

Reply

Public Consultation on the Future of the Internal Market

European Platform of Women Scientists

8 June 2006

The EU has come a long way. The Internal Market has been the centre piece of the development, and a lot has been achieved. The European Platform of Women Scientists welcomes the invitation of the Commission to the stakeholders to comment on its views on the Internal Market. For women in science, the major benefit of the internal market has certainly been the enhanced mobility made possible by the Internal Market regulations. Being able to move across national borders has revived competition and it has increased opportunities of a broader importance – the working conditions for scientists in various EU member states have begun to compete alongside the competition between the scientists in terms of their work.

The development of the Internal Market, however, is embedded in a much larger context which is important to take into account when addressing the questions put forward in the Lisbon Call for Public Consultation. In the following, we would therefore like to point out a number of issues we consider crucial – both in terms of the Commission's current view of the Common Market and in terms of what it envisages to be its future. One of the most important issues in this respect is the question of the innovation-friendliness of the Internal Market. In dealing with this question, it is important to address the principal roots of Internal Market problems, such as conditions that prevent innovative minds and especially innovative women to fully use their potential – and thereby contribute to Europe's growth and economic success. We encourage, in this context, to take due account of the problems identified by DG Research and DG Employment, and to assess their measures with regard to their value for Internal Market improvements. Both Directorates General have done substantial research on the question why certain groups of the population such as women leave the workforce in areas crucial for the EU's economic and innovation advancement at a disproportional rate.¹

Concerning the Lisbon Call for Public Consultation, in our view, three major points deserve more attention:

- 1) Defining and measuring of innovation, excellence and competitiveness
- 2) Comprehensiveness and coherence of the approach, particularly with regard to activities of other DGs in the context of the Lisbon agenda and cross-cutting issues such as gender equality
- 3) Consultation and evaluation

¹ E.g. European Commission (ed.) (2004): Gender and Excellence in the Making. Workshop report on the conference "Minimizing Gender Bias in the Definition and Measurement of Scientific Excellence", Florence, 23/24 October 2003, co-organized by the Gender Studies and Governance, RSCAS-EUI and the Women and Science Unit, European Commission and the Joint Research Centre, European Commission. Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: A Roadmap for equality between women and men 2006-2010 (SEC(2006)275).

1) Defining and measuring innovation, excellence and competitiveness

As stressed by the European Commission, Europe needs 700.000 additional researchers to achieve scientific and technological excellence if it is to reach the Lisbon goal of becoming the world's most competitive knowledge-based economy. This argument also is of major importance with regard to the fostering of the Internal Market as research plays a key role for industry, development and innovation across Europe.

Linking innovation and research

The link between innovation and research is crucial. Innovation needs favourable conditions for research to create the source of knowledge from which innovation can emerge. Attention therefore needs to be given to the question what innovation consists in and to the conditions necessary for individuals to be innovative. In this context, the situation of women scientists is of special concern. As revealed by the recently published *She Figures 2006*², more than half the research in Europe is carried out by the private sector, yet only 18% of industrial researchers are women and their opportunities to progress to senior level positions are minimal. The European Commission outlined in its Communication "Women and Science – Mobilising women to enrich European research", endorsed by a European Parliament Resolution, the need of research by, for and on women as well as the added value of the European dimension of this effort. Besides the social argument of gender equality, the promotion of women in science also has a manifest economic implication.

Structural obstacles for innovation

Especially in the area of research, the success of the individual researcher largely depends on her or his successful placement in networks. Reputation gained due to membership in formal or informal networks, language abilities and untransparent selection procedures are still key and contradict the spirit of creating innovation by excellence. This creates particular disadvantages for women within the EU member states, for foreign researchers wishing to work in a EU member state other than their own, and even more so for female foreign researchers. If regulation and investment are not geared towards an inclusive approach of all intelligent minds in the EU, structural inequality will lead to a waste of talent of various groups including women who make up a highly qualified more than 50% of EU students but on average only get to 15% of senior academic positions with this percentage much lower in some countries and in some disciplines.

How the notions of 'equal qualification' or 'excellence' are defined also influences our interpretation of what will lead to better competitiveness of Europe. Europe, for example, cannot be innovative if there is no room for innovative careers. Fostering innovative career-development in various aspects therefore is one important issue to be addressed when seeking to promote innovation. Transparency-seeking EU policies in this respect as well as targeted regulation to improve conditions for innovative research would be ways to address this situation.

² European Commission (2006): Women and Science. Statistics and Indicators. *She Figures 2006*.

The need for redefining excellence

The notion of excellence currently implicit in science and science policy, does not necessarily give the opportunity to excel, but for example discriminates those researchers who voluntarily or involuntarily took a career-break, be it because of caring responsibilities, for practical experience outside academia or other reasons. Yet, individuals with experience in fields of life outside a streamlined scientific career could be likely to produce more socially embedded and socially relevant scientific research. These diversity issues need to be addressed by DG Internal Market as well as by more research-oriented DGs, because all entities of the economy are subject to the development of innovation. If the positive impacts of diversity on innovation are to be reaped, the Internal Market would have to create an environment in which flexibility also extends to individuals with career choices off the mainstream track.

2) Coherence of the overall approach

Improving the Internal Market is strongly interrelated with the Lisbon Strategy as well as general cross-cutting goals of the European Union, such as the achievement of gender equality as recently put forward in the Roadmap for Equality between Women and Men (Gender Roadmap)³ created by DG Employment in view of the Lisbon Agenda.

With regard to the Lisbon Agenda, the Commission has identified eight key measures:

- supporting knowledge and innovation;
- reform of state aid policy;
- simplification of the regulatory framework;
- completion of the internal market for services;
- global agreement on the Doha round;
- removal to obstacles to physical, labour and academic mobility;
- developing a common approach to economic integration;
- supporting efforts to deal with the social effects [e.g., job losses] of economic restructuring.

In the Gender Roadmap the Commission sets out six priority areas for action in the 2006-2010 period:

- Achieving equal economic independence for women and men;
- Enhancing reconciliation of work, private and family life;
- Promoting equal participation of men and women in decision-making;
- Eradicating gender-based violence and trafficking;
- Eliminating gender stereotypes in society, and
- Promoting gender equality outside the EU.

³ Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: A Roadmap for equality between women and men 2006-2010 (SEC(2006)275).

The Importance of Gender equality

An integrated approach and a coherent strategy across DGs are indispensable to achieve the Lisbon Goals. Additionally, a priority to address the cross-cutting task of gender equality connected with innovation and research is needed to ensure that the key measures do not only address instruments, but actually tackle the causes of problems. Accordingly, we encourage that with regard to the Lisbon Agenda a ninth, cross-cutting, key measure be added to the list:

- ensuring the consideration and achievement of gender equality with respect to all precedent eight key measures

Most of the Commission units involved in achieving the Lisbon Agenda have recognized the important role of women and the necessity to create conditions for their inclusion and promotion. The conditions needed to achieve the desired increase in participation by women scientists are also of importance to the activities of DG Internal Market. Studies such as the recent report on Women in Science and Technology and Business⁴ clearly demonstrate two factors that are generally rather neglected and also not addressed in the present consultation:

- Albeit over-proportionally better educated than men, women are not represented at the higher positions in business nor in science
- Women to a larger extent than men employ different strategies in the workplace and approaches to research questions

It follows from these findings that the way women contribute to science and economic development and the reasons why they are underrepresented in key positions have to be addressed across policy areas – thus also by DG Internal Market since its stakeholders have to bear the respective costs.

In this context the employment of (young) women scientists features prominently. EU regulation demanding gender equality and equal opportunities would at the same time have to entail EU research and innovation policies which are transparent with respect to how, for example, costs for maternity leave of project researchers are taken into account, putting gender-equality-awareness safeguards across its regulations.

An overall coherent approach would also need to include the discussion on European social policy, since social security regulations are very heterogeneous across Europe and transferability remains difficult.

⁴ European Commission/Directorate General for Research, Science and Society – Women and Science (ed.) (2006): Women in Science and Technology – The Business Perspective. EUR 22065 EN.

3) Consultation and evaluation

Finally, we would like to suggest possibilities how to improve the consultation and communication practice to increase stakeholder input (see question number 24).

The need for transparency

A strong and intelligent communication policy regarding the various aspects of the Internal Market as initiated, for instance, by the Commission's White Paper on a European Communication Policy is a necessary step to bring the benefits of the Internal Market to the attention of the citizens. The instrument of public consultations used by the European Commission is generally positive. For the stakeholders taking part in these consultations it is very important to see that their input is being evaluated by the Commission and that their voice can have an impact in the shaping of EU policies. If consultations only serve as a demonstration, but actual drafting of decisions and measures is undertaken in bilateral discussions with well-organised interests, the consultations do not serve their purpose. We therefore propose to make the processing of answers to the consultations more transparent. The reports summarizing public input would have to demonstrate to a much larger extent that they are based on a thorough assessment of all inputs as well as lay open which opinions have been taken up for what reason. Furthermore, more use could be made of and support given to civil society organizations to communicate EU goals and policies.

Open phrasing of consultation questions

We also encourage a more open phrasing of questions in consultation documents in order to enable a truly incremental participation of citizens. Although understanding that the Commission has to target its questions, the current assessment and choice of priorities as put forward in the Lisbon Call for Public Consultation are broad in scope and at the same time specific in addressing issues for Internal Market improvement. This may lead to unintended and possibly rather narrow interpretations on the part of the stakeholders so that the opportunity to address the roots of Internal Market conditions is lost.

Enhancement of impact assessments through targeted evaluation

Impact evaluation is an important means to ensure the quality of community legislation. To render impact assessments effective and targeted at the desired outcomes, evaluations have to be transparent. Where issues such as gender balance and gender mainstreaming are concerned the use of mediators such as the European Platform of Women Scientists could help improve gender-related impact assessment and advice project and funding applicants with respect to the formulation of gender action plans.

The European Platform of Women Scientists EPWS is an international non profit association with its administrative seat in Brussels. The Platform seeks to promote women scientists by networking their networks and engage women scientists in the research policy debate, acting as a structural link between women scientists and research policy makers.

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