

# Advisory Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men

Opinion on “Breaking gender stereotypes in the media”





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## 1) Mandate of the working group and purpose of this opinion

The Advisory Committee on Women and Men decided at its meeting on 19 November 2009 to set up a working group to prepare an opinion on women and the media. At a meeting of the working group on 20 May 2010, the title was changed to "Breaking gender stereotypes in the media"

The purpose of this opinion is to propose measures for the promotion of a balanced and non-stereotyped portrayal of women and men in the media and in new technologies of communication. Together with this objective goes the purpose to promote equal opportunities and working conditions for women and men working in all areas of the media sector, as well as to increase participation and access to expression and decision-making for women in and throughout the media.

Freedom of expression and information is also a fundamental right of our democracies. The right balance therefore needs to be found between the fundamental right to equality of women and men, the breaking of gender stereotypes in the media and the fundamental right to freedom of information, freedom of expression in the media, diversity of opinion and media pluralism.

## 2) Background in relation to gender equality and the media

The European Union is based upon the fundamental importance of human rights and values, including the right to equality of women and men. The **Treaty of the European Union** stipulates in its article 2 that "The Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities. These values are common to the Member States in a society in which pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men prevail."

Article 3 specifies that "(the Union) shall combat social exclusion and discrimination, and shall promote social justice and protection, equality between women and men, solidarity between generations and protection of the rights of the child. (...)"

In general terms, the UN **CEDAW** Convention of December **1979**, which came into force in September 1981 already required in its article 5 about sex role stereotyping and prejudice that all appropriate measures should be taken "To modify the social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women, with a view to achieving the elimination of prejudices and customary and all other practices which are based on the idea of the inferiority or the superiority of either of the sexes or on stereotyped roles for men and women; "

The **Beijing Platform for Action** adopted in **1995** and the resolution of 2000 on the follow-up to the Beijing Platform had identified women and the media as one of 12 critical areas of concern. As stated in the Beijing Platform for Action, gender stereotyping in advertising and the media is one of the factors of inequality that influences attitudes towards equality between men and women. It emphasized the important role of awareness by media education and responsible guidelines.

The Council Resolution of 5 October **1995** on the image of women and men portrayed in advertising and the media [10] invited the Member States and the Commission to take adequate measures to promote a diversified and realistic picture of the skills and potential of women and men in society.



Further, EU Parliamentary Resolution of 25 July **1997** on discrimination against women in advertising, and Resolution 1557 (2007) of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, entitled "Image of Women in Advertising" focused on women and advertising and the multiple problems of stereotypes deeply rooted to the image of women in society and which we also encounter when dealing with the media as a whole.

On 20 December 2006 the European Parliament and the Council adopted a Recommendation on the Protection of Minors and Human Dignity and on the Right of Reply. The Recommendation builds upon the earlier 1998 Council Recommendation, which remains in force. It extends the scope to include media literacy, the cooperation and sharing of experience and good practices between self-, co- and regulatory bodies, action against discrimination in all of the media, and the right of reply concerning online media.

In the said instrument, it is recommended that the Member States, in the interests of promoting the development of the audiovisual and on-line information services industry, take the necessary measures to ensure the protection of minors and human dignity in all audiovisual and on-line information services by promoting a responsible attitude on the part of professionals, intermediaries and users of new communication media such as the Internet by encouraging the audiovisual and on-line information services industry, without infringing freedom of expression or of the press, to avoid all discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation, in all audiovisual and on-line information services.

While initially foreseen in the draft, during the adoption process of the Directive, the content of media or advertising and public or private education were excluded from the scope of Council Directive 2004/113/EC of 13 December **2004** implementing the principle of equal treatment between men and women in the access to and supply of goods and services applies, as stated in article 13, considering though that the content of media and advertising was neither a "good" nor a "service".

The European Commission's **Roadmap** for Equality between Women and Men **2006-2010** (COM(2006)0092) and the related impact assessment (SEC(2006)0275) foster the elimination of gender stereotypes in the media and propose as key actions to "support awareness-raising campaigns and exchange of good practices in schools and enterprises on non-stereotyped gender roles and develop dialogue with the media to encourage a non-stereotyped portrayal of women and men."

In June **2008**, the Council of the European Union adopted Council Conclusions on Eliminating Gender Stereotypes in Society. The Council recognized the responsibility of the media in reproducing culturally transmitted stereotypes and images of women and men, on one hand and in combating gender stereotypes and promoting the non-discriminatory and realistic portrayal of girls/women and boys/men in society, on the other. The Council called on the Member States and the European Commission to promote awareness-raising campaigns and the exchange of good practices on combating gender stereotypes and the advancement of the realistic and non-discriminatory images of girls/women and boys/men in the media.<sup>1</sup>

In September **2008**, the European Parliament passed a resolution on how marketing and advertising affect equality between women and men. The Resolution argues for 'the need to eliminate from textbooks, toys, video and computer games, the internet and new information and communications technologies (ICTs), and from advertising through different types of media, messages which are contrary to human dignity and which

<sup>1</sup> Council Conclusions on Eliminating Gender Stereotypes in Society (Doc. 9271/08)



convey gender stereotypes'. The Parliament called on the Commission to intensify its efforts against discrimination in the media and for further research on this topic.<sup>2</sup>

The Audiovisual Media Services Directive<sup>3</sup> of 10 March **2010** requests Member States to ensure that "audiovisual media services provided by media service providers under their jurisdiction do not contain any incitement to hatred based on race, sex, religion or nationality." (Chapter III, art.6). In addition, this directive clearly requests Member States to ensure that audiovisual commercial communications (...) do not (i) prejudice respect for human dignity; (ii) include or promote any discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, nationality, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation; (iii) encourage behaviour prejudicial to health or safety (Chapter III, article 9).

### 3) Definitions

When mentioning gender stereotypes in the media, it is essential to define (a) our target groups, (b) what we mean by the media and (c) what we mean by stereotypes, as there may be different understandings.

(a) Women, like men are not a homogeneous group. There are women and men from different groups, ages, social or educational levels, nationalities, sexual orientations, different apprehension and motivations, there are business women, women working in the home, women working in the field of research and women as senior managers. There are women and men with migrant background or of ethnic minorities, disadvantaged, (dis)abled, those of different cultures, religions, and different ways of living. This heterogeneity makes it a challenge to address specific and efficient measures to different groups.

(b) In general, "media" refers to various means of communication. For example, television, radio, magazines and newspapers are different types of classic mass media designed to reach a large audience. Nowadays, mass media also include Internet media in all its developments (like blogs, podcasts, and video sharing).

The term also refers to the press or news reporting agencies, entertainment industries, advertising agencies providers of information and shapers of our perceptions, ideas, attitudes and behaviour.

The media also means what is produced by the media: facts and fiction, text and images, advertising in print. The media, especially mass communication, pervade our lives at all levels, may perpetuate and enhance stereotypical attitudes about the roles and situation of women and men. They may also contribute to different types of discrimination and unequal treatment between girls and boys, women and men and even contribute to violence against women.

(c) The notion of stereotypes is quite complex. Stereotypes are beliefs adopted in advance; concerning characteristics of an individual, a group or an object and

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<sup>2</sup>European Parliament Resolution of 3 September 2008 on how marketing and advertising affect equality between women and men (2008/2038(INI)), available at: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=TA&reference=P6-TA-2008-0401&language=EN&ring=A6-2008-0199>

<sup>3</sup>Directive 2010/13/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 10 March 2010 on the coordination of certain provisions laid down by law, regulation or administrative action in Member States concerning the provision of audiovisual media services (Audiovisual Media Services Directive) : see also Directive 2007/65/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2007 amending Council Directive 89/552/EEC on the coordination of certain provisions laid down by law, regulation or administrative action in Member States concerning the pursuit of television broadcasting activities <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2010:095:0001:01:EN:HTML>



emphasising the fact of not taking into account the individual traits. Stereotypes are simplifications, of social origin, persistent, subjective, being transmitted from generation to generation. Some may be universal, but in general, stereotypes are known, used and transmitted inside a certain group or a certain culture. There are gender stereotypes, but also ethnic or national stereotypes and they may also interfere with one another.

Stereotypes also perform the justifying role: they justify our behaviour and the social system or the behaviour of a social group with which we identify ourselves. Stereotypes are not essentially negative. They actually help us in understanding complicated processes ruling the social world, reduce uncertainty and provide a sense of security.

In the present context, it is important to address the fact that *gender stereotypes* not only contribute to the status quo in terms of women's and men's roles, but also promote an asymmetrical vision of women and men in society. Furthermore, they are one of the most persistent causes of inequality between women and men in all spheres and at all stages of life, influencing their choices in education, professional and private life.

Regarding to the diversity of women, and with the objective to eliminate complex and versatile stereotyping in relation to gender, media conscious of its widespread power of shaping public opinion should respect and account of the identities, situations and experiences of various women within society.

## 4) Context of gender equality and the media in European Union member states

Media content influences the way we perceive reality and also contributes to transmitting shaping gender roles. Despite their crucial role in our modern high-tech society, women are not represented in the media according to their number, to their social involvement, to their real life. Actually, there is a gap between what the reality of women's and men's lives in Europe is and how they appear in and through the media.

### Women and decision making in the media

In relation to the media sector, women are quite present in general, with variations according to countries, but they are seriously under-represented in decision-making in this sector as in most others: in 2000, there were 9.3% women in top management positions in the telecommunications industry in the EU and European Economic Area and only 3% of women journalists were in decision-making positions.<sup>4</sup>

To tackle this problem, in Austria, for example, the law amendment for the Austrian Broadcast and Television Company includes 45% women as a goal at all levels of decision making with exception of members of bodies and councils.

### Woman as media professionals and experts

Gender equality means an equal visibility of both men and women in all spheres of public life.

The obstacles women face in the media profession are similar to those they encounter in the labour market more generally: discrimination at the stage of recruitment, a pay gap averaging 18% in the EU<sup>5</sup>, more precarious conditions of employment and the existence of

<sup>4</sup> Media Awareness Network; International Federation of Journalists, *Getting the balance right: gender equality in journalism*, 2009; International Federation of Journalists, *Equality and Quality: Setting Standards for Women in Journalism*, 2001.

<sup>5</sup> <http://ec.europa.eu/equalpay>



a glass ceiling. Among media professionals, some figures also show that women are often valued for their looks, being far more likely to be presenters than reporters, especially when they are young: whereas women represent 79% of presenters up to the age of 34. Their presence drops to just 7% in the 50-64 age-bracket. Underrepresented as reporters, especially in newspapers, they are more often assigned to local news as well as to social issues, health and education.<sup>6</sup>

It might reasonably be expected that media content would be equally made by men and women as they address a public composed by men and women. But women make up only 19% of experts and 18% of spokespersons in the news<sup>7</sup>. A Luxembourg study about fair portrayal of men and women in the media in 2005 showed that in 2005 only 23% of the persons in the national TV News were women under the European average of 30 to 35% of female participants in TV programs. Only 14% of experts appearing in the Journal were women.<sup>8</sup>

### The image and visibility of women given by the media in general

The media in general continue to depict public life as a male domain and even insignificant factors may contribute to strengthening or perpetuating traditional gender stereotypes and stereotyped attitudes. Today's social changes make it an evidence that the traditional role model associated with women is no longer appropriate and realistic as real life is showing more and more active women playing a lead role in society. This evolution should be more appropriately reflected in the media.

All this calls for an in-depth study of the public image of women generated by the media, including advertising.

In relation to the content of news items, the persistence of journalistic routine - among other factors - make women relatively invisible in the news media, as shown in the Global Media Monitoring Project 2010<sup>9</sup>, which highlighted a slight rise in the number of female subjects in the news since 2005 (from 21% to 24 %). The survey shows that women are almost as often "popular opinion sources" as men, but this is not the case when "expert sources" are taken into account. According to the GMMP, news made by female journalists, in general, challenges gender stereotypes more often than those of male journalists.

Nevertheless, the fact remains that the European Union does not score well in relation to women's voices in the media. For example, in Europe women are central to a news story only 10% of the time, a figure that has not changed since 2000 and is half the US rate. This low representation of women goes beyond the news: only 32% of main TV characters are female;<sup>10</sup> and women athletes only secure between 2-9% of television airtime devoted to

<sup>6</sup>Global Media Monitoring Project preliminary report, 2010, p. 8. The Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP) exclusively covers news and was done on one day in 1995, 2000, 2005 and 2010. Global Media Monitoring Project 2010, *Who makes the news?* 2010 will be launched in September with more specific results from the participating countries. The Preliminary Report is available at: [http://www.whomakesthenews.org/images/stories/website/gmmp\\_reports/2010/gmmp\\_2010\\_preliminary.pdf](http://www.whomakesthenews.org/images/stories/website/gmmp_reports/2010/gmmp_2010_preliminary.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> Global Media Monitoring Project 2010, page 14

<sup>8</sup> Fair Portrayal in Television. Etude systématique sur la représentation des femmes et des hommes dans les émissions TV. Ministère de l'Égalité des chances 2005

<sup>9</sup> The Global Media Monitoring Project, which took place in 1995, 2000, 2005 and 2010, represents a **single day** sample of **news media** from a gender perspective in 130 countries (in 2010).

<sup>10</sup> Götz, M., *Girls and Boys and Television: A few reminders for more gender sensitivity in children's TV*, 2008, available at: [http://www.br-online.de/jugend/izi/deutsch/forschung/IZI\\_Guidelines\\_WEB.pdf](http://www.br-online.de/jugend/izi/deutsch/forschung/IZI_Guidelines_WEB.pdf)



sports.<sup>11</sup> Certain groups of women receive even less attention than the average (migrant women, elderly women, disabled women, lesbian women, etc.).<sup>12</sup>

Only 10% of European politicians in the news are female – this is actually below the global average of 12% and often even below the percentage of women politicians! In Italy and Portugal, women represent only 2% of politicians in the news. This is not simply because men tend to be in higher positions: a 2003 study of politicians heading their party lists in parliamentary elections in the Netherlands found that the men received twice the coverage of the women.<sup>13</sup>

Recent German research has mirrored this analysis: In 2008, 23 different types of media were analysed (print newspapers and magazines, TV-news, TV-magazines) over six months focusing on top women in German politics, the economy and sciences.<sup>14</sup> When this research was started in 2008, Germany had had a woman chancellor, Angela Merkel, for three years. The cabinet was formed of 8 men and 6 women (42.8%). The chancellor always gets the highest media attention, no matter whether female or male. Nonetheless, except for A. Merkel, all women ministers ranked lowest in media coverage. It was only due to the position of chancellor that the average percentage of top female politicians in print and TV news grew from 18% to 20%!

In the above mentioned Luxemburgish study, only 15% of the persons interviewed in their professional environment were women. This may not be a conscious choice done by journalists but the result of gender stereotypes that need to be understood and deconstructed. Showing fewer women than men in their professional environment impacts the public perception of women's and men's roles and professional competences.

The above mentioned German research also looked at top women in the business sector and their visibility in media. Women hold as few as 9-13% top positions but in business news they only make up for 5%. Interestingly enough so called Celebrity Magazines have 17%-19% stories on top women managers and entrepreneurs in word and photo.

The celebration of youth/young women is omnipresent: on TV, news and fiction, in movies, in magazines, in advertisement. The media certainly produces its impact on other domains as for example the image employers have in mind when recruiting. Initiatives such as the Polish campaign "seeking 45+ woman: reliability, commitment and experience", are therefore very interesting because they try to break gender stereotypes of age regarding women. The campaign aimed at the promotion of women 45+ on the labour market and to change the attitude of employees and employers by modifying the stereotype image of working women +45. Real life professional experience is usually linked with experience and age. But in most of TV fiction, professional experience and age seem not to be related as the female experts roles are often held by young women.

Advertising and marketing reflect culture but also contribute to the creation and perpetuation of gender stereotypes, as it is not only a communication tool for furthering the purchase and use of products. Even if advertisement is basically a marketing tool, advertisements convey values, attitudes and stereotypes, potentially influencing general behaviour beyond purchasing decisions and, in short, proposing an outlook on the world through their cumulative effects. Although advertising depictions of women's roles in

<sup>11</sup> Media Awareness Network, *Media Portrayals of Girls and Women: Media Coverage of Women and Women's Issues*, 2005, available at: [www.media-awareness.ca](http://www.media-awareness.ca)

<sup>12</sup> GMMP Project 2010 [www.whomakesthenews.org](http://www.whomakesthenews.org)

<sup>13</sup> Wierstra, R., *Borsten, Billen, Balkenende (Breasts, Butts, Balkenende)*, Hilversum, Bureau Beeldvorming en Diversiteit, 2003.

<sup>14</sup> "Top women in the Media" is part of a larger project which runs until the end of this year (cofounded by ESF), see: [www.spitzenfrauenindenmedien.de](http://www.spitzenfrauenindenmedien.de)





society do evolve as a function of social progress, there are still concerns. The fashion industry in particular still portrays the ideal body image 'of extremely thin women' which can adversely affect self-esteem of women and men, particularly teenagers and those susceptible to eating disorders such as anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa.

Women are often depicted in the media in *traditional* and *male dependent* roles such as victim, sexual object, sacrificial wife and mother, as either victim or monster. According to a Belgian study on advertisements for example, women are more than twice as likely to be portrayed in (semi-) nudity as men.<sup>[1]</sup> One can also observe a phenomenon of '*pornification of the public space*' whereby men, women and children are exposed to advertisement often displaying naked women.<sup>[2]</sup> The fashion industry (including through magazines) is eroticizing increasingly younger models, and adopting the visual images of vulnerability common in pornographic media.<sup>[3]</sup>

As highlighted by the UK-based organization Eaves, highly sexualized images of young women and girls exist across all of the media, including mainstream television and public advertising. They are routinely presented as expressions of sexual liberation, rather than exploitation. It is argued that the commodification of women and girls, which is central to the majority of pornographic material, fuels demand for commercial sex acts, and in turn may increase sex trafficking.<sup>[4]</sup> In this digital age, children might receive their earliest sex 'education' from hardcore pornography, viewed online either accidentally or intentionally with possible negative impact on their personal development. However, it has to be noted that both the exposure to hardcore pornography and its possible effects depend also on how parents fulfil their parental responsibilities and how the education system deals with sexual education.<sup>[5]</sup>

There are also concerns about video games using stereotypical and sexualized representations of women.

There is a need for dialogue with this industry and further research.

## 5) How could women's equal participation in expression and decision-making in and through the media be promoted?

Media should reflect a realistic picture of women and men and the notion of quality media should include the protection of democratic values, including equality between women and men.

### Empowerment of women in media organizations

In relation to all forms of inequality and sex-based discrimination in employment in the media sector, media enterprises should, as any other employer, participate actively to positive action programs on gender equality at work as well as adopt various strategies and implement best practices.

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[1] Van Hellemont & Van Den Bulk : *L'image des femmes et des hommes dans la publicité en Belgique*, 2009, p. 16.

[2] [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NPoOK7\\_2fts&feature=related](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NPoOK7_2fts&feature=related)

[3] Media Awareness Network, *Media and Girls*.

[4] For discussion of the intersection between prostitution and pornography, refer to 'Prostitution Online' by Donna M.Hughes, published in 'Prostitution, Trafficking and Traumatic Stress' (2003).

[5] E.g. Zillmann, D. (1989): *Effects of Prolonged Consumption of Pornography in Pornography: Research Advances or Utah Domestic Violence Coalition*, 2009, available at: [www.udvc.org](http://www.udvc.org) and Policy Considerations. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. Also, Layden, M.A. (1999).



The positive actions have to be an integrated part of the national gender equality strategies which should contain other key measures to support equal participation of men and women in media taking into account the huge range of employment relationships which exist in the media. Positive action projects may target media companies as well, if they count more than 10 employees.

Within the scope of such a positive action plan, women should be actively promoted into senior positions in media companies as they should be in all other companies where there is still unequal participation.

To achieve this objective, companies should be pushed to elaborate measurable objectives within their positive action plans. As one example for possible implementation, this philosophy had been made fact by a company in Luxemburg in 2003. In their action plan, the hierarchy fixed a percentage to be achieved on the level of managerial training of women, participation of women in decision making and in internal cross mentoring networking. As these objectives were communicated to the staff, as well as to the ministry with whom the action plan was worked out, this was equivalent to an internal quota made up on voluntary basis.

In Germany, a positive action programme was implemented and during the last 20 years, it did help to enlarge the number of female employees and of women in decision-making-positions. On average today, there are 40% women producers and senior producers in public broadcasting in Germany, but the situation is not as good in newspapers and print magazines.

In terms of equal appearance of women and men as, for example, experts in panels on television or radio, an expectation of parity should be part of the framework of positive action plans. Public authorities at the regional, national and European level could also support the creation and maintenance of thematic databases of women to be interviewed and used as experts by media professionals, so as to allow professionals to easily have access to them and so use other than 'usual suspects' for their sources, panels and interviews.

In the context of positive action programmes, the gender gap in the media has to be monitored and criticised much more consistently wherever and whenever it occurs. In Denmark, a new female member of the Danish Union of Journalists employed in media and communication earns approximately 700 euro less in salary per month than her male colleague<sup>15</sup>. This is documented by new statistics from the Danish Federation of Journalists. The figures confirm the general trend: the slow pace in reaching equal pay. With journalists, the difference has only decreased on average by 0.4% from 2008 to 2009. An entirely new statistic also from the Danish Federation of Journalists shows however, that female graduates from one of the 3 Danish universities of journalism apparently are not disadvantaged in wage<sup>16</sup>. Anyhow a discussion about the gender pay gap will be relevant.

### **National gender equality policies promoting networking and civil society activities**

Networking is another important aspect to tackle gender inequality in media expression. Regarding the work of NGOs, it could be an efficient initiative to give more financial

<sup>15</sup> "Lønstatistik 2008-2009" [Salary Statistics 2008-2009], February 2010 by the Danish Federation of Journalists, p. 7. See [http://www.journalistforbundet.dk/graphics/loen\\_og\\_ansaettelse/loenstatistik/loenstatistik2009\\_v1.pdf](http://www.journalistforbundet.dk/graphics/loen_og_ansaettelse/loenstatistik/loenstatistik2009_v1.pdf)

<sup>16</sup> "Ligestilling blandt dimittender", Notat, April 2010 [Gender Equality Among Graduates] note by the Danish Federation of Journalists, see <http://journalistforbundet.dk/graphics/nyheder/2010/dimittend-statistik.pdf>



support to gender-sensitive civil society media initiatives in order to make them more visible and improve their impact.

It would be a positive move for public authorities and the private sector to support gender-sensitive civil society initiatives and gender quality-centred media, which are often local, low-scale and non-profit'. At the institutional level, public services should work more together on data collecting and networking (i.e. analysis of the impact legislation on gender issues).

## 6) How could balanced and diverse portrayals of women and men in the media be promoted?

### European monitoring

Given the frequent translational nature of some type of media and advertising / marketing campaigns, a European Media Monitoring Group could be constituted at the European level with a specific gender equality branch and expertise including professionals and gender equality experts. This group could also foresee to work on common European standards for defining degrading images and sexism. It should also be competent to receive and consider complaints from the public. This European group should work together closely with European media federations and relevant gender-equality focused organisations.

### National gender equality policies

National gender equality policies should:

- Implement without delay current EU legislation, complement and monitor its application:

The Audiovisual Media Services Directive<sup>17</sup> prohibits discrimination based on sex, age, racial or ethnic origin, nationality, religion, belief, or disability in TV adverts and other audiovisual commercial communications. It provides also that audiovisual media services may not contain any incitement to hatred based on race, sex religion or nationality. The Commission, as a guardian of the Treaty, monitors the correct transposition and implementation of Directive 2010/13/EU. .

- Supervise statistics and monitoring:

Monitoring (as it is done by "The Global Media Monitoring Project: Who Makes the News?")<sup>18</sup> could be a good example to be developed to improve knowledge facts about the unequal participation of women and men and the presence of gender stereotypes and sexism on the one hand, with an aim to make the media industry become more aware of the problem<sup>19</sup> and ultimately improve the quality of media content.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Directive 2010/13/UE (Directive 2007/65/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2007 amending Council Directive 89/552/EEC on the coordination of certain provisions laid down by law, regulation or administrative action in Member States concerning the pursuit of television broadcasting activities, available at: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:32007L0065:en:NOT>

<sup>18</sup> during one day every five year)

<sup>19</sup> There is the need to address the increasingly sexual double standard representation of men and women, in which female passivity and responsibility is balanced against male sexual aggressiveness (Schwartz& Rutter, 1998) (in fact and fiction), with men shown as aggressive and women as subservient (GOW, 1996; Sommers-Flanagan et al. 1993)

<sup>20</sup> There is the need to address the increasingly sexual double standard representation of men and women, in which female passivity and responsibility is balanced against male sexual aggressiveness (Schwartz& Rutter, 1998) (in fact and fiction), with men shown as aggressive and women as subservient (GOW, 1996; Sommers-Flanagan et al. 1993)



Monitoring should be one of the key actions supervised by national strategies. It should also pay attention to diversity aspects. Certain categories of women, such as poor, disabled or older women or those belonging to ethnic minorities are often virtually invisible. In the same time some other categories of women are overrepresented, with especially younger women in situations or attire with sexual connotation. Therefore efforts must be done to balance the presence of all different groups of women.

- Enhance image building, visibility and diversity of women (and men)

All types of media press and advertisement, should promote the visibility of women at different levels (diversity of their life, positions in media and all other companies) by their supports (articles, interviews...). Women should appear in all the types of positions (experts, senior managers...).

Women and men should be shown in non stereotypical situations and vice versa: showing women in non traditional roles would also benefit to the better perception of women in the public sphere and of men in the private sphere. It is also very important to show women from the past, women who were present in the public sphere at that time, a time which is most often forgotten and ignored. Showing successful women of all spheres of life may strengthen role models to other women.

Promotion of diverse and balanced images of women and men in media determines the future roles in society of the young generation. An eye should be kept on the representation of women as objects of sexual desire or confined to the role of house wives.

Concerning news media and documentaries, gender equality should be a compulsory module for training and university studies of journalism and communication.

There is also the need for increased visibility of women in all types of media on the 'cultural' and artistic contributions of women e.g. modern visual arts.

## 7) How could the media be an active partner in the promotion of gender equality?

The phasing out of gender stereotypes in the media has to be promoted through close partnership with media companies in the framework of regular communication based on respect of human rights and human dignity while respecting their freedom and independence. In order to promote gender equality in an effective and concrete way, media should play a very active part at different levels:

- regarding company organization:

As formerly developed (point 3), media companies should participate in national gender equality programmes and in **positive action programmes** to become active partners in the promotion of gender equality. Positive action should integrate gender mainstreaming as it would ensure that women would be part of the decision, but also that media output would possess a gender perspective.

Either the objectives already mentioned, another analysis being brought forward in positive actions programmes could be a critical approach of job functions and job descriptions in the media companies in order to break with traditional job attributions and stereotypes (financial themes are treated by men, society themes are treated by women).



- regarding media contents:

Considering the harmful effects of negative gender stereotypes on self-perception, especially with young people and their perception of gender roles and relations in society, all players in media companies including journalists should be made aware of their **social responsibility** and best practices should be promoted. Owners and managers of media corporations could also be encouraged to promote codes for gender sensitive media communication, which would be more effective and sustainable than if the topic is promoted by individual journalists.

Such **codes of conduct** (of ethics) are part of media quality strategies and should therefore be complemented with a gender equality perspective or adopted and implemented in order to promote gender sensitive media communication. This would help to raise professional awareness on how strongly mass communication influences stereotype beliefs. Beyond the usual focus on fairness, accuracy, impartiality and objectivity in relation to media output, these codes should also include obligations to use gender sensitive language.

Also, in this respect, further promoting women to decision-making positions in national media, and encouraging, as well, relations with women's associations and groups to identify their communication needs and interests are key actions to be taken.

In order to strengthen the impact of codes of conduct, they should be better known, promoted and respected. They could also focus to specific target groups. In Luxembourg, for example, such a code has been worked out specifically for public service communicators to prevent discriminatory messages in governmental campaigns.<sup>21</sup>

**Co- or self-regulation** regarding media content with independent authorities able to receive complaints from the public should be developed specifically from a gender equality perspective.

**Training for students of journalism and media personnel:** In order to ensure a long term impact, gender equality should be a compulsory module for training in university studies of journalism and communication. Media professionals should be encouraged, by their organizations, to participate in gender trainings, which should be funded and encouraged by national and European institutions. These trainings should focus on the use of non-sexist language and how to avoid gender stereotypes in the media.

**Incentives** to professionals within the media (e.g. an award) that have a positive gender equality impact and give visibility to the issue could be organized and supported by public authorities. Participation in existing gender equality awards related to advertising and communication should be improved at the national level.

- regarding public awareness and media education:

The awareness of the public, especially of young people, plays an important role in stimulating media to become more active in the promotion of gender equality. Efforts to combat sexism and gender stereotypes in the media including advertising should therefore, be accompanied by education strategies and measures to cultivate awareness from an early age and to develop critical faculties regarding images and the media in general.

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<sup>21</sup> Site du ministère de l'Egalité des chances :  
[http://www.mega.public.lu/actions\\_projets/campagnes/guide\\_media/index.html](http://www.mega.public.lu/actions_projets/campagnes/guide_media/index.html)



It is necessary to develop critical media education in schools in order to give students tools to become aware of gender stereotypes.

Media literacy in schools needs to be developed. Specific media training to develop active rather than passive consumers of the media should be integrated into school programmes. As consumers of media, young people as well as adults in general should have their rights to direct or indirect “misleading” advertising, protected also in the context of stereotyping or discrimination.

In this context, it would be important to draw a particular attention to messages and language used in school books as well as in all communication tools (internet, video, computer games) which convey stereotypes or incitement to violence. Media education is also particularly relevant for new media.

## **8) What is the current impact and future potential of new media technologies in terms of women and the media?**

New media technologies have both a negative and a positive impact and future potential of ICT tools in relation to women's rights and gender equality largely depend on how they will be handled and used. This is largely dependent on how public policies will address those and how especially young generations are prepared to approach new media technologies as they use them more and more as primary source for all types of information, educational programs and entertainment.

Even if using modern technology, new media may perpetuate persistent stereotypical portrayal of women and men in the same way as conventional media and they pervade all levels of society. New media are harder for public authorities to regulate and may expose vulnerable audiences to content that might be harmful, notably pornography.

Up to now, there is not enough information about the potential negative impact of social networks on the web on young women and girls in terms of peer harassment, body images, spreading of personal data and images, cyber bullying, etc, and media awareness education is necessary to inform young people about issues of privacy and use of image. There needs to be more research and studies on the gender impact of new media technologies, in order for public authorities to define their response to possible problems.

In the worst cases, ICT may be a source for criminal activity and portrayal of activities such as trafficking of human beings, pornography and violence against women and children. This impact needs to be researched and the results published so that issues arising can be addressed in public policies.

Therefore, reasonable and responsible use of television, ICT, mobile phones, internet, social networks, video games, etc. should be promoted from an early age onward through education channels and also by raising the awareness of parents to supervise media consumption of their children at home. The European Safer internet Programme should put a special focus on awareness-raising initiatives.<sup>22</sup>

On the other hand, new technologies and media also offer alternative routes, sometimes of easier and cheaper access and use than traditional media for women's groups, feminist information providers, women artists etc to work and to communicate.

ICT may also offer new perspectives to women (and men) as these technologies may offer an added value for reconciling work and family life by enabling new work models

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<sup>22</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/information\\_society/activities/sip/policy/programme/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/activities/sip/policy/programme/index_en.htm)



("teleworking") or new facilities such as online shopping. New technologies also allow for an additional free space for new gender sensitive media.

But women are still not professionally as active as men in ICT and some groups of women have little access to new technologies. Campaigns raising awareness and interest of young girls in non traditional jobs, especially ICT, are needed to balance the participation the women of new media technologies. Initiatives such as the Girls' day in Germany or Luxembourg may contribute to promote new opportunities for young women in new media.

## **9) What could be the added value of EU action (for instance awareness raising, studies, statistics ...) given that its scope is limited to supportive actions?**

### **EU action related to legislation**

The gender mainstreaming obligation contained in the Lisbon Treaty entered into force on 1 December 2009 should be fully implemented into all European policies and programmes related to the media and information society. New legislation regarding to equality of men and women in the media could be a way to fill in the gap of legal rules on the European level.<sup>23</sup>

The *Audiovisual Media Services Directive*<sup>24</sup> prohibits discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, nationality, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation in commercial communications whether linear (broadcast) or non-linear (video-on-demand). The Commission, as a guardian of the Treaty, monitors the correct transposition and implementation of Directive 2010/13/EC

### **EU action in databases, research and media monitoring,**

In article 29, the Audiovisual Media Services Directive foresees the constitution of a contact committee that is "established under the aegis of the Commission. It shall be composed of representatives of the competent authorities of the Member States. It shall be chaired by a representative of the Commission and meet either on his initiative or at the request of the delegation of a Member State." The tasks of the contact committee shall be, among others, to "facilitate effective implementation of this Directive through regular consultation on any practical problems arising from its application, to facilitate the exchange of information between the Member States and the Commission on the situation and the development of regulatory activities regarding audiovisual media services. In this context, the contact committee should be equally composed of women and men, in accordance with EC Decision of June 2000 on gender balance within committees and expert groups. The contact committee should also tackle issues related to gender equality and breaking stereotyping, inviting experts to an exchange of views.

A **European Media Monitoring Group** should be constituted at the European level with a specific gender equality branch and expertise including professionals and gender equality experts as well as representatives of women's and consumers' organisations to monitor media content, including new media technologies. This group should work on common European standards for defining degrading images and sexism. It should also be possible to receive and consider complaints from the public. This European group should work together closely with European media federations.

<sup>23</sup> see above point 2 : 2004 Council directive

<sup>24</sup> Directive 2010/13/UE



More studies about participation of both women and men in media companies (positions, issues dealt with) and about the portrayal of women and men in the media and the effect of this on the audience should be promoted. The EU should also support a European wide compilation of studies on women and the media of the last 10 years and promote new research and studies on the impact of new media technologies and content on women in the media including the portrayal of women from specific groups such as women with disabilities or ethnic minority women.

The EU and Member States could support the creation and maintenance of thematic databases of women experts to be interviewed or asked as experts by media professionals. These databases could exist also at the national and regional level.

### **EU action in training**

Media education is an important topic of Directive 2010/13/UE. Regarding media education, the directive underlines that "Media literacy" should be promoted in all sections of society (...) and its progress followed closely. Media literacy initiatives should include a Gender mainstreaming dimension.

Referring to the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 December 2006<sup>25</sup> on the protection of minors and human dignity the directive points out "a series of possible measures for promoting media literacy such as, for example, continuing education of teachers and trainers, specific Internet training aimed at children from a very early age, including sessions open to parents, or organization of national campaigns aimed at citizens, involving all communications media, to provide information on using the Internet responsibly." (47). The Commission recommendations on media literacy should be taken into account proposing awareness raising campaigns and co-regulatory initiatives with a Gender dimension.<sup>26</sup>

Starting from the necessity to develop "skills, knowledge and understanding" allowing an effective and safe use of media, the EU should develop, fund and encourage training programmes on women's rights, anti-discrimination and gender stereotypes for media professionals to make them understand the benefits of gender sensitive journalism.

### **EU action in support of good practices and networking**

The EU should support media initiatives that specifically promote women's rights and gender equality in Member states.

An important role should be foreseen for promoting extensive media representation of good practices illustrating media production, which are free of gender stereotypes and / or promote equality between women and men.

Added values could be the sharing of good practices, awards for non-discriminatory advertising and other positive action in all forms of artistic productions.

The European Commission could put together best practice from different countries in relation to codes of conduct (co)-self regulation and legislation.

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<sup>25</sup> Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 December 2006 on the protection of minors and human dignity and on the right of reply in relation to the competitiveness of the European audiovisual and on-line information services industry :

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2006:378:0072:01:EN:HTML>

<sup>26</sup> Commission recommendation on media literacy in the digital environment for a more competitive audiovisual and content industry and an inclusive knowledge society, C (2009) 6464 final, Brussels, 20.8.2009





The European Commission could transfer the exercise that was done in relation to self regulation in the health sector for gender equality.

### **EU action in gender awareness campaigns**

EU action regarding to media promotion should be launched on a large scale taking into account all different types of media communication. Different initiatives could be supported, for example a prize for advertising that is gender-sensitive.<sup>27</sup>

EU communication campaigns should better coordinate strategies and good practices in relation to legislative work to be disseminated in EU Member states. This could be done more specifically in relation to the implementation of the *Audiovisual Media Services Directive* and promote and fasten its implementation in concrete measures on national level.

Another initiative to be supported could be the movie production in Europe. If the EU wants to support and encourage the movie industry to tell balanced stories about men and women a prize exclusively for female directors who are telling stories with a strong human dimension, set within the EU would be an idea. In relation to that, movies generally instructed by women could be supported as well. It would also be important to look at video games with a gender perspective.

It is always good to promote awareness-raising campaigns and the exchange of good practices on fighting gender stereotypes and the advancement of the realistic portrayal of women and men in the media, i.e. "Girls Day" organized by Germany or Luxembourg in the framework of Peer Reviews organized by EC.

As an important part of campaigns, attention to fighting gender stereotypes in EU publication design and illustrations as well as gender sensitive language in EU official documents, publications and websites could be useful and should be promoted. Furthermore, national initiatives for supporting gender sensitive language in websites should be supported.

Such large awareness raising campaigns, gender surveys, gender disaggregated data bases could be reflected appropriately in the policies at national level. EU should strengthen networking with national public services in order to promote gender equality in the Media more efficiently in all Member States at the same time.

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<sup>27</sup> This has been proposed for instance by European Council Recommendation 1799 adopted on 26 June 2007.



## RECOMMENDATIONS

### 5. How could women's equal participation in expression and decision-making in and through the media be promoted?

#### 5.1. Empowerment of women in media organizations by positive action programs

Media companies should adopt positive action programs with measurable objectives in order to:

- integrate a gender dimension into their work and organization ;
- encourage and empower women to take senior positions in their companies ;
- to guarantee equal working conditions to men and women regarding recruitment, pay, training and career opportunities ;
- to create and maintain expert databases of women ;
- to achieve parity in experts panels ;

#### 5.2. Empowerment of women in the media by national gender equality policies

National gender equality policies should adopt a proactive approach to media issues by:

- data collecting on men and women in the media ;
- financing studies on stereotypes in the media ;
- promoting networking and create more platforms, forums and links between all national stakeholders (Gender equality-centred media profession, gender equality experts and the academic sector) ;
- promoting civil society activities and support their media initiatives ;
- improving public awareness of the role and gender impact of the media through campaigns, information days, round tables, etc ;

### 6) How could balanced and diverse portrayals of women and men in the media be promoted?

#### 6.1. On the European level

- constitution of a European Media Monitoring Group with a specific gender equality branch and expertise including professionals and gender equality experts ;

#### 6.2. On national level of gender equality policies

- implementing without delay current EU legislation, complement and monitor its application ;
- developing media monitoring projects to be integrated in national strategies and supervised in partnership with all European member states ;



- Promoting diverse and balanced images of women and men as well as increasing their visibility in all types of media ;
- Promoting gender equality as module for school, for training and university studies of journalism and communication ;

### **7) How could the media be an active partner in the promotion of gender equality?**

- media companies should participate in positive action programmes (see pt 5) and integrate gender equality dimension in their quality strategies ;
- media and advertising federations should actively promote codes of ethics and gender sensitive vision and language among their members;
- promote networking between media federations and women's associations, e.g. when working out a code of conduct ;
- develop co- or self regulation regarding media content from a gender equality perspective with independent authorities able to receive complaints from the public ;
- promote training for students of journalism and media personnel in media organizations;
- federations should promote awards for gender sensitive advertisements and press articles among their members ;
- promote awareness-raising campaigns aimed at children, students and citizens ;
- promote gender sensitive language in school books as in all communication tools used by young people ;

### **8) What is the current impact and future potential of new media technologies in terms of women and the media?**

- impact has to be better analysed by more research and studies on the gender aspect of new media technologies ;
- new media technologies offer new perspectives to women (and men) and present an added value for reconciling work and family life by enabling new work models ("teleworking") ;
- new job opportunities for women in a non traditional sector

### **9) What could be the added value of EU action (for instance awareness raising, studies, statistics ...) given that its scope is limited to supportive actions?**

- constitution of a European Media Monitoring Group with a specific gender equality branch and expertise including professionals and gender equality experts (see pt 6) ;
- support the creation and maintenance of national thematic databases in the media ;
- support a European wide compilation of studies on women and the media ;
- support and promote a European wide networking on fair portrayal in the media ;
- develop, fund and encourage training programmes on women's rights, anti-discrimination and gender stereotypes for media professionals ;
- encourage national training programmes on women's rights, anti-discrimination and gender stereotypes for media professionals ;



- support and promote awareness raising campaigns and co-regulatory initiatives with a Gender dimension in collaboration with European Media Federations (Press and advertisement) ;
- integrating gender sensitive language in EU publication design and illustrations as well as gender sensitive language in EU official documents, publications and websites ;
- support national media initiatives and promote best practices among EU member states;
- promote awareness-raising campaigns and the exchange of good practices on fighting gender stereotypes ;



## ENCLOSURES

### Incentives, best practices, analysis and studies in the member states

#### *I. Some examples of general incentives*

- Analysis of frequency of using the naked female body compared with naked male body
- Award or advertisement contest: changing sexes in advertisement and discussion, round table
- Code of ethics
- Consumer legislation in the area of advertising in line with misleading, degrading advertising
- Content and language in school text books
- Global media monitoring Project (GMMP)
- Implementing of Internet Equality portals
- Media education in the Curricula of teachers
- Portraying politics (International Federation of Journalists)
- Project called "Gallery of tolerance", where one may "rent" a gay, a Jew, a Roma or a disabled person and spend a few hours with her or him, talk, see how this person lives, get to know their dreams and in a way "accustom" oneself to the unknown which causes fear, rejection without reflection and, in the end, prejudice;
- Studies on portrayal of women in media productions, advertising, cinema
- Supporting book production in Europe and equality on decision level;
- WIFT, Women in Film and Television, a global and national network for women working in film and television <http://www.wift.org/about/index.html>

#### **II. Some examples of national best practices**

- United Kingdom

UK Orange Prize in literature only for female writers: <http://www.orangeprize.co.uk/home>

- France

In France the LAW no 2010-769 of July 9, 2010 on violence against women in article 27 amend the law on freedom of communication and state that the media need to fight against discrimination, gender prejudice, violence against women, violence within marriage and to promote equality between men and women.

"Following a report on women's image to the media submitted to the Minister in charge of equality a Committee is set up to ponder on image of women in the media and aims to install a self-regulatory approach of professionals.

- Spain

'Compostela Charter':



[http://www.eu2010.es/en/documentosynoticias/noticias/may07\\_cima\\_dos.html](http://www.eu2010.es/en/documentosynoticias/noticias/may07_cima_dos.html)

Spain is currently addressing media responsibility in sex trafficking through the publication of sex contact advertisement. Self Regulatory Codes and other measures have been promoted.

- Portugal

RTP (Portuguese public television), as part of a project in partnership with CITE – Commission for Equality in Labour and Employment, developed training in gender equality and non-sexist language for its workers. For a greater impact on the organisation, training involved three hierarchical levels: top managers, supervisors and employees (including journalists) and their representatives.

- Poland

"Seeking 45+ woman: reliability, commitment and experience" campaign

- Sweden

Training of journalists in gender awareness and at the SVT (a Swedish public service channel supported by the state)

- Germany

Top women in the Media" is part of a larger project which runs until the end of 2010 (cofounded by ESF): [www.spitzenfrauenindenmedien.de](http://www.spitzenfrauenindenmedien.de)

The project MINTiFF (Mathematik, Informatik, Natur- und Technikwissenschaften und Chancengleichheit im Fiction-Format) was started to explore the potential of fictional media formats to make science and technical professions more popular for girls/women: [www.mintiff.de](http://www.mintiff.de)

- Luxembourg

Positive action programs for media companies; Code of conduct for public communication [www.mega.public.lu](http://www.mega.public.lu)

Studies on fair portrayal in the media.



### III. Some examples of analysis and studies on equality and the media in member states

- “Sexualisation of Young People” by Linda Papadopoulos. A recent review commissioned by the Home Secretary and published in the UK, which has put spotlight on the sexualisation of children and teenagers within our society.

See <http://www.generationnext.com.au/pdf/sexualisation-young-people.pdf>

- “Broadcasting and the Young Adult Consumer, Local and Global Media Influences on Maltese Youth Culture,” by Dr Joe Grixti, (2004) ISBN No.: 99932-21-03-1) [www.ba-malta.org](http://www.ba-malta.org)
- Gender Issues in News Bulletins: Comparative Analysis - Malta, Cyprus and Ireland, by, Ms Joanna Spiteri B.A. Hons. (Communication Studies), M.A. Head Monitoring Department., Malta Broadcasting Authority URL: [www.ba-malta.org](http://www.ba-malta.org)