU and, in particular, between the EU and the candidate countries to combat trafficking in human beings.

- Grant short-term residence permits to victims of trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation in accordance with the principles set up in the 1998 Commission communication on future actions in the fight against trafficking in women.
- Continue to develop action to combat domestic violence against women in the EU, in the applicant countries and in third countries (supporting programme).
- Support research, data collection and dissemination of information on violence against women, in the EU and in the applicant countries

### **3.5. PROMOTING CHANGE OF GENDER ROLES AND STEREOTYPES**

This field of intervention addresses the need to change behaviour, attitudes, norms and values which define and influence gender roles in society through education, training, the media, arts, the culture and science. Elimination of existing cultural prejudices and societal stereotypes is paramount for the establishment of gender equality.

Perpetuating negative or stereotyped images of women, in particular in the media and computer-mediated information and entertainment, in advertising, and in educational material, does not provide an accurate or realistic picture of women's and men's multiple roles in and contributions to a changing world. Without detriment to their freedom of expression, the media and culture industries should, as opinion formers and means of shaping values, contribute to changing gender stereotypes in the public perception and to presenting a fair portrayal of gender.

#### **3.5.1. Operational objective: Raise awareness about gender equality issues**

##### **Actions:**

- To support strengthened efforts to eradicate stereotypical gender discrimination in education, for example in educational materials, and to develop good practice in this field
- Develop awareness-raising activities on women's contribution to the European project and European culture and the importance of gender equality in our modern democratic society.
- Organise every year a European week on a priority topic of the framework strategy, in cooperation with the Member States authorities (supporting programme).

3.5.2. *Operational objective: Overcome gender stereotypes in and via relevant Community policies*

**Actions:**

- Monitor the integration of a gender perspective in policies of particular relevance in overcoming gender stereotypes such as education, training, culture, research, media and sport policies and promote equality through all future programming phases of the current Community programmes, such as Socrates, Leonardo, Youth, Culture, Research and other relevant programmes and initiatives.
- Discuss with the existing national ethical committees the inclusion of a gender dimension in their remit as well as the support for networking of National Ethical Committees.
- Ensure, where appropriate, that Commission departments take into account in their information policies specific women' needs and perspectives, in close cooperation with Commission's representations in Member States.
- Promote the exchange of views and good practices in the media and create a group of media representatives to assist the Commission to implement the talks under this objective of the framework strategy (supporting programme).

**4. TOOLS AND MECHANISMS:**

Policy-making for gender equality needs specific methods and tools (such as networking, data collection, training or gender impact assessment). The supporting programme of the Community framework strategy will analyse the effectiveness of the existing instruments and support the development of new and more efficient ones. This will be accompanied by the development of common indicators and the setting of benchmarks to allow for more efficient monitoring and evaluation. Activities and strategies might, in this way, be refocused if deemed necessary, or new ones developed during the period covered by the framework strategy.

**4.1. Reinforcing cooperation with the EU national gender equality authorities and coordination of the activities**

The framework strategy will actively encourage the exchange of good practice among the EU and the EEA Member States and the applicant countries involving governments, social partners and the civil society.

In order to support and improve the synergy among national policies on gender equality and to create Community added value, the supporting programme of the framework strategy will financially support a range of initiatives, to be developed by the Member States authorities in cooperation with all relevant national actors, particularly NGOs and social partners, on particular topics with a European interest and dimension.

Once a year, the Commission will organise a high-level meeting with senior officials from the Member States with responsibility for gender mainstreaming.

The Commission Advisory Committee for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men will continue to assist the Commission throughout the implementation of the framework strategy. Its role will be vital in providing expertise and information on Member States gender related policies, in particular as regards the benchmarking, monitoring and reporting exercises of the framework strategy.

#### **4.2. Reinforcing of Commission structures**

The Group of Commissioners on Equal Opportunities will continue to play a major role in giving political impetus to the Commission's gender mainstreaming and equal opportunities strategy and actions. It will also continue to ensure adequate coordination between the departments involved and will monitor progress being made in the implementation of the Framework Strategy and, if necessary, make appropriate recommendations.

The Commission's Inter-service Group on Gender Equality will coordinate the activities of the various Commission departments regarding the implementation of actions covered by the Framework Strategy on Gender Equality in their respective policies as well as the annual work programme for their respective policy area. Within the Inter-Service Group, the Commission departments will develop, implement, monitor and evaluate a set of gender indicators and benchmarks and report regularly on the progress made to the Group of Commissioners on Equal Opportunities. This will also include further development of gender impact analysis and assessment of Community policies, gender mainstreaming training of officials.

#### **4.3. Reinforcing cooperation among the Community institutions**

The Commission will encourage inter-institutional cooperation amongst all Community institutions in order to facilitate and enhance gender mainstreaming. The Commission will also facilitate networking among European research institutions on gender equality.

#### **4.4. Strengthening partnership**

Experience in running earlier Community measures and programmes has shown that the commitment and participation of the traditional players are not enough to achieve the aim of gender equality. It is essential to involve key actors from economic and social life and strengthen the partnership aspect.

#### *4.4.1. Cooperation with the social partners at European level*

The Amsterdam Treaty has assigned a major role to the European social dialogue and has given the social partners substantial responsibilities and powers. The Commission confirms its commitment to encourage the social partners to make a full contribution to promoting gender equality, in particular to assess the impact of their framework agreements. The Commission, for its part, will support a network of social partners' representatives on the question of gender equality in businesses, and information and awareness-raising measures, in partnership with the social partners, on the pay gap between women and men.

#### *4.4.2. Cooperation with NGOs*

NGOs are an important element of civil society and major players in the promotion of a gender democracy. The existing forms of Commission-NGOs cooperation and partnership will be the basis for enhancing the dialogue and improving mutual information and exchange of best practice regarding gender activities and policies. It will also encourage NGOs which do not specialise in women's issues to integrate a gender perspective in the activities.

#### *4.4.3. Cooperation with other international organisations*

Cooperation with other international organisations such as the United Nations (follow-up to the Beijing Platform for Action), the Council of Europe (Steering Committee for Equal Opportunities) and the OSCE (new action plan on gender equality) will be encouraged in order to build on the expertise of these organisations and avoid duplication on the ground.

### **4.5. Setting indicators and benchmarks**

The setting of indicators and benchmarks is a determining factor for the success of the Framework Strategy in order to make the progress achieved measurable and visible and to monitor trends and translate idealistic ultimate goals (the strategic objectives) into realistic stages or phases (the operational objectives). Indicators and benchmarks provide incentives for greater sustained efforts, help determine responsibility for achieving targets and, finally, allow progress to be rewarded by general recognition.

With regard to the strategic objective of equality in the economy, the Framework Strategy will use the indicators already developed within the European employment process and will provide support for them to be supplemented and used regularly. Targets and benchmarks set by the European Council in Lisbon will be regularly monitored. The implementation of the Framework Strategy will regularly be the subject of reports prepared using the indicators developed by Council in the areas of decision making and reconciling working and family life.

In order to monitor progress made in meeting the various strategic objectives, systematic production and availability of statistical data both at EU and national levels will be supported. The range of harmonised and comparable data should be enlarged by carefully selecting the statistics allowing effective monitoring of the Framework Strategy.

## **4.6. Ensuring information, reporting and evaluation**

### *4.6.1. Information*

The Framework Strategy will be accompanied by an integrated information strategy, providing for an Internet web-site with information on the different initiatives of the supporting programme and on the gender-related activities of the Commission departments

### *4.6.2. Reporting*

The Commission will be accountable for the implementation of the framework strategy and will regularly report on it. To this aim, the approach of the Annual Report on Gender Equality will be revised to include more information on the implementation of the framework strategy (*inter alia*, budgetary information on allocation and expenditure) and on developments at national level, including progress in reaching the benchmarks, and assessment of the results achieved.

Every year, the Commission will adopt the annual work programme of the framework strategy, including the priority actions that will be developed under the in the current year. A global report, covering the entire implementation of the Framework Strategy as well as the results of the external evaluation (see below), will be adopted by the Commission.

### *4.6.3. Evaluation*

All actions implemented under the framework strategy on gender equality will be subject to continuous internal evaluation.

The framework strategy will be subject to an independent external evaluation, which will start as soon as possible after its adoption. The external evaluation team will provide the Commission with an intermediate evaluation report. This external report will be annexed to the Commission interim evaluation report on the framework strategy and its supporting programme that will be submitted to the European Parliament, the Council, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of Regions by the end of December 2003.

A final external evaluation report will be prepared by the external evaluators. This will be annexed to the final evaluation report that the Commission will adopt and forward to the other European institutions by the end of December 2006, at the latest.

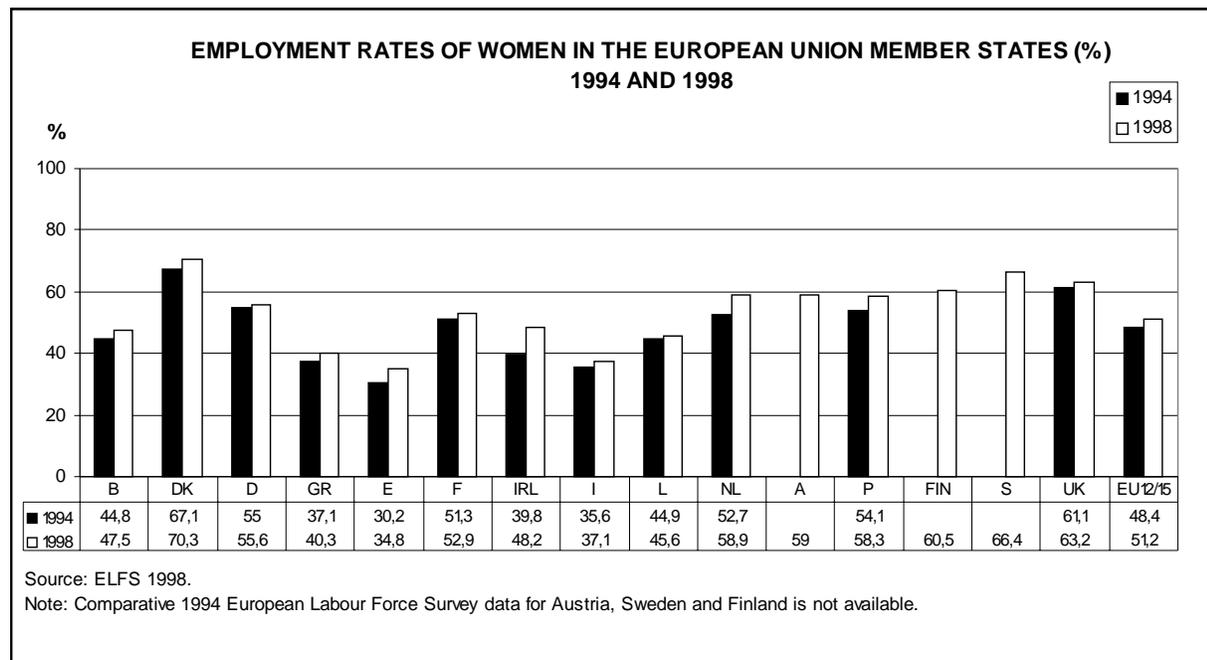
## ANNEX I

### WOMEN IN THE LABOUR MARKET

Women are not integrated into the labour market as well as men. They generally have less regular and secure jobs and carry more of the burden of care for children and other dependants, which means that there are still serious gender problems in the labour market. Although gender equality policy has been focussed on women in the economy, there are very few cases where women in Member States have, on average, achieved parity with men.

1. In almost all Member States and a majority of the applicant countries, the unemployment rate remains systematically higher for women than for men and long-term unemployment hits women harder than men.
2. The gender gap in employment rates is, on average, 20 percentage points. Women's employment rates remain low in many Member States (Table 1). The female employment rate remains below 40% in Spain and Italy. The gender gap is highest in Spain, Greece, Italy and Luxembourg, where it is above 30 percentage points.

**Table 1**



3. The employment rate of women decreases once they have young children. The opposite is true for men. The employment rates of men aged 20 to 44 are higher if they are in a household with a child (Table 2).

**Table 2**

Table 2 <sup>1</sup>	Employment Rates - 20 to 44 year olds 1998				
	Comparative Index	No Children		Child aged 0-5	
		Men	Women	Men	Women
IRL	1.9	81	81	87	46
DE	1.8	83	83	90	49
LU	1.8	93	84	98	49
UK	1.7	85	87	90	53
ES	1.7	88	67	90	40
EU11	1.7	84	79	91	52
NL	1.6	88	86	95	60
IT	1.6	91	68	92	45
FR	1.5	79	72	91	56
GR	1.5	82	60	96	48
AT	1.3	89	85	94	68
BE	1.2	87	77	92	66
PT	1.2	92	83	96	72

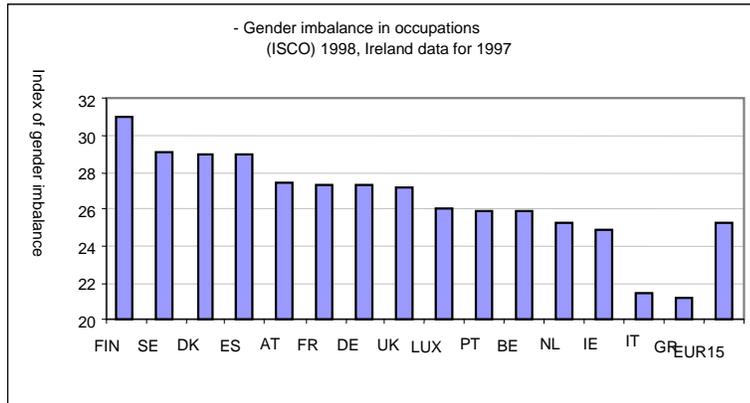
4. The segregation of women and men in the labour market remains a major concern in the EU, also in those countries where women have achieved high employment rates (Table 3). The index of gender imbalance<sup>2</sup> shows that three countries (Finland, Sweden and Denmark) with relatively high employment rates for women also have fairly highly segregated occupational structures.

<sup>1</sup> Comparative index: Women and men's employment rates are compared without the presence of any children and with the presence of a child aged 0 to 5. The closer the value of the index to one the more similar the impact of parenthood on the employment rates of women and men. Values over one suggest that the impact of parenthood on females has reduced the change of employment relative to the experience of males.

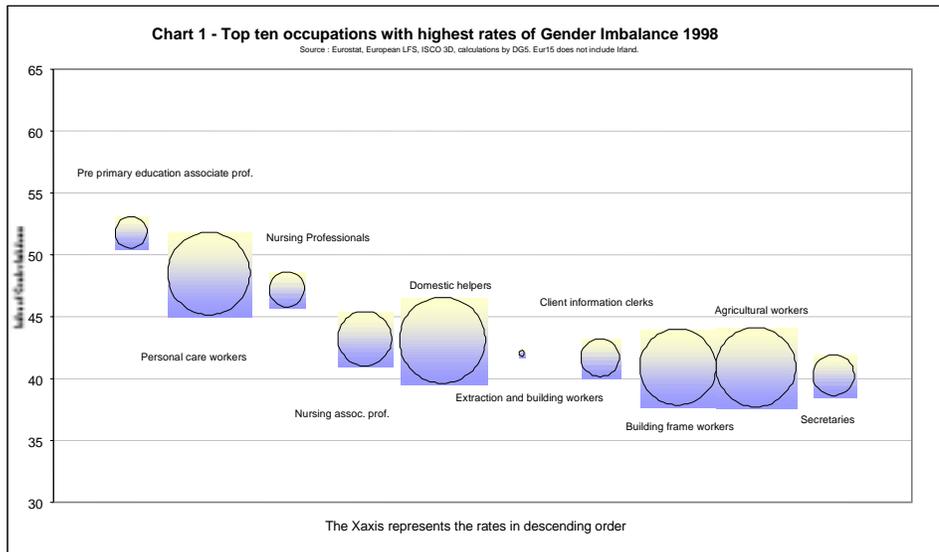
<sup>2</sup> Segregation index: A national share of employment for women and men is calculated, that average rate is then applied to each occupation. The applied national-average represents the number of women (or men) who would work in that occupation if the total of female/male workers was evenly spread across all sectors, e.g. if women make up 40 percent of the total employed in a particular country then the comparison in each sector would be between the observed rate and the 40 percent national-average rate. If all these differences are added up (ignoring positive or negative signs) across the economy we can then produce a total proportion of people who are employed beyond the balance suggested by the national-average shares of employment, i.e. a total amount of gender imbalance. This gender imbalance is then presented as a proportion of total employment to generate an indicator of gender imbalance or segregation.

Recent data on horizontal segregation are presented in chart 1, showing, at EU level, the ten occupations with the highest rate of gender imbalance; the size of the 'bubbles' representing the number of people involved. The chart shows the dominance of women in caring professions and the dominance of men in building and agricultural jobs.

**Table 3**

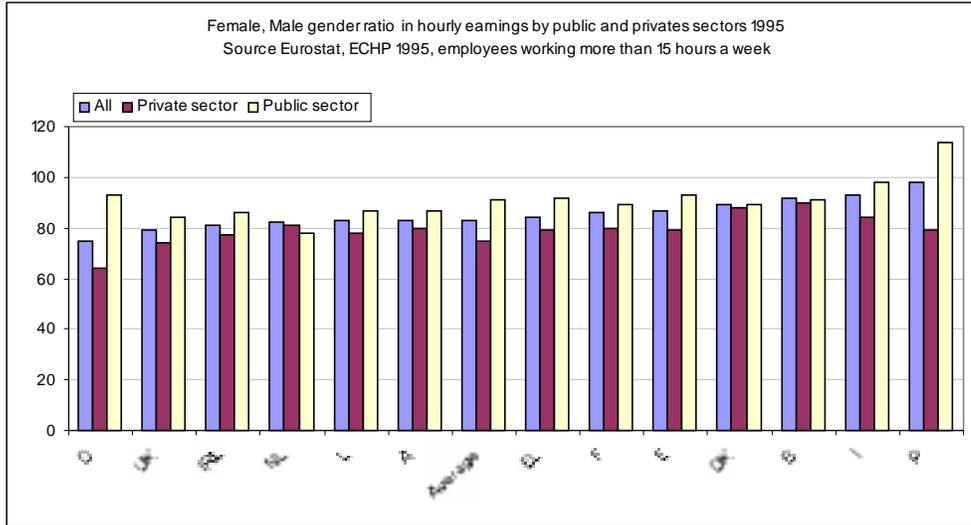


**Chart 1**



5. Women are paid less than men for the same work or for work of equal value. The pay gap is greater in the private sector (25%) than in the public (9%). Structural effects such as age, occupation and sector of activity fail to account for the gender wage gap. There is still a 15% difference in average earnings (Table 4)<sup>3</sup>

**Table 4**



<sup>3</sup> Statistics in focus, 6/1999, EUROSTAT, "Women's earnings in the EU: 28% less than men's".

## ANNEX II

### WOMEN IN POLITICAL DECISION-MAKING

Although there was steady progress in the representation of women in the decision making bodies of the EU institutions, the 1999 annual report on equal opportunities in the EU shows that women are still disproportionately under-represented in political decision-making in the EU and its Member States. This underscores the importance of strategic objective 2 "Equal participation and representation".

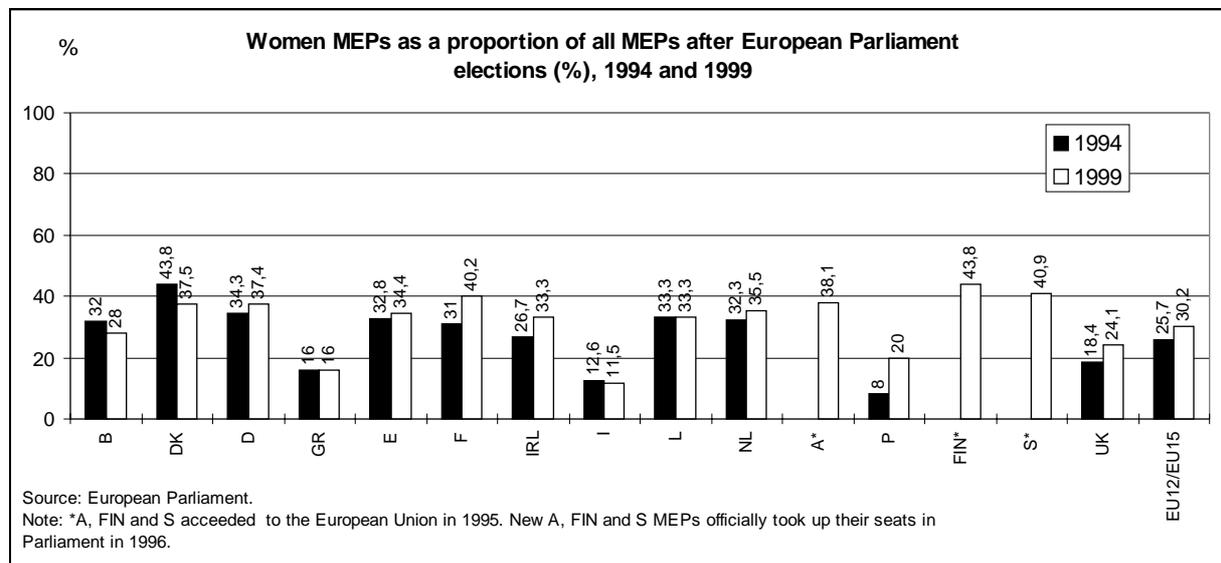
#### **Women's representation in the European Commission, the Court of Justice and the Court of Auditors (at the end of 1999)**

Since 1995, 25% of the Members of the European Commission have been women. Of the Director-Generals in the Commission, 2.8% are women. Until 1999, there was never a female judge in the European Court of Justice. With the appointment of one in 1999, there are now 6.6% women. In 1999, a second women was appointed member of the European Court of Auditors, which brings the percentage of women up to 13.3%.

#### **Women in the European Parliament - elections of 1999**

Women's representation in the European Parliament has increased steadily with each election since 1984. Yet, at 30.2%, women continue to be under-represented in the European Parliament in the period 1999-2004.

Table 1

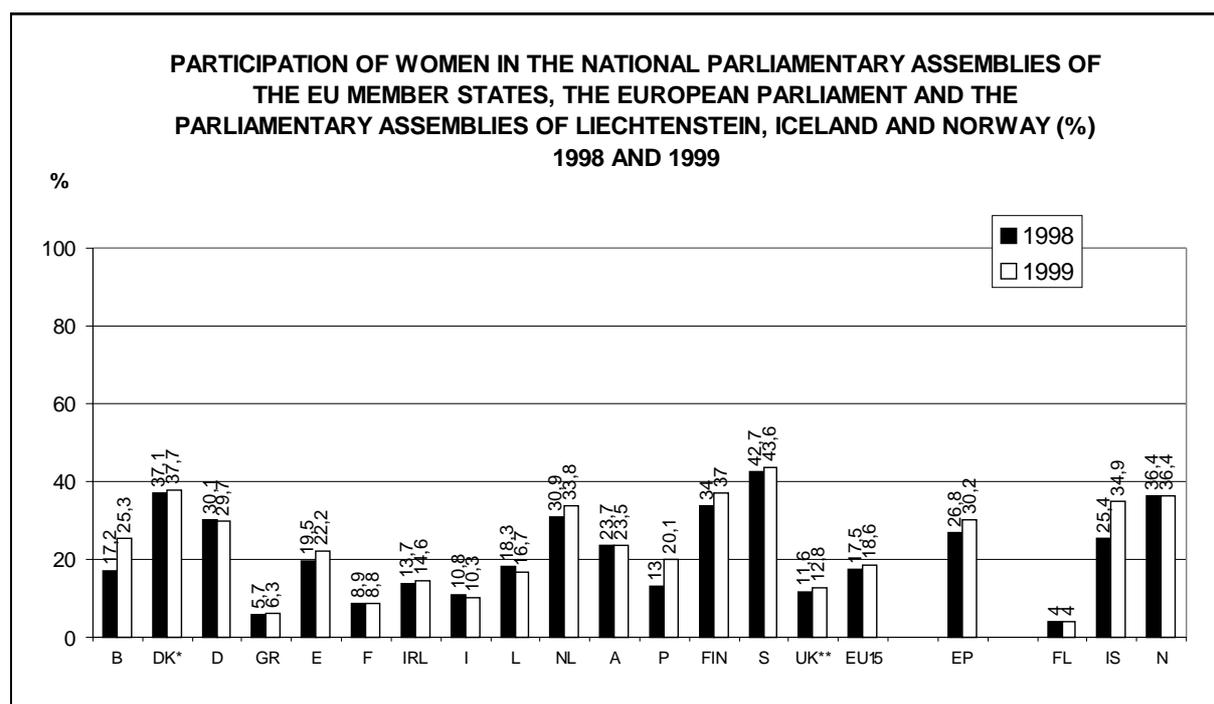


The President of the European Parliament for the period 1999 to 2001 is a woman. There are 7% women among the Vice-Presidents and 29% of the presidents of the Standing Committees of the European Parliament are women.

#### **Gender balance in parliaments of the European Union**

The average participation rate of women in the national parliaments across the European Union stood at 18.6% in 1999. Using comparable methods of data collection, the annual rate of change in women's participation was small, but consistent. It rose by 0.6 in 1997-1998 and by just over one percentage point in 1998-1999.

Table 2



Source: FrauenComputerZentrum Berlin and Deuce. Data for 1998 updated June 1998; data for D and S updated September 1998.

1999 data updated June. Data for E, F, IRL, P, A and UK updated November.

Note: DK: Data for Lower Chamber excludes 4 members elected in Greenland and Faroe Islands. UK (1999 Data) One seat vacant.

### Women's presence in national governments

The increase in the number of women holding positions in national government is somewhat more significant and illustrates the impact of new policy thinking in relation to gender equality. The share of women members of cabinet (ministers and junior ministers) rose from 21.9 to 24.1% (1998-1999). In Belgium, Finland and Iceland the increased participation of women in parliaments was mirrored by significant increases in the proportion of women in their governments. In Portugal, the participation rate of women in government fell slightly. In Sweden, women held a majority (52.6%) in national government. The combined impact of cross-party groupings, quotas and alternating male/female lists in elections go some way towards explaining women's equal presence in Swedish government.

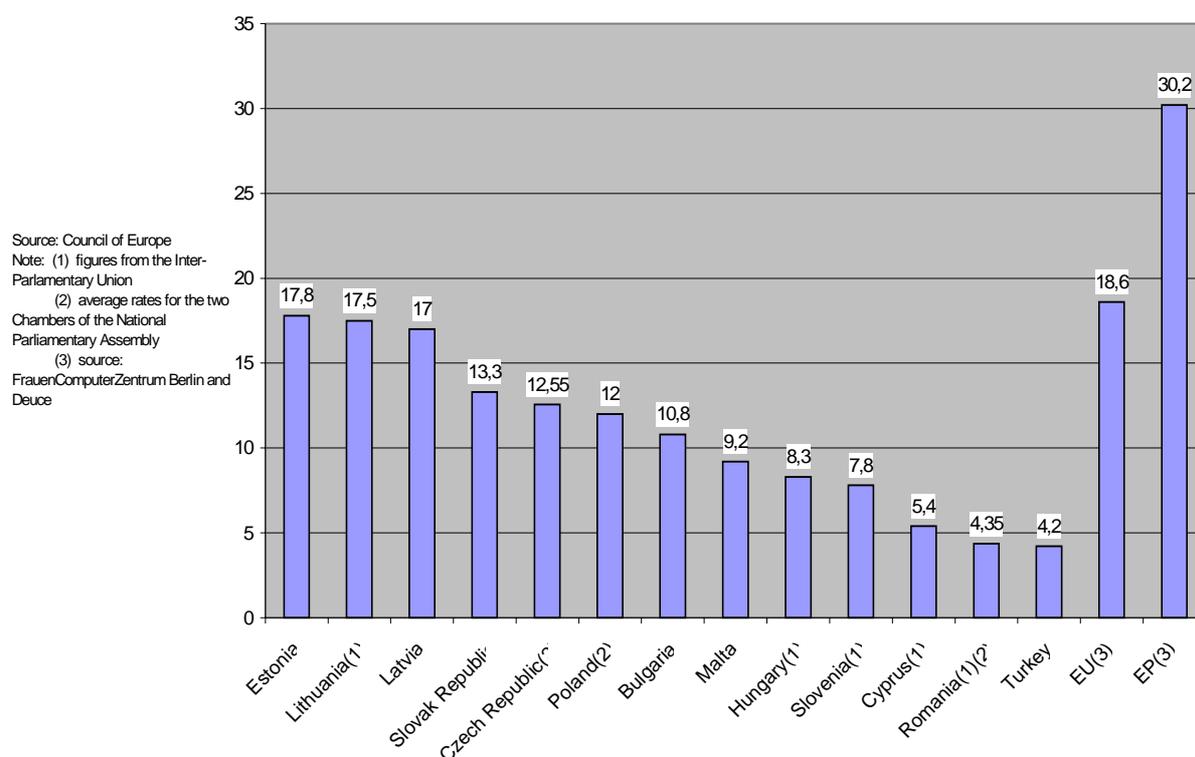
At the regional level of political decision-making, the rapid progress achieved during the last decade appears to have been consolidated, although overall growth rates tend to be smaller. Women's participation rate in regional parliaments has risen by 1.1 percentage points from 27.8 to 28.9% (1998-1999) and in regional governments it has remained the same at 24.5%. A closer look reveals large differences between Member States with decreases (German *Länder*) and increases (Belgian Regions).

## Women in the parliaments of applicant countries

The latest available complete data on the representation of women in the national parliaments of the 13 applicant countries were collected and published by the Council of Europe in December 1999<sup>1</sup>, showing large differences between the countries. The average is 10,5% women in the national parliamentary chambers. This is well below the EU average of 18.6%, which only Lithuania and Estonia exceed. It is particularly regrettable that, for instance, in Hungary in 1980, there were 30% women in the National Assembly, while now there are only 8%. Similar trends were observed in other applicant countries.

**Table 3**

Proportion of Women in the National Parliamentary Assemblies of the Candidate Countries (%), 1999



<sup>1</sup> Information document "Women in Politics in the Council of Europe Member States", Council of Europe, doc. EG (99)5rev. of December 1999.

