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14 April 1982

DOCUMENT 1-102/82

INTERIM REPORT

drawn up on behalf of the Committee of Inquiry into  
the Situation of women in Europe

on the position of women in the less-favoured regions  
of the European Community in the context of revision  
of the European Regional Development Fund Regulation

Rapporteur: Miss S. DE VALERA



At its meeting of 23 November 1981 the Committee of Inquiry into the Situation of Women in Europe decided to make 17 inquiry reports on various subjects.<sup>x</sup> One of them deals with the position of Women in the less-favoured regions of the European Community. Miss De VALERA was nominated rapporteur at the meeting of 30 November.

In the meantime the Commission submitted a proposal for a Regulation amending Regulation (EEC) No 724/75 establishing an European Regional Development Fund (doc. 1-735/81) which has been sent on 11 November 1981 by the Council to the European Parliament for an opinion.

The President of the European Parliament referred this proposal to the Committee on Regional Policy and Regional Planning on 16 November 1981.

As this subject also relates to Miss DE VALERA's inquiry report the Committee of Inquiry into the Situation of Women in Europe charged Miss DE VALERA at its meeting of 23/24 February 1982 with the preparation of an Interim Report of Inquiry on the Commission's proposal to amend the ERDF Regulation insofar as this affected women.

The Committee of Inquiry considered this proposal at its meetings of 18/19 March and 29/30 March 1982. At the latter meeting the Committee of Inquiry adopted the Motion for a Resolution and the Explanatory Statement unanimously.

The following participated in the vote: Mrs Vayssade, acting chairman; Dame Shelagh Roberts, vice-chairman; Mrs Von Alemann, vice-chairman; Miss De Valera, rapporteur; Mrs Pantazi-Tzifa (deputizing for Mrs Lizin), Mrs Squarcialupi (deputizing for Mrs Le Roux), Mrs Van Hemeldonck (deputizing for Mrs Van den Heuvel) and Mrs Wiczorek-Zeul.

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See minutes of its meeting of 23/24 November 1981.

Text not collated.

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The Committee of Inquiry into the Situation of Women in Europe hereby submits to the European Parliament the following amendments, together with the Motion for a Resolution:

Amentment proposed by the Committee of Inquiry into the Situation of Women in Europe:

Text proposed by the Commission of the European Communities<sup>1</sup>

No. 1

Article 2

Paragraph 3 (a)

After "...means to be employed,"  
insert the following sentence:

Information given in respect of employment objectives shall be analysed by sex and age-group.

Article 2

Member States shall communicate to the Commission their regional development programmes, and any amendments thereto, for the regions and areas covered by a regional State aid scheme. Such programmes shall be prepared in accordance with the joint outline drawn up by the Economic Policy Committee<sup>(1)</sup> and in the Light of the Commission Recommendation of 23 May 1979<sup>(2)</sup>. They shall be indicative in nature and shall specify the objectives of the development of the region concerned and the means to be employed.

(Rest of paragraph unchanged.)

<sup>1</sup> See doc. 1-735/81 or OJ No. 336 of 23.12.1981

Amendment proposed by the  
Committee of Inquiry into  
the Situation of Women  
in Europe

Text proposed by the Commission  
of the European Communities;

No. 2

Article 2  
Paragraph 3 (b)  
First indent

Article 2

After "investment and jobs;",  
add the following:

as regards jobs, this shall be  
quantitative and qualitative infor-  
mation on the nature of the jobs  
created, with an analysis by sex  
and age-group.

- quantified information on  
the results of measures carried  
out in the regions in terms  
of investment and jobs;

No. 3

Article 2

Add a new paragraph 5:

The periodic report shall include  
an assessment of the effect of the  
implementation of this Regulation  
during the preceding year on the  
situation of women in the various  
regions of the Community.

Amendment proposed by the  
Committee of Inquiry into  
the situation of women in  
Europe

No. 4

Article 8

Paragraph 3 (a)

Amend to read as follows:

- a) expected results, where possible  
in quantified form, and, where  
relevant, expected effects on the  
social and economic situation of  
men and women respectively, and  
on people in different age-groups;

No. 5

Article 9

Paragraph 3

After "productive jobs".  
insert:

for both men and women and for  
young people

Text proposed by the Commission  
of the European Communities:

Article 8

- a) expected results, where possible  
in quantified form;

Article 9

3. The Commission shall assess a  
programme taking due account  
of its consistency with the regional  
development programmes and of its  
contribution to attainment of the  
Community's regional objectives  
and priorities, and notably the  
creation or maintenance of productive  
jobs, mobilization of the  
indigenous potential of the region  
concerned and strengthening of its  
economic base

Amendment proposed by the  
Committee of Inquiry into  
the situation of women in  
Europe

No. 6

Article 13  
Paragraph 1  
Introduction

After "project on employment",  
insert:

with due regard to the  
employment of both men and  
women and to the employment  
situation in different age-groups.

Text proposed by the Commission  
of the European Communities:

Article 13

1. the provision of Fund assistance shall be decided upon by the Commission in the light of the relative severity of the economic imbalance of the region in which the investment project is carried out and of the direct or indirect impact of the project on employment. The Commission shall examine, in particular, the consistency of the project with all the measures taken by the Member State concerned to assist that region, as described in the information supplied by Member states pursuant to Article 2, with particular reference to

(Rest of the paragraph  
unchanged.)

Amendment proposed by the  
Committee of Inquiry into  
the situation of women in  
Europe

Text proposed by the Commission  
of the European Communities:

No. 7

Article 14

Paragraph 2 (a)

After "the predicted overall  
effect on employment", amend  
the phrase in parentheses to  
read as follows:

(creation or maintenance and  
nature of jobs analysed by  
sex and age-group)

Article 14

(a) in respect of investments in  
industry, the artisanat or the  
service sectors, the names of the  
undertakings concerned, their  
sector of activity, and the  
location of each investment  
and its object (establishment,  
extension, conversion or  
restructuring of an undertaking),  
the total amount of investment  
involved, the predicted overall  
effect on employment (creation  
or maintenance of jobs) the  
estimated implementation schedule,  
total aids granted in connection  
with which Fund assistance is  
requested, and the planned schedule  
of payments;

No. 8

Article 21

Paragraph 1 (b)

Third indent

Amend to read as follows:

- the number and nature of jobs  
created or maintained by a pro-  
ject in industry, the artisanat  
or the services sector, with a  
statistical analysis of such jobs  
in terms of employees' sex and  
age-group;

Article 21

- the number of jobs created or  
maintained by a project in  
industry, the artisanat  
or the services sector;

Amendment proposed by the  
Committee of Inquiry into  
the situation of women in  
Europe

Text proposed by the Commission  
of the European Communities:

No. 9

Article 23  
Paragraph 2  
First indent

Article 23

After "its effect on employment," insert:

analysed by sex and age-group  
and taking account of the nature  
of the jobs,

- for measures referred to in Article  
16(a), the object of the measure,  
its location, the nature of the  
agencies or businesses benefiting  
from the measure, its effect on  
employment, the planned  
implementation schedule and the  
financing arrangements;

No. 10

Article 26  
First indent

Article 26

After "the services sector",  
amend to read as follows:

the number and nature of jobs  
created, analysed by sex and  
age-group;

- in the case of investment projects  
in industry, the artisanat or the  
services sector, the number of  
jobs created;

Amendment proposed by the  
Committee of Inquiry into  
the situation of women in  
Europe

No. 11

Article 27

Paragraph 2

Second sub - paragraph

After "creation of employment",  
insert:

for men and women as well as  
young people

No. 12

Article 29

Paragraph 2 (b)

After "their implementation"  
add:

Taking account of needs (particular-  
ly in relation to the provision of  
social services and education)  
arising from the interaction of social  
and economic factors.

Text proposed by the Commission  
of the European Communities:

Article 27

The measures may not have as their  
object the internal reorganisation of  
declining sectors but may, by  
establishing new economic activities and  
the implementation of new technology,  
promote the creation of employment in  
regions or areas experiencing  
difficulties.

Article 29

(b) the Community through the com-  
bined use of various structural  
financial instruments, and the  
national and local authorities  
in Member States, contribute  
in close association to their  
implementation.

Amendment proposed by the  
Committee of Inquiry into  
the situation of women in  
Europe

No. 13

Article 36  
Paragraph 1

add the following sub-paragraph:

This Report shall include an assess-  
ment of the effect of the implemen-  
tation of this Regulation during the  
preceding year on the situation of  
women in the various regions of the  
Community.

Text proposed by the Commission  
of the European Communities:

Article 36

1. Before 1 October each year, the  
Commission shall present to the  
Council, to the Parliament and  
to the Economic and Social Com-  
mittee a report on the imple-  
mentation of this Regulation  
during the preceding year.

A.

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

embodying the opinion of the European Parliament on the proposal from the Commission of the European Communities to the Council for a Council regulation amending Regulation (EEC) No. 724/725 establishing a European Regional Development Fund in so far as this proposal relates to the Situation of Women in Europe.

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the proposal from the Commission of the European Communities to the Council<sup>1</sup>,
- having been consulted by the Council (Doc 1-735/81),
- having regard to its resolution on the Position of Women in the European Community of 11 February 1981,
- having regard to the interim report of Inquiry of the Committee of Inquiry into the Situation of Women in Europe (Doc 1- /82),
- having regard to the report of the Committee on Regional Policy and Regional Planning (Doc 1- /82),

1. Hereby adopts the attached amendments to the Commission proposal for a Council regulation amending Regulation (EEC) No. 724/725 establishing a European Regional Development Fund.
2. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and the Commission;

<sup>1</sup>OJ No. C 336 of 23.12.1981

B.

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

A: Introduction

1. This Interim Report represents one element of the work of the European Parliament's Committee of Inquiry into the Situation of Women in Europe.
2. The present rapporteur has been entrusted by that Committee with the task of investigating the position of women in the less-favoured regions of the European Community.
3. The timing of this Interim Report has been influenced by the legislative timetable for the Commission's proposal for a further revision of Regulation (EEC) No. 724/75<sup>1</sup> establishing a European Regional Development Fund.
4. Specific reference to the planned revision of the Regional Fund Regulation was made in the European Parliament's Resolution of 11 February 1981<sup>2</sup>. Paragraph 46 of that Resolution read as follows:
  - "Points out that in the Community regional disparities have worsened and that in the depressed areas exclusion from productive life; the widespread phenomenon of black work and the lack of social services are having an adverse influence on the life of women;
  - "Calls therefore for more emphasis to be given to the position of women in defining the specific needs of each region in the context of the forthcoming ERDF reform;
  - "Calls further for the three Community funds (EAGGF; ERDF; Social Fund) to be used in a coordinated manner in the less-favoured regions for integrated intersectoral measures intended to improve the position of women by creating jobs where female labour is abundant, providing education and training possibilities, developing services necessary to working women while establishing more direct contact with local and regional authorities."
5. This Interim Report is not solely a commentary on the proposal to revise the Regional Fund Regulation. It is intended to be a concise interim stocktaking of the way the problem of women in the less-favoured regions is treated in the formulation of Community regional policy.

<sup>1</sup> COM(81) 589 fin. Doc. 1-735/81

<sup>2</sup> OJ No

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6. The specific observations on this subject which will be made in this Interim Report depend on a understanding of the general evolution of the attitude of the Commission and the Council towards regional policy formulation since 1972. The next sections will present an historical synopsis of this evolution.

7. This synopsis will trace the background to the current proposal for a further revision of the Regional Fund Regulation. In doing so, it will show that the current proposal represents the culmination of an important shift of emphasis in the main aspects of Community regional policy.

8. In particular, it will show that the Commission and the Council have come to accept the view expressed by the European Parliament in 1973, when the Regional Fund was being set up, that a regional policy which ignores the social dimension of regional problems in the Community is condemned to failure.

9. It will also be seen that Community regional policy is moving away from the comparatively piecemeal and ad hoc character of earlier Regional Fund assistance towards a more coordinated and directed conception which will give the Community an important opportunity of initiative.

10. These developments can only be welcomed by the Committee of Inquiry since they are basic prerequisites for a coherent attempt to solve the problems of women in the less-favoured regions, particularly the problem of female unemployment.

11. Nevertheless it must be stated that the Commission and Council do not yet appear to have taken these problems sufficiently into account in the formation of regional policy.

12. That the Commission and Council have been informed of the scale and character of the problem of female unemployment, for example, will be shown below. There is no evidence, however, that, in the revision of the Regional Fund Regulation, they have taken steps to meet the challenge which it represents.

B. The Evolution of the Community's Approach to Regional Policy since 1972  
Part I - 1972-1980

1. The initiative for the creation of the Regional Fund was made by the Paris Summit Conference in October 1972. Under the timetable fixed in Paris, the European Community was to establish a Regional Development Fund by 31 December 1973.
2. In the course of 1973 the Commission produced, first, a report to the Council on regional problems in the enlarged Community<sup>1</sup> and, second, a proposal for a regulation establishing a Regional Development Fund.<sup>2</sup> The European Parliament debated the former on 5 July 1973 and the latter on 15 November 1973.<sup>4</sup> In each case the basis for the debate was a report by Mr F.L. DELMOTTE.
3. In its resolution of 5 July 1973, which encouraged the Commission to proceed with the submission of the Regional Fund proposal, the European Parliament nevertheless expressed the belief that  
" the Commission's concept, which is essentially economic, must be widened to reflect a broader view of development taking account of the human factor since education and vocational training are necessary as well as economic action."
4. Further, Parliament enumerated certain principal tasks for the Community Institutions and the (future) Regional Policy Committee. Among these, it suggested, was  
- "to undertake Community regional development planning, since this alone can prevent dispersion of effort and inefficiency, taking account of existing national policies in this field".
5. In its Resolution of 15 November 1973 on the Regional Fund Regulation, the European Parliament felt obliged to recall that in its earlier resolution it had "already criticised the essentially economic concept of the Commission" and expressed the belief "that the latter should take greater account of social and human factors in its practical proposals as the deficiencies are not only economic but involve above all education and occupational training." It regretted "that the Commission has not changed its restrictive approach since it maintains that aid should only be granted for infrastructures connected with economic development."

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<sup>1</sup> COM(73) 550 fin.

<sup>2</sup> OJ No C 86, 16.10.1973, p. 7

<sup>3</sup> OJ No C 62, 31.7.1973, p. 33

<sup>4</sup> OJ No C 108, 10.12.1973, p. 50

6. The regulation establishing the Regional Fund was passed by the Council on 18 March 1975.<sup>1</sup> This regulation fixed the endowment of the Fund for each of the years 1975, 1976 and 1977. Article 18 of the Regulation provided that, on a proposal from the Commission, the Council should re-examine the Regulation before 1 January 1978.
7. Simultaneously the Council decided to set up the Regional Policy Committee.<sup>2</sup> Its task was to examine problems relating to regional development and ways of solving them. Among its more detailed terms of reference was the requirement that it should study, in particular, "on a continuing and comprehensive basis, economic and social trends in the various regions of the Community."
8. The Regional Fund Regulation was revised for the first time on 6 February 1979.<sup>3</sup> One of the main provisions of the amended regulation was the budgetization of the Fund's endowment. Another was the creation of the non-quota section. This revision did not alter the primarily economic orientation of the original regulation.
9. There was a second, minor revision of the Regulation on 16 December 1980 in order to adapt quotas to take account of Greek accession.<sup>4</sup>
10. The Regulation of 6 February 1979 which amended the original Regional Fund Regulation was accompanied by Council Resolution "concerning the guidelines for Community Regional Policies."<sup>5</sup>
11. Unlike the preamble to the amending regulation, the preamble to the Resolution referred to the difficulties facing Community Regional Policy. It noted that "in spite of efforts by the Member States of the Community to speed up the development of least-favoured regions, the disparities between regions remain." It said the situation in some Community regions was "made all the more disturbing by the fact that the economic crisis in the Community since 1973 has led to a lasting decline in the growth and has weakened the propensity to invest."
12. In the Resolution itself, the Council made three important statements:
  - (i) "Regional Policy is an integral part of the economic policies of the Community and the Member States" ;
  - (ii) "The principal Community policies have regional implications, particularly as regards employment ... it (the Council) states its intention of taking account of these implications when adopting its decisions relating to these policies" ;
  - (iii) "In order to achieve progressively a balanced distribution of economic activities throughout the Community, coordination of national regional policies and of Community policy is essential."

<sup>1</sup> OJ No L 73, 21.3.1975, p. 1

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, p. 47

<sup>3</sup> OJ No L 35, 9.2.1979, p. 1

<sup>4</sup>

<sup>5</sup> OJ No C 36, 9.2.1979, p. 10

13. The Resolution further established "a comprehensive system of analysis and policy formulation for Community Regional Policy." Pursuant to this, the Commission, in close collaboration with the Regional Policy Committee, would prepare "a periodic report on the situation and socio-economic developments in the regions of the Community." This would in due course guide the Council in discussing the guidelines and priorities proposed by the Commission.
14. Accordingly, the Commission produced, on 7 January 1981 a lengthy document entitled: "The Regions of Europe - First Periodic Report on the social and economic situation of the regions of the Community."<sup>1</sup> On 24 July 1981, there followed the Commission's Communication to the Council, "New Regional Policy Guidelines and Priorities."<sup>2</sup>
15. Of all the documents mentioned above, the First Periodic Report was the only one which mentioned women.

## Part II - 1981

1. In the chapter of the First Periodic Report devoted to the labour market, the following statement was made:

"Clearly from the preceding sections of this chapter, the problem of unemployment has worsened considerably during the 1970s, both in terms of its overall level and its nature. The weaker regions of the Community are still experiencing the highest rates of unemployment. The nature of this unemployment has also changed. There are now relatively more young people and more women unemployed than there were in the 1960s and this upward trend is likely to continue well into the 1980s."
2. Specifically, the Report stated that "while male registered unemployment roughly doubled over the '70s, female unemployment more than quadrupled (600,000 females in 1970 and 2.6 million in 1978)."
3. "At the same time," the Report continued, "youth unemployment (in the 14-24 age group) rose steeply in all Member States. This reflects two important changes in the labour force ... - the steady rise in numbers reaching working age and the sharp increase in female participation rates."
4. Referring specifically to long-term unemployment (i.e. unemployment continuing for more than 6 months), the Report stated that "in more than half of the European regions female long-term unemployment amounts to over 50% of the total."

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1 COM(80)816 fin.

2 COM(81)152 fin.

5. These passages underline the fact that to talk about the problem of female unemployment in the European Community today is not merely to refer to one aspect among many of the problem of unemployment: it is to reach right into the very heart of the problem. That this is so should be all the clearer when one reflects that the categories of "youth unemployment" and "Female unemployment" overlap. A high proportion of the young unemployment are young women.
6. It would have been useful if the Report had stated the proportion of youth unemployment accounted for by either sex, but it did not. "Youth" appears to have been treated as an autonomous biological category.
7. Further, there was no information about women in the chapter on population statistics, save for the observation that falling birth rates in EC Member States are partly due to women having fewer children. This chapter did not state the numbers or ratios of women and men in the Community as a whole, in the Member States or in the regions. Although these numbers (but not the ratios) are available elsewhere,<sup>(1)</sup> it would have been valuable to have had them presented in this chapter of the First Periodic Report, together with the other relevant demographic data. It would also have been valuable if the population projections given in the Report had shown the estimated future distribution of sexes as well as of age-groups, but again this was not done.
8. Later in 1981, as noted above, the Commission followed up the publication of the First Periodic Report with a much shorter document, the communication to the Council entitled "New Regional Policy Guidelines and Priorities". The introduction to this communication recalls that, under the terms of the Council Resolution of 6 February 1979, the Commission was to propose guidelines and priorities to the Council on the basis of the Periodic Report.
9. This communication makes no reference at all to women. This is remarkable in view of the very clear terms in which the reference to female unemployment are couched in the First Periodic Report. Moreover, the communication does refer specifically to youth unemployment, which, as has been seen, was treated in conjunction with female unemployment in the First Periodic Report.
10. Further impetus towards a new revision of the Regional Fund Regulation was given by the Report on the Mandate of 30 May, which the Commission presented on 24 June 1981.<sup>2</sup> In it the Commission argued the case for concentrating aid from the quota section on regions suffering severely from structural underdevelopment, so as to make the most of limited resources. The non-quota section, it said, should be enlarged.

(1) Yearbook of Regional Statistics (1981), Statistical Office of the European Communities, p. 42

(2) COM(81) 300 fin.

11. "Changes in the working and operating criteria of the Fund", the Commission suggested, "should include replacing support for isolated projects by a new system of co-financing with Member States of regional infrastructure programmes and regional investment aid schemes, which would incorporate the individual, Community-aided projects".

12. On 26 October 1981, the Commission presented its proposal for a new revision of the Regional Fund Regulation.

C. The Commission's Current Proposal for Revision of the ERDF Regulation

1. The Commission's proposal starts from the observation that regional imbalances are continuing to grow in the European Community and that this trend, which is an obstacle to integration of the economies of the Ten, is being aggravated by the present economic crisis. The need is seen to strengthen the various regional policy instruments available to the Community, especially the European Regional Development Fund.
2. Its philosophy for reinvigorating the Regional Fund may be summed up under the following four headings.
3. Greater coordination of regional policies :  
National and Community regional policies will be coordinated to avoid contradictory efforts and to ensure that aid takes account of the relative severity of regional problems in each country and at Community level.
4. Greater concentrating resources :  
Aid from the quota section (Title III of the new Regulation) will be concentrated on regions with particularly serious structural problems, judged by the relative intensity of their social and economic problems in relation to the Community average. In the non-quota section (Title IV), more credits will go to regions affected by recent industrial decline, or by certain Community policies.
5. A more active role for the Community, as such :  
Finance will go to regional programmes rather than, as in the past, to individual projects. The Commission will assess programmes submitted by the Member States, in the light of the Community's regional policies. The proposal document makes this important affirmation :  
" The Commission considers that the moment has come for the Fund to pass from work of a mainly book-keeping nature to that of conceiving, promoting and programming, that is to say to a more active role".

6. Closer evaluation of effectiveness :

The system of periodic reports on the situation in the regions (every two and a half years) followed by the adoption of new regional policies and guidelines on the basis of these reports, which was tried out in 1981, is made permanent as a means of keeping policy objectives up to date. Substantial obligations are imposed on Member States to inform the Commission in advance about the expected effects of programmes, and later to inform it of the results achieved.

7. The Commission's proposal obviously constitutes an important and fundamental revision of the Regional Fund Regulation, with aspects which the European Parliament may well feel able to welcome.

8. Nevertheless, the proposal contains no reference to women, or to their problems in the regions of the Community.

9. This omission is unjustifiable.

10. Given the existing social, cultural and economic environment in Europe, the idea that the situation of women should be taken fully into account in any revision of Community regional policy ought to be axiomatic. Arguments of both principle and expediency may be advanced to support the idea, but these should be unnecessary. Let it clearly be stated that the Commission is at fault in not mentioning the situation of women in its proposal regarding the ERDF.

11. There is one aspect of the matter which makes omission of any reference to the the problems of women particularly hard to understand. This is the fact the whole evolution of the Regional Fund would seem, albeit slowly and with difficulty, to have led up to a point where the opportunity had at last been created to use the Regional Fund as an effective instrument for making a coherent attack on the problems of women in the less-favoured regions of the Community. This argument will be elaborated in the next section.

D. The Regional Fund as a potential instrument for solving the problems of women in the less-favoured regions

1. On the basis of the account already given of the evolution of the Regional Fund, one might distinguish two basic conceptions of the Fund and its role: a "narrow" conception and a "broad" one.
2. The narrow conception is the one which Parliament criticised the Commission for taking up in 1973, and which the Commission now says it has abandoned. It is the piecemeal, "book-keeping" approach, which sticks to economic criteria alone and offers little opportunity for Community coordination or initiative.
3. The broad conception does provide opportunity for Community coordination and initiative, and although it sees the Fund as first and foremost an economic instrument it recognises that the economic imbalances of the Community's regions can only be understood in certain human and social contexts.
4. It is important to remember that the reason why the broad conception is now being adopted by the Commission and the Council is because the narrow approach was tried and failed. Chapter and verse for this failure is given in the Council Resolution of 6 February 1979, which acknowledged that, despite the efforts of the Member States and the Community, regional disparities remain.
5. From the point of view of improving the position of women in the less-favoured regions, the adoption of the broad view of the Regional Fund's role is a prerequisite for success.
6. There is, for example, the case of unemployment in the regions. As long as unemployment is seen as a single undifferentiated economic phenomenon, Community intervention is condemned to remain a blunt instrument.
7. Opportunities for the fine-tuning of Community intervention can only arise if the analysis is fine-tuned in the first place. If it is, then the salient features of the phenomenon are thrown into relief, and appropriate action can be attempted.
8. This was clearly shown by the First Periodic Report, which presented a valuable analysis of the unemployment problem in the regions. As has been noted, this showed that female unemployment was a very important component of that problem.

9. Further, the data it presented showed that female unemployment itself was of different kinds, having different causes. Some of these causes may have been economic, in the sense of being related to either short or long-term trends in economic activity, but others were demographic, in that they arose from the age-structure of local populations, or social, in that they related to basic social changes affecting the willingness of women to enter the labour market.
10. Plainly, a narrow, "book-keeping" approach to regional policy is hardly likely to do justice to a problem of this complexity. This is why the best hope for detailed and perceptive treatment of the problems of women in the less-favoured regions lies with the broad approach.
11. That the success of the broad approach is closely bound up with the availability of full information and with effective analysis of that information is something which the Commission has realised.
12. The long and important new Article 2 of the proposed Regulation provides (a) for the production of the Periodic Reports by the Commission, in close association with the Regional Policy Committee, on which future revised guidelines are to be based;(b) for the information to be communicated to the Commission by Member States when submitting their regional development programmes, and (c) the information they are to submit concerning the results achieved in the preceding year.
13. After everything which has been said so far, it must be clear that the future effectiveness of the Regional Fund will depend on the efficient functioning of these information channels and procedures.
14. Unless adequate, accurate information circulates among the various authorities involved, the attempt to achieve greater coordination of regional policies will fail, and the attempt to relate them to Community-wide standards and averages will be a waste of time.
15. The Community has already had one year's experience of the procedure by which the Periodic Report is prepared as a basis for proposals concerning new regional policy "guidelines and priorities".
16. The lessons of this experience have not been wholly encouraging. It is hard to see how any objective reader of Chapter 3 of the First Periodic Report, on the Labour Market, could fail to be surprised that female unemployment was not specifically mentioned as a "priority" for Community action in the subsequent Commission communication to the Council, let alone in the Commissions's proposal for amendment of the Regional Fund Regulation.
17. The lesson of this experience is, in fact, that general instructions cannot be relied upon to produce specific results.

18. What the Commission is currently proposing is a major revision of a vital Community policy. If, as a result of it, the Community is not at least better informed about priority areas of concern which have been specifically and objectively indentified, then the exercise will be hard to justify.
  19. Accordingly it is imperative that information provided to the Commission by the Member States about plans for, or results of, regional development programmes and similar meassures at least include information about the impact of these measures on the two sexes and on different age-groups.
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#### E. Conclusions

1. By the time the Regulation amending the Regional Fund Regulation is likely to have been adopted, nine years will have elapsed since the European Parliament advocated the 'broad' conception which it believed should animate the Fund's activities.
2. The European Parliament's view was not heeded at that time. Since then, there has been an economic crisis with mounting unemployment, and meanwhile, it is generally recognised, the regional imbalances in the Community have remained, if not increased.
3. Now the broad approach is being adopted. The Commission and Council must show that they intend to make it work. There is not time for another nine years of hesitation.
4. Their attitude to the problems of women in the less-favoured regions of the Community will be a test of their intentions. In particular, it will be a test of the strength of their determination to adjust Community policy, on an objective basis, to social and economic changes in the regions of Europe.
5. At the same time, their willingness or reluctance to make specific acknowledgment of the problems of women in the less-favoured regions when formulating one of the Community's most important policies will be a sign to women everywhere in Europe of how seriously they are prepared to confront the problem of making equal opportunity a reality.
6. The sign which would give most encouragement in the present context would be an acknowledgment that specific requirement must be made in the revised Regional Fund Regulation for the provision of information, at all material stages, of information regarding the impact of proposed measures on the respective situations of women and men.
7. The same requirement should also be made in respect of different age-groups, partly because age and sex categories are not mutually exclusive, and partly because of the intrinsic importance of such information.