



ESF Monitoring and Evaluation Meeting –
Technical Group
21/06/2002

Discussion Paper

Evaluation of mainstreaming equal opportunities
for women and men in measures cofinanced by the ESF

1. INTRODUCTION	4
2. EVALUATION FIELD AND LEVELS	5
3. CONTENT OF THE EVALUATION OF GENDER EQUALITY	6
3.1. <i>Assessment of the programming rationale for mainstreaming equal opportunities policy</i>	6
3.2. <i>Assessment of the effectiveness and efficiency of interventions contributing to gender equality</i>	7
3.2.1. Analysis of implementation (both physical and financial) for all operations	7
3.2.2. Analysis of types of action and the nature of beneficiaries	8
3.3. <i>Analysis of implementation</i>	9
3.4. <i>Cause-effect analysis for a significant number of measures</i>	9
3.5. <i>Assessment of the Community added value</i>	10
4. THE DATA	11
4.1. <i>Context-related statistics</i>	11
4.2. <i>Indicators for quantification of objectives</i>	11
4.3. <i>Data on implementation of the common minimum</i>	12
4.4. <i>Information on specific measures</i>	12
4.5. <i>Additional information</i>	13
4.6. <i>Performance reserve</i>	13
5. RECOMMENDATIONS	14
REFERENCE DOCUMENTS	15
ANNEX 1 BACKGROUND TO THE EVALUATION OF MAINSTREAMING EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES BETWEEN WOMEN AND MEN IN MEASURES COFINANCED BY THE ESF	16
ANNEX 2 BACKGROUND TO MAINSTREAMING EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY INTO ESF FINANCING	18

1. INTRODUCTION

Mainstreaming equal opportunities for women and men is one of the Community's priorities set out in the Treaty. The ESF plays an important role in developing equal opportunities policy by supporting action by Member States to develop the labour market and human resources.

How well this priority has been taken into account in the European Social Fund programming needs to be assessed. In what way has gender equality been made a priority and gone beyond simple compliance with the legal obligations? What impact has Community action had?

This document does not replace any of the guidelines pertaining to evaluation of the 2000-2006 period, or any other existing document. The aim here is **to give some food for thought** for joint discussion of how best to assess mainstreaming of equal opportunities for women and men in programmes financed by the ESF¹.

A further purpose of the document is to **capitalise** on methods and experience gained in respect of the 1994-1999 period and incorporate the new aspects arising during the 2000-2006 programming and in measures so far.

The ideas discussed here are intended for evaluators whose responsibilities include assessing the degree to which equal opportunities have been mainstreamed into the programmes financed by the ESF, and for the **people following and using their assessments**.

It must be emphasised that the text does not set a definitive framework, but will be expanded on and adjusted as discussions progress with all the players concerned and more results are available.

Matters to be discussed:

1. Does the document provide a realistic framework for assessing mainstreaming of equal opportunities policy in ESF interventions? What does this assessment entail according to the evaluators' task description?
2. Does the evaluation ask the right questions? Do these questions allow more than just descriptive analysis? Can they pinpoint policy fields and provide a basis for deciding on future action? Which questions are complementary? Which are the experiences enabling those questions to be answered?
3. Are the systems of indicators appropriate for the proposed analyses? What are the advantages and disadvantages of agreeing on conventions for data definition? How do the systems currently used by the managing authorities allow the proposed analyses?

¹ In the remainder of this document, mainstreaming of equal opportunities between women and men will be referred to as "equal opportunities policy" or "EO policy"

2. EVALUATION FIELD AND LEVELS

There are two complementary sources for evaluating ESF operations which apply to all evaluation fields. The aspects relating specifically to gender equality are covered in the guidelines for ESF monitoring and evaluation². Working paper No 8 on the mid-term evaluation of Structural Fund interventions gives guidelines for including an assessment of the horizontal priorities³.

The types of ESF intervention and their context are described in Annex 2.

The evaluation mandates are organised in accordance with the CSF/SPD and operational programme structures. They should enable three evaluation levels to be covered:

- the reference framework for Objective 3, the overall human resources objectives, i.e. **an overview of the contribution to EO policy at CSF/SPD level;**
- the areas of intervention, shown as priorities or operational programmes, which constitute **the sub-objectives**. This is the appropriate evaluation level for analysing the ESF contribution. It is at this level that the objectives are defined and quantified and the links with the EES guidelines established to analyse the contribution of the ESF to these objectives. In analysing all the operations supported by the programmes, the male/female comparative approach must be used systematically to identify the nature and extent of the contribution per area;
- The contribution of the **measures** will be either specific to area E or spread across all the SF objectives and EES pillars. Through differentiated assessment of the impact for men and women it should be possible to determine the **nature of the existing links**, and the operating mechanisms in respect of the ESF contribution. More detailed assessment will be necessary for a significant number of measures. The sampling used for the measures should take into account the structure of the objectives to ensure that it is representative of the strategy followed. The objectives table (see annexe 2) should provide a basis for constructing a sample which takes into account the contribution to EO policy.

² Guidelines for systems of monitoring and evaluation of ESF assistance in the period 2000–2006 (July 1999).

³ Working Paper No 8: The Mid-Term Evaluation of Structural Fund Interventions (December 2000).

3. CONTENT OF THE EVALUATION OF GENDER EQUALITY

The gender equality objectives are set at Community level and incorporated into various policies. Basically, the reference framework is constituted by the framework strategy on gender equality⁴, the European Employment Strategy and the SF Regulations⁵ (see Annex 2).

The ideas below on the content of evaluation are intended to stimulate discussion on methods for evaluating the application of equal opportunities policy.

Evaluation of EO policy should broadly take account of two mutually complementary aspects:

- Application of equal opportunities policy to ESF interventions. This rests on a "dual approach": on the one hand, **horizontal application** of the equal opportunities principle across all co-financed activities and, on the other, **specific measures** either with a positive discrimination objective or intended to support the horizontal activities. This means that the evaluation should not be based solely on the female angle but should systematically involve a women/men comparison.⁶
- The **influence** of ESF financing on other, national and Community, policies. Assessment of that "influence" enables a factor in Community added value to be identified.

The purpose of this section is to identify the questions and evaluation methods relating to specific matters of EO policy according to the principle stages described in the evaluation guidelines.

3.1. Assessment of the programming rationale for mainstreaming equal opportunities policy

How can the programming rationale be influenced by the situation of women in the labour market in the Member States? How do the Community objectives fit in with the national objectives, what are the specific cultural factors influencing the results? How appropriate are the equality objectives?

The context of the ESF interventions as presented in the table of examples of inter-relationships between objectives may help to identify progressively the ESF's contribution and its results and impact.

⁴ Towards a Community framework strategy on gender equality (2001-2005) COM(2000) 335 final (p. 5)

⁵ EC Regulation 1260/1999 laying down general provisions on the Structural Funds, and Regulation 1784/1999 on the European Social Fund

⁶ Guide to gender impact assessment (...) "Gender impact assessment means to compare and assess, according to gender relevant criteria, the current situation and trend with the expected development resulting from the introduction of the proposed policy".

- Appropriateness of the **priorities selected** for the ESF contribution to the Community objectives, **definition of objectives**, their **quantification** in relation to the situation of women, **concentration**⁷ on the fields and topics with the greatest disparity between women/men, definition of target groups, analysis of the relative importance of the various SF objectives according to identified needs.
- In particular, just as for assessing the ESF contribution to the European Employment Strategy, analysis of the consistency and appropriateness of the links between the ESF operations and the gender equality aspects in the NAPs.
- Consistency with **national/regional policy** and the other Community policies.
- Relevance of the **causal relationships** linking the ESF measures with the horizontal gender equality objectives and with the guidelines.
- Relevance of the **role** of the **specific measures** in strengthening action under the other ESF priorities in the fields with greatest need
- **Recommendations** depending on how situations are developing, taking account of M/F disparities.

3.2. Assessment of the effectiveness and efficiency of interventions contributing to gender equality

What kind of discrimination against women is covered and what measures are implemented to reduce it? How do the strategies function? Which fields contribute the most to the objectives of the FS and the EES pillars?

3.2.1. Analysis of implementation (both physical and financial) for all operations

What is the relative significance of the ESF contribution to the various objectives? How does this financing influence national systems, and with what results?

A major component of the assessment of operations is quantified analysis of the contribution of EO policy across all operations at the aggregated level of the individual fields or priorities. Effectiveness can be analysed in relation to the concentration of Community assistance by analysing the rate of implementation of the quantified objectives.

- **Spending on measures** is a gauge of the application of equal opportunities policy, and by assessing spending levels, measures encountering difficulty may be highlighted and analysed.

⁷ Article 4 ESF Regulation 1784/1999

- Analysis of the overall implementation of the programme, respective participation by men and women in measures in relation to the **number of participants** in measures targeting individuals, and their status on the labour market⁸.
- Assessment of the consistency between the actual female participation rates and the situation as regards male/female disparity⁹. How does female representation in ESF operations **compare** with their share of the unemployment figures? What developments have there been since the 1994-1999 assessments? How should the observed variations be interpreted?
- The programme complements should indicate which measures are making a positive contribution to equal opportunities¹⁰. By analysing **spending** on equality-positive measures, including those specifically within field E, it should be possible to construct a description of the ESF contribution to supporting equal opportunities policy mainstreaming.
- Analysis of this contribution **compared** with spending under the other measures of the programming complement financing plan and the specific budgets under national policies, together with the gravity of the situation should give a soundly based picture of the strategy implemented to support equal opportunities policy.
- The assessment of **efficiency** could take the form of a systematic cost comparison (in particular average costs) between women and men. Whether spending was consistent with M/F distribution of the beneficiaries could be determined by analysing resource distribution.¹¹

3.2.2 Analysis of types of action and the nature of beneficiaries

What types of action are promoted under the ESF strategy vis-à-vis EO policy? Who are the target groups of these actions? How are they linked to national policies?

A representative number of measures¹² are monitored to identify the characteristics of the beneficiaries and the types of action in which they participate.

A further purpose of monitoring individual measures is to establish whether the nature of actions financed by the ESF produces a certain degree of discrimination, for example by looking at women's participation in measures aimed at the market or non-market sector.

⁸ Comprehensive common minimum indicators available for all measures targeting individuals

⁹ In particular by updating the context indicators in the national action plans for employment

¹⁰ Technical document 3 (p.12) and classification of operations according to their contribution to equal opportunities objectives (p.15)

1. Equality **positive**: the operation aims specifically to improve equal opportunities between women and men.

2. **Equality-oriented**: general operations which will contribute clearly to the gender equality objectives.

3. Equality **neutral**: general operations which will not contribute to any of the equality objectives.

¹¹ The 1994-1999 evaluation reports show that spending is not always proportionate to the number of beneficiaries, and that women therefore have access to measures which are less well funded (conclusion of the mid-term evaluations, p. 159)

¹² Document 8 speaks of 50 % of spending, the ESF guidelines of measures representative of the strategy, the two criteria could usefully be cross-referenced.

The evaluation of individual measures also serves to demonstrate the role of the specific actions. Do they represent the main priorities of equal opportunities mainstreaming to give it a higher profile, or is their role to reinforce measures financed under fields A, B, C, D ? What is that role?

3.3. Analysis of implementation

What methods have been used to mainstream EO policy in the programmes? What approach in respect of the partnership? What criteria are applied for selecting measures and actions? Are the monitoring systems appropriate? What role is played by the programme information and leadership? How do these methods affect the results?

It is through analysing the implementation of measures and the methods applied that the outputs obtained through financing take on their meaning. What need to be understood are the processes through which those outputs were produced. The most important factors (internal or external) to pinpoint and assess are those which explain the results.

- The quality of programming depends on the influences exerted by the specialised players, the **role of the partnership** being another line of analysis. The principle aim of the evaluation is to determine whether the opinions of the equal opportunities bodies are being followed, in what way, and to identify the effects.
- How well the objectives have been understood and disseminated, in particular by means of **information** and communication plans, in respect of equal opportunities, training of managers in the equality principle, etc.;
- The way in which **operations are selected** and the quality of selection. Are the right criteria applied according to the classification of equal opportunities objectives (positive, neutral, negative)? Is the method appropriate? What would be the alternative?
- The nature of the **obstacles** encountered in implementing the objectives linked to action by the players; what are the warning thresholds to avoid slippage in implementing the objectives?
- The quality of **monitoring systems**, breakdown by sex of quantitative and qualitative data.

3.4. Cause-effect analysis for a significant number of measures

What are the results of the measures and how are the effects differentiated between the sexes? In what way do these results promote women's integration according to their specific situation?

In evaluating the measures, the way in which the objectives for each policy area have been achieved should be analysed.

Assessment of the impact in the various fields could follow the examples given in the ESF guidelines. These examples have been used to illustrate the “objectives matrix”.

In the first evaluation report, it is important to identify the effects to be assessed. Typologies of effects and the available results in respect of those effects in non-cofinanced measures presented in the NAPs would be very useful for establishing the net impacts in the final evaluation. This, along with analysis of the evaluation methods would contribute to improving methodological exchange.

3.5. Assessment of the Community added value

What has been the Community added value in mainstreaming equal opportunities policy in ESF-funded actions?

The impact of the ESF contribution in implementing the Community priority of gender equality can be considered an added value criterion in itself. Some pointers on assessing the Community added value are currently being prepared¹³.

All the evaluation elements described above will come into play in describing the Community added value.

The main elements of Community added value put forward for discussion can be summarised as follows:

- Quality of the **strategy** to mainstream the results, influence of the Community priorities on the human resource development strategies in the MS, as set out in the CSF/SPD and the national policies and, conversely, the influence of the CSF/SPD on the Community strategies;
- Impact of the effects on the MSs' **capacity** to understand and implement the objectives more effectively;
- **Quantitative effects**: respective degree of spending on the priority and the proportion of national co-financing put into supporting the Community priority (overall spending and specific proportion represented by the ESF);
- **Effects in respect of methods**, influence of Community priorities on methods of implementation, contribution to the changes observed.
- Specific impact of the **partnership**, in particular of consultation and involvement of equal opportunities bodies;
- Impact on the creation of **indicators** in terms of labour force participation objectives, systematic breakdown of statistics by sex, the existence of a monitoring system showing data broken down according to sex.

¹³ Working paper on "Community value-added in the framework of structural policy"

4. THE DATA

The purpose of this section is to identify the questions for discussion concerning :

- the definitions and, sometimes, the various sources of those definitions, and their specific place in EO policy evaluation. Identification of the definitions used in the CSF/SPD, examination of the possibility of agreeing on conventions for a limited number of context indicators;
- identification of the main sources, in particular the common sources for Community objectives;
- identifying the main uses for the evaluation and establish the questions on which to base the analysis of monitoring systems¹⁴.

The regulations provide that, in all cases, where appropriate to the nature of the operation, the statistics are to be broken down by sex. Much of the data on ESF cofinancing can be broken down in this way.

4.1. Context-related statistics

Definition: The purpose of the context indicators is to identify disparities in gender equality.

Convention: Select a limited number of indicators to explain the most striking disparities in connection with ESF assistance promoting equal opportunities policy in the labour market. They should be selected on the basis of their suitability to allow comparison with other data.

Source: Some indicators have been selected at European level as a basis for monitoring the EES¹⁵. Context indicators are used by all the MS to monitor implementation in the NAPs. Statistics on gender disparities have been identified in the CSF/SPD¹⁶. Trends in these indicators should be covered in the annual reports.

Evaluation: Analysis of trends in the indicators and their suitability for identifying the areas with the greatest disparities between men and women.

4.2. Indicators for quantification of objectives

Definition: The objectives in individual fields/priorities need to be quantified, taking into account the gender equality priority.

Convention: Quantification may take two specific forms:

- either setting specific equality objectives
- or establishing a general trend in respect of the horizontal objectives.

¹⁴ See the document on evaluating monitoring systems (11/02/2002)

¹⁵ Indicators to monitor the implementation of Employment Guidelines on Gender Equality (25/09/01)

¹⁶ The study on ESF programming, currently in progress, could serve as an aid to summarising these indicators.

Once examples have been found, a small number of objective indicators could be selected according to the results of the analysis of the programming rationale and the links between the equality objectives set for the SF and those for quantifying the ESF action areas vis-à-vis equal opportunities policy.

Sources: The CSF/SPD/OP, the programming complements and the ex-ante assessments.

Evaluation: It is the evaluators' task to check the quantification of objectives and the extent to which they have been achieved. In the event of problems, recommendations should be made enabling the approach to quantification to be revised. The indicators agreed for the objectives could be identified systematically as part of the mid-term evaluation.

4.3. Data on implementation of the common minimum

Definition: Indicators of physical and financial implementation which must be available comprehensively for all measures. These show the male/female distribution by measure and by priority aggregated by ESF action area¹⁷.

Convention: The common minimum indicators could be established vis-à-vis objectives set by priority in the CSFs/SPDs, or by comparison with the objective indicators agreed for measuring equal opportunities policy.

Table of coverage rates per priority

Objectives in the CSFs, the SPD priorities and the OPs	Full details of financial implementation per year and per priority					Full details of concrete implementation of measures aimed at individuals				
Context and objective indicators	A	B	C	D	E	A	B	C	D	E

Sources: Trends in the physical and financial indicators must be covered in the annual reports. They are to be used for describing male/female disparities in relation to the physical progress of measures and should be aggregated by field/priority.

Evaluation: The evaluators determine the coverage rates, if possible making recommendations in respect of the indicators for which conventions have been agreed.

4.4. Information on specific measures

Definition: For a significant number of measures, information on implementation, in addition to that on the common minimum, should enable the characteristics of the beneficiaries, the types and duration of measures for the various categories of beneficiary, the type of implementation (certified training courses, training places offered, etc.) and other information on the measures to be described¹⁸.

¹⁷ Guidelines for ESF monitoring and evaluation

¹⁸ Guidelines for ESF monitoring and evaluation, p.7

Sources: Both the programming complements and the annual reports contain these indicators on implementation.

Definition: Indicators on these measures should also enable their **results** (direct and immediate) to be described according to type of intervention, and, where possible, their impacts¹⁹.

Sources: These results and impact indicators specific to individual measures, and their development, must be covered in the annual reports and mid-term evaluations.

Convention: The questions used for evaluating the results and impacts for gender equality should be capable of indicating which types of indicator would be the most useful.

Evaluation: Evaluation of data on implementation, results and impact in accordance with the proposals under point 3 of this document.

4.5. Additional information

Definition: Additional information on the processes leading to the results and the impact of certain measures on certain categories of beneficiary.

Convention: Since specific information is involved, there should be no convention on this indicator.

Sources: Survey systems, case studies, etc. These will be partially available in the mid-term evaluations and should certainly be ready in full for the final evaluations.

Evaluation: Feasibility, data quality, detailed assessment of specific measures with an impact on equal opportunities policy, should provide a basis for evaluating the way in which the results and impacts have been obtained. Some of the case studies should be geared to determining the specific links between ESF funded actions and impacts in terms of added value.

4.6. Performance reserve

To be completed with the analyses currently in progress.

¹⁹ Guidelines for ESF monitoring and evaluation, p.9

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

At the reprogramming at the end of 2003, evaluators will be asked for their recommendations on the basis of their conclusions drawn from the assessments of the priority themes for the period 2004-2006.

The purpose of this section is to predict what these questions will be and how to anticipate them.

- *How can programming be adapted to the trends observed since the CSFs/SPDs were adopted? What adjustments need to be made to the objectives in the light of the 2003 EES guidelines and the most recent recommendations to the MS?*
- *How can application of the gender equality principles be made more effective, and how can they be concentrated on the most effective equal opportunities measures?*
- *How can specific measures be linked more closely with horizontal application of equal opportunities policy?*
- *How can this area be made mutually reinforcing with other policy areas?*
- *On a more forward-looking note, what are the implications likely to be of the conclusions of the mid-term evaluations on equal opportunities mainstreaming for the future of the ESF after 2006?*

REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

Framework documents relating to the 2000-2006 period

- EC Regulation No 1260/1999 laying down general provisions on the Structural Funds
- Regulation No 1784/1999 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the European Social Fund
- Towards a Community framework strategy on gender equality (2001-2005) COM(2000) 335 final
- Technical Paper 3: Mainstreaming Equal Opportunities for Women and Men in Structural Fund Programmes and Projects, March 2000
- Council Decision on guidelines for Member States' employment policies for the year 2002 (18/02/02)

Commission guidelines

- Mainstreaming Equal Opportunities for Women and Men in Structural Fund Programmes and Projects, Technical Paper 3 (March 2000).

Evaluation guidelines

- Guidelines for systems of monitoring and evaluation of ESF interventions in the period 2000-2006 (July 1999)
- Working Paper 8: The Mid-term Evaluation of FS Interventions (December 2000)
- Conclusions of the mid-term evaluations, period 1994-1999 (1997) : Part VI: Equal opportunities between men and women in ESF interventions
- MEANS Collection, Volume 5: Transversal Evaluation of Impacts on the Environment, Employment and other Intervention Priorities. Evaluating the impact of structural interventions on equal opportunities, p. 113-135, 1999.
- A Guide to Gender Impact Assessment (COM 1998)

Results of the evaluations :

- Conclusions of the mid-term evaluations, period 1994-1999 (1997) : Part VI Equal opportunities between men and women in ESF interventions
- Conclusions of the final evaluations, period 1994-1999 (2001) Chapter 5: Equal Opportunities for Men and Women within ESF Activities, and the reports quoted in the bibliography
- When available : the conclusions of the EES evaluation on theme 9

Sources for defining the indicators

- ANNEX IV to Working Paper 2: Ex-ante Evaluation of Structural Fund Interventions
- ANNEX I to Working Paper 3: Indicators for monitoring and evaluation - an indicative methodology
- Indicators to monitor the implementation of Employment Guidelines on Gender Equality (25/09/01)

ANNEX 1 BACKGROUND TO THE EVALUATION OF MAINSTREAMING EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES BETWEEN WOMEN AND MEN IN MEASURES COFINANCED BY THE ESF

1. Ex-ante evaluation

The purpose of ex-ante evaluation shall be to provide a basis for preparing the development plans, assistance and programme complement of which it shall form part.

Ex-ante evaluation of the situation in terms of equality between men and women with regard to labour market opportunities and treatment at work, including the specific constraints on each group; an estimate of the expected impact of the strategy and assistance, particularly on the integration of women and men into the labour market, on education and vocational training, on the establishment of women in business and on the reconciliation of family and working life.

2. Mid-term evaluation (June 2003 report)

The Commission's guidelines for evaluation of SF operations²⁰ emphasise the need to look at the mid-term impact for certain essential priorities, in particular that on equal opportunities for men and women. It identifies the mid-term evaluation as the best time to establish whether quantification of the objectives is satisfactory and to determine the results in terms of both implementation and probable impact.

The points below concern mid-term evaluation, which will essentially analyse the data permitting implementation and anticipated effects to be described in the light of national and Community priorities, identifying the kind of problems encountered and the way in which the intended impact is being achieved.

The results of the mid-term analyses will constitute a basis for identifying the Community added value of ESF financing and its contribution to mainstreaming equal opportunities in all policies at European level.

3. Final evaluation (update of the mid-term evaluation) June 2005

The final evaluation of equal opportunities mainstreaming in activities cofinanced by the ESF will build on the mid-term analyses and should be available in June 2005 for the programming of future operations. The main content will be:

- Updates of the mid-term evaluations
- Impact analysis (deadweight and substitution effects)
- Reprogramming in 2004 and concentration on priority areas
- The results of allocating the reserve to reinforce this Community priority
- Conclusions on the impact and Community added value of mainstreaming equal opportunities policy.

The recommendations will principally concern implementation of the new SF intervention framework after 2006.

²⁰ Working Paper No 8: The Mid-term Evaluation of FS Interventions (December 2000)

4. Thematic evaluations of implementation of equal opportunities policy

There should be a thematic analysis at Community level of the ESF's contribution to mainstreaming equal opportunities policy, based essentially on the results of the mid-term and final evaluations. The conclusions and recommendations will feed the results of the evaluation of the Community framework strategy in 2006. The Commission is planning to carry out such an analysis. Prior discussion of the approach will enable an appropriate framework to be established incorporating the contributions of the Member States.

In the national or regional evaluations, it would be helpful to have specific sections or reports reviewing analysis of all aspects relating to mainstreaming of equal opportunities in policies cofinanced by the ESF. How to go about this will be established progressively in the course of discussion on the approach to evaluation.

ANNEX 2 BACKGROUND TO MAINSTREAMING EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY INTO ESF FINANCING

The gender equality objectives are set at Community level and incorporated into various policies. The purpose of this section is to identify the reference policy framework for evaluating equal opportunities mainstreaming in the ESF. This means discussing the main elements going to make up this framework and identifying how the ESF's contribution to these policies can be reconstructed from the different objectives. Basically, the reference framework is constituted by the framework strategy on gender equality²¹, the European Employment Strategy and the SF Regulations²².

1. The European Social Fund Regulation

The ESF Regulation provides for two complementary approaches to supporting equal opportunities policy. The first is general mainstreaming of equal opportunities policy across the five policy areas²³. The second comprises specific measures²⁴ focusing on discrimination between women and men.

Mainstreaming equal opportunities policy may involve various general and specific objectives. The general objectives in respect of equal opportunities policy belong under the human resources strategy (described in the Objective 3 reference framework).

2. The Structural Funds

The General Regulation²⁵ provides for the promotion of equality between men and women and consistency between action under the Funds and other Community policies

²¹ Towards a Community framework strategy on gender equality (2001-2005) COM(2000) 335 final (p. 5)

²² EC Regulation 1260/1999 laying down general provisions on the Structural Funds, and Regulation 1784/1999 on the European Social Fund

²³ Included under Article 2.2 "Within the policy fields (...) the Fund shall take account of (...) c) equal opportunities for women and men as part of the mainstreaming approach" which is one of three horizontal priorities, the others being support for local initiatives and the social dimension of the information society.

²⁴ Included under Article 2.1 as policy field E of the ESF "Specific measures to improve women's access to and participation in the labour market, including their career development, their access to new job opportunities and to starting up of businesses, and to reduce vertical and horizontal segregation on the basis of sex in the labour market".

²⁵ The final paragraph of Article 1 "Objective" of the General Regulation (1260/1999) provides that "in pursuing these objectives, the Community shall contribute to the harmonious, balanced and sustainable development of economic activities, the development of employment and human resources, the protection and improvement of the environment, and the elimination of inequalities, and the promotion of equality between men and women.

Article 2(5) "The Commission and the Member States shall ensure that the operations of the Funds are consistent with other Community policies and operations, in particular in the areas of employment, equality between men and women, (...)".

Article 8(1) (...) In designating the most representative partnership (...) taking account of the need to promote equality between men and women.

Article 35(1) (...)The Monitoring Committees (...) shall promote the balanced participation of (...) women and men.

Article 36(2) Where the nature of the assistance permits, the statistics shall be broken down by sex.

Article 42(2)(c) "Ex-ante evaluation: an ex-ante evaluation of the situation in terms of equality between men and women with regard to labour market opportunities and treatment at work, including the specific constraints on each group; an estimate of the expected impact of the strategy and assistance, particularly on

and operations, in particular in the areas of employment and equality between men and women.

Certain rules on the implementation of operations reinforce these general objectives, for example through the Monitoring Committees which are there to ensure balanced participation and appointment of the most representative partners, bearing in mind the need to promote gender equality, and through the requirement to ensure that the operations are publicised and to inform potential beneficiary organisations of funding available for promoting gender equality.

Article 42(2)(c) on ex-ante evaluation identifies the main objectives pursued. The general objective approaches the situation in terms of **equality between men and women as regards labour market opportunities and treatment at work**, including the specific constraints on each group. The estimate of the expected impact mainly concerns the objectives of **integrating women and men into the labour market, education and vocational training, the establishment of women in business and reconciling family and working life**.

The Commission's proposed guidelines for programming and implementing assistance are presented in the document "Mainstreaming Equal Opportunities for Women and Men in Structural Fund Programmes and Projects"²⁶.

3. The European Employment Strategy

Operations financed by the ESF must be consistent with the priorities of the national action plans for employment. The guidelines used for drawing up the plans were those of 1999. Their content has not changed very much. Certain amendments have been made by the Council concerning **horizontal objectives** within a consistent overall strategy.

Concerning the women/men dimension, there is a specific horizontal objective (E) which involves developing an equal opportunities mainstreaming strategy in the NAPs in all four pillars. The employment rate objective (A) includes specific objectives for the female employment rate in percentage terms (57% in 2005 and 60% in 2010). The horizontal objective of employment quality must take into consideration the labour market dimension including gender equality.

Some of the guidelines include a specific objective of reinforcing equal opportunities policy (access to employment, career prospects, income, reconciling family and working life). Guidelines 17 and 18 refer to specific action to reinforce the gender equality dimension in employment²⁷.

4. The Community Framework Strategy

the integration of women and men into the labour market, on education and vocational training, on the establishment of women in business and on the reconciliation of family and working life.

Article 46(2)(a) (...) the managing authority shall be responsible for ensuring that publicity is given to the package and particularly for informing: potential final beneficiaries (...) bodies promoting equality between men and women (...).

²⁶ Technical Paper 3 "Mainstreaming Equal Opportunities for Women and Men in Structural Fund Programmes and Projects" March 2000

²⁷ Council Decision on guidelines for Member States' employment policies for the year 2002 (18/02/02)

At Community level, the framework strategy covers all policy including the SF. Its objectives may be seen as “**Community objectives**” to be taken into consideration. The Commission has identified five interrelated areas of action: economic life, equal participation and representation, social rights, civil life and gender roles and stereotypes. The consistency of ESF-financed operations with Community policies could be examined mainly in respect of the economic life objective since, although the ESF also contributes to other objectives, it probably does so to a lesser extent.

5. Conclusions for discussion: proposal for constructing reference objectives

In conclusion, the tables below put forward for discussion a possible basis for summarising the contribution of the SF to the Community’s gender equality objectives in the human resources field. It would take the form of a key for interpreting interventions under the CSFs/SPDs for equal opportunities policy. Without wishing to pre-empt the outcome of discussion and the aspects to be selected as priorities, it seems essential above all to establish a coherent framework for organising priorities which overlap significantly and identifying the main influences.

The aim would be to link the SF’s contribution to equal opportunities policy²⁸ by introducing the objective set at Community level, the horizontal objectives and the European Employment Strategy guidelines. For the ESF operations, the contribution of the SF objectives to equal opportunities mainstreaming would take into account the horizontal aspect of mainstreaming in the various fields of action and the role of the fifth policy area of special measures to improve women’s access to and participation in the labour market.

²⁸ Technical Paper 3, p. 7

EXAMPLE: Gender equality objectives and SF priorities

The table below gives the hypotheses for the various levels of objective.

One of the aims of the discussion is to identify the links enabling the main causal relationships or influences to be established. These examples for interlinking objectives could provide a way of reconstructing progressively the nature of the ESF contribution and its results and impacts (see the section later in the document on updating the programming rationale).

Certain broad hypotheses concerning the ESF contribution may help to identify those of the objectives set out in the employment guidelines which would be most likely to benefit from a contribution.

A reference to the key indicators²⁹ on gender equality for monitoring the ESF contribution would probably improve the definition of the objectives.

Table of gender equality objectives and SF priorities:

Community Objectives ³⁰	Objective of reducing inequality and promoting equality between men and women essentially in economic life			
EES: horizontal and specific objectives ³¹	A/Increasing employment rates (57% in 2005 and 60% in 2010)			
	B/Improving the quality of employment in the context of the labour market, which also covers gender equality			
	E/ National Action Plans to implement the strategy for employment incorporating equal opportunities into all four pillars, guideline 16 (idem)			
EES Pillar IV: Strengthening policy on equal opportunities for women and men	Guideline 17 Combating sex discrimination (on the labour market)			Guideline 18 Reconciling family and working life ³²
The SF equal opportunities objectives ³³	Access to the labour market	General and vocational training	Enterprise creation and growth	Reconciling family and working life
Priority 1: SME and private sector development				
Priority 2: Tourism				
Priority 3: Human resources				
Priority 4: Transport infrastructures				
Priority 5: Research and technology				

²⁹ Indicators to monitor the implementation of Employment Guidelines on Gender Equality (25/09/01). Annex 3 (attached)

³⁰ Towards a Community framework strategy on gender equality (2001 – 2005) COM(2000) 335 final

³¹ Council Decision on guidelines for Member States' employment policies for the year 2002 (18/02/02)

³² This could be seen as a specific objective directly linked to the fourth dimension of the SF contribution

³³ Technical Paper 3

EXAMPLE: Close-up on the ESF gender equality objectives and their contribution to the SF priorities

This is an attempt to zoom in on the contributions of the various areas to the SF equal opportunities objectives. The boxes give the hypotheses for illustrating the links between the objectives at the various levels. The examples have been extrapolated very rapidly from the examples in the ESF guidelines³⁴ to identify the links between the various fields of the ESF and the pillars in respect of the effects on individuals, systems and job creation. One hypothesis was to consider access to the labour market as a system measure and training as a measure aimed at individuals. These examples have been cross-referenced with the 2002 guidelines represented by the number of the pillar (1) and the guideline concerned (2).

The objectives linking the ESF fields to the gender equality objectives are reinforced by the specific actions. By constructing the potential links between the contribution of the specific actions to these fields a picture can be gained of the ESF contributions overall.

Table: ESF gender equality objectives and their contribution to the SF priorities

The SF equal opportunities objectives	Access to the labour market	General and vocational training	Enterprise creation and growth	Reconciling family and working life
Priority 3: human resources Reference framework				
A/ Active policy	I.1 Impact on systems to activate equal opportunities policies (modernisation of the PES)			
B/ Social integration	I.1, I.2 Impact of overall integration strategies intended to change employers' conduct vis-à-vis women	I 1, I.2, 1.4 Improvement of qualifications and of individual capacity to integrate, M/F differentiated	II 11 Overall strategies to change the conduct of investors vis-à-vis women (in particular the social economy)	
C/ Education / training		III 15 Disaggregation of access to lifelong training		
D/ Adaptability			II Creation of new activities by/for women (in particular job-sharing)	III Impact on the flexibility of working time for reconciling family and working life

E Specific measures	Specific impact of measures aimed at individuals in relation to their specific objectives Specific impact of systems measures to reinforce the equal opportunities mainstreaming objectives in all the EES pillars			
– career prospects				
– access to new job opportunities				
– business creation				
– reducing gender-specific vertical and horizontal segregation in the labour market				

³⁴ Guidelines for monitoring and evaluation of ESF assistance, point 5.2 P. 11-13.

**ANNEX 3 INDICATORS TO MONITOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF EMPLOYMENT
GUIDELINES ON GENDER EQUALITY (25/09/01)**

**Summary of list of gender indicators (including existing, modified and new
indicators)**

Guideline	Existing Indicators	Proposed list of indicators (existing, modified and new indicators) and data source
Guideline 17	EO ₁ =Absolute unemployment gap	<p>KEY INDICATOR</p> <p>EO₁ = Absolute unemployment gender gap (no change to current indicator) <i>Definition and data source the same as before.</i></p> <p>CONTEXT INDICATORS</p> <p>EO_{C1} = Absolute unemployment gender gap by age group and educational attainment level (new indicator) <i>Data source: Labour Force Survey (LFS)</i></p> <p>EO_{C2} = Absolute Long term Unemployment Gender Gap (new indicator) <i>Data source: Eurostat unemployment harmonised series</i></p> <p>EO_{C3} = Relative unemployment gap (new indicator) <i>Data source: Eurostat unemployment harmonised series</i></p>

<p>EO₂ = Absolute employment gap</p>	<p>KEY INDICATORS</p> <p>EO₂ = Absolute employment gender gap (no change to current indicator) <i>Definition and data source the same as before. Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS).</i></p> <p>EO₃ = Absolute employment gender gap measured in full-time equivalent (new indicator) <i>Data source: Labour Force Survey (LFS)</i></p> <p>CONTEXT INDICATORS</p> <p>EO_{C4} = Absolute employment gender gap by age group and educational attainment level (new indicator) <i>Data source: Labour Force Survey (LFS)</i></p> <p>EO_{C5} = Relative employment gap (new indicator) <i>Data source: Labour Force Survey (LFS)</i></p> <p>EO_{C6} = Share of inactive people wanting to work by gender and by reason (new indicator) <i>Data source: Labour Force Survey (LFS)</i></p> <p>EO_{C7} = Inflows into employment, unemployment and inactivity, by gender (new indicator) <i>Data source: European Community Household Panel (ECHP)</i></p>
<p>EO₃ = Index of gender segregation in occupations</p> <p>EO₄ = Index of gender segregation in sectors</p>	<p>KEY INDICATORS</p> <p>EO₄ = Index of gender segregation in occupations (no change to current indicator) <i>Definition and data source the same as before.</i></p> <p>EO₅ = Index of gender segregation in sectors (no change to current indicator) <i>Definition and data source the same as before.</i></p> <p>CONTEXT INDICATORS</p> <p>To be developed in line with the recommendations of the Group of experts on gender and employment.</p>

<p>EO₅ = Gender pay gap</p>	<p>KEY INDICATOR</p> <p>EO₆ = Gender pay gap (modified indicator) <i>Data source:</i> European Community Household Panel (ECHP)</p> <p>CONTEXT INDICATORS</p> <p>EO_{C8} = Gender pay gap, breakdown by sector (new indicator) <i>Data source:</i> Statistics on Structure of Earnings</p> <p>EO_{C9} = Female part-time pay in relation to male full-time pay (new indicator) <i>Data source:</i> Statistics on Structure of Earnings</p> <p>EO_{C10} = Proportion of women with low earnings in relation to median male earnings (annual) (new indicator) <i>Data source:</i> European Community Household Panel (ECHP)</p> <p>EO_{C11} = Proportion of women with low earnings in relation to median male earnings (hourly) (new indicator)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Data source:</i> Statistics on Structure of Earnings
<p>EO₆ = Gender income gap</p>	<p>Dropped</p>

Guideline 18	EO₇ = Employment impact of parenthood by sex	KEY INDICATORS EO₇ = Employment impact of parenthood on a full-time equivalent basis (modified indicator) <i>Data source: Labour Force Survey</i>
	EO₈ = Gender gap in the employment impact of parenthood	EO₈ = Children cared for as a proportion of all children of the same age group, by school age group (new indicator) <i>Data source: National sources</i> EO₉ = Dependant elderly men and women over 75 as a proportion of all men and women over 75, by type of care (new indicator) <i>Data source: National sources</i> CONTEXT INDICATORS EO_{C12} = Employment impact of parenthood by number of children, level of education of the parents, and couples living together or lone parents <i>Data source: Labour Force Survey</i> EO_{C13} = Gender Gap in unpaid time spent looking after children, other dependant people and on basic domestic tasks <i>Data source: Time Use Survey (TUS)</i>
	EO₉ = Involuntary part-time employment	Dropped