

## COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

### COUNCIL RESOLUTION GIVES POLITICAL CLOUT TO THE THIRD EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES ACTION PROGRAMME

**D**uring its 21-24 May session, the Council of Ministers adopted a Resolution on the Third Community Medium-Term Action Programme on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men. This Resolution proves the political will of Member States to commit themselves to applying the Programme adopted by the European Commission last October. This Programme follows two earlier ones (1982-1985 and 1986-1990) which had initiated a series of practical measures together with information and research networks at European level.

The primary objective of the Third Programme is to promote the full and entire participation of women on the labour market and full recognition of the value of their contribution to economic and social life. The Commission's strategy in this Programme is now directed at "mainstreaming", in other words, integrating the policy of equal opportunities into all other EC policies. At the same time, the programme aims to strengthen cooperation with Member States and with the various social partners.

The programme defines three priority lines of action:

- consolidating and developing the legal framework by improving the application of Community standards, supplementing them with new Directives and reinforcing the equality dimension in dialogue between social partners;
- promoting women's participation in the workforce through support from specific programmes such as NOW (see **Women of Europe Newsletter no. 16**) and from other Community networks, positive action measures in business enterprises and the expansion of research and of measures to improve infrastructures, in particular for childcare.



# WOMEN OF EUROPE NEWSLETTER

NEWS

ON THE EQUALITY POLICY  
OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY



Dear Readers,

*With the adoption, on 21 May 1991, of the Resolution on the Third Community Action Programme on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, the Ministers*

*of the Twelve have taken a key decision on the path towards achieving real equality of opportunity.*

*Several bodies had stressed the need for the Council to issue an official document on this subject, thereby providing political support to an Action Programme which, despite its importance, is not mandatory. These bodies include the Advisory Committee on Equal Opportunities, a body of national experts which assists the European Commission in all areas of equal opportunity policy, as well as the European Parliament. The latter expressed its opinion via its "Women's Rights" and "Social Affairs" Committees. We quote MEP Nel Van Dijk (Greens, Netherlands) who, in the opinion adopted in April by the Social Affairs Committee, stated that it was "absolutely essential that the Third Action Programme be accompanied by a Council Resolution, forcing Member States to implement it and to provide sufficient financial resources to this end".*

*At the same time, the Council is moving forward on the implementation of the action programme accompanying the Social Charter which provides for the adoption, before the end of 1992, of a series of measures for the protection of workers. Ministers still have to state their position on the "Women" part, in particular on the proposal for a Directive concerning the protection of pregnant women and women who have just given birth, and on the three proposals for Directives on atypical work presented by the European Commission just one year ago (see "Women of Europe" Newsletter no.11).*

Fausta Deshormes La Valle

- deepening society's understanding of the issues of equal opportunity and of improving women's position in society.

In the Resolution adopting the Programme, the Council invites Member States to implement the actions outlined in the text in order to achieve the following objectives:

- to ensure the application and, where necessary, the improvement of existing legal provisions; to increase the level of awareness about legal rights and obligations;
- to increase the participation of women in the work force by a better application to women of national legislation and practices, by the development of specific measures to ensure equal opportunities for women and men, and by promoting women's entrepreneurship and local employment initiatives;
- to improve the quality of women's employment by maximizing their potential, and particularly through education, vocational training, improved management of human resources and the implementation of positive action in business enterprises;
- to reduce barriers to women's access to and participation in employment, particularly through measures aiming to reconcile working life and family responsibilities of women and men;
- to continue and expand awareness-raising initiatives which relate to the specific objectives of the Action Programme and to improve and disseminate information on the topics of equality of opportunity and treatment;
- to continue to encourage a greater participation of women at all levels in the media industry and to develop innovatory programmes which portray a complete and realistic image of women in society;
- to encourage measures designed to promote women's participation in the decision-making process in public, economic and social life.

The Council invites Member States:

- to adopt, under this Programme, national, regional and local schemes to establish equality and other appropriate political measures, to establish objectives which are in line with specific national situations;
- to draw up evaluation reports;

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It invites the social partners:

- to make equal opportunities a key issue in the collective bargaining process, in particular by making every effort to set up positive action programmes within business enterprises and in professional branches and sectors, as an integral part of a coherent resource management policy, and to encourage a genuine commitment to the training and employment of women in enterprises;
- to pursue and intensify social dialogue on reconciling professional and family responsibilities and on protecting the dignity of women and men at work;
- to include the issues of equality of remuneration (equal pay for the same work or work of equal value) and the elimination of sex-based discrimination in evaluation systems and/or job classification in collective bargaining rounds;
- to take all necessary measures to promote actively the representation of women in decision-making bodies.

The Council also invites the Commission:

- to oversee the implementation of the programme and to proceed, on the basis of information provided by Member States, to draw up interim and global evaluations (mid-way through and at the end of the Programme) of the implementation of equal opportunity policy, taking account of all the actions undertaken by the Commission and describing actions undertaken by Member States;
- to submit the results of these evaluations to the European Parliament, the Council and the Economic and Social Committee;
- to integrate the objective of equality of opportunity into the formulation and implementation of appropriate policies and action programmes, by introducing specific means of coordination.

### The Third Programme is launched in Portugal....

Information days on the Third Action Programme were organized in Lisbon on 17 May. After presenting the Programme and the role of information in its application, the

three priority objectives were analyzed and discussed. Participants insisted on the need to expand the legal framework of the Programme and to obtain directives rather than recommendations. Measures to encourage equal opportunity must be implemented at all levels and commence as soon as possible, participants declared, mentioning the importance of actions to be undertaken in the field of education. The need to develop reference models for women in the decision-making process is felt very keenly, as was underlined by concrete examples.

This event was organized jointly by the Commission of the European Communities through its Lisbon representative office and by the two Portuguese equal opportunities organizations, the Committee for Women's Position in Society (recently renamed the Commission for Women's Equality and Rights) and the Committee for Equal Opportunity at Work.

*Useful address: Comissão para a Igualdade e Direitos das Mulheres, Av. da Republica 32, P-1093 Lisbon.*

### ... and in Belgium

In Belgium, it was the Commission on Women's Labour (Ministry of Employment and Labour) which organized the presentation of the Third Action Programme on 29 May in Brussels. Emphasizing the need for coordinated and complementary action, the round table discussion brought together first of all political decisionmakers, followed by the social partners. Whilst recognizing the formal and legislative progress already accomplished in favour of women, the round table pointed out that women continue to suffer real discrimination, albeit often more difficult to define. Participants of both sexes recognized that the new Programme is looking to support women in responding to the new challenges of the labour market and of business life. The programme stresses the importance of qualifications, the need to re-consider job classifications and the necessity of promoting new measures, aimed at both women and men, to reconcile family and professional life.

*Useful address: Commission du Travail des Femmes, Ministère de l'Emploi et du Travail, rue Belliard 51-53, B-1040 Brussels.*

## ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

The Advisory Committee on Equal Opportunities met in Brussels on 3 and 4 June. It was informed on the Commission's latest work in the area of equality and proceeded to an exchange of information on the development and launch of the NOW (New Opportunities for Women) programme. The Committee insisted that implementation of the Third Programme take account of national priorities and that formal links be established with networks. The Committee then proceeded to an exchange of views on the report on women's unemployment in the European Community, prepared by the Women and Employment network. An analysis of this topic will be presented to the Committee in September.

*Equal Opportunities Unit, Commission of the European Communities, Directorate-General for Employment, Industrial Relations and Social Affairs, 200 rue de la Loi, B-1049 Brussels*

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION

### Contacts and exchanges with women from Central and Eastern Europe

We must "break down walls (including invisible ones) and build bridges" and respond to the "great hope which women from Central and Eastern Europe have placed in the European Community". These wishes were expressed during a series of contacts and seminars attended by delegates from the Women's Information Service of the European Commission during May in Czechoslovakia, Hungary and the new German Länder. In Hungary, a YWCA (Young Women's Christian Association) seminar brought together women's leaders from 17 Central and Eastern European countries, including Estonia, and EFTA and European Community countries. The purpose of the seminar was to re-launch association life in Eastern and Central European countries, to examine national situations, in particular those of women

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at work, and to situate the problems of women's position in society within the context of a changing Europe. Women from Central and Eastern European countries expressed their fears of growing unemployment and in particular the tendency of sending women back to the home. The threat to the freedom of abortion is also a major concern, in particular in Poland. In **Prague**, meetings with YWCA members, with Dr Eleonora Slavickova, President of the women's rights movement in Bohemia and Moravia, as well as with Mr. Skolek from the National Library Information Centre, once again underlined the importance of organizing exchanges of information. At this early stage, discussions also focused on concrete projects: a women's database and women's information centre.

### Reunited Germany – Challenges and Opportunities

German unity, the Single Market and women: these topics were at the centre of discussions during the seminar organized from 24 to 26 May in Bonn by the Deutsches Frauenrat (Council of German Women's Associations) in cooperation with the Women's Information Service of the European Commission. Organized specifically to provide information for the five new Länder, the seminar welcomed women leaders in the area of equal opportunity, women engineers and teachers and women militants from political parties and associations. During the seminar, participants tackled the essential question of the challenge and opportunities of 1992 with respect to women's employment. During discussions, the provision of information, in particular by the Women's Information Service, training for women and joint efforts between the Community, Member States and social partners were recognized as key directions for enabling women to take advantage of the economic situation.

Another aspect of the discussion was the implementation of the Third Community Action Programme for Equal Opportunities.

Mr. Sipp from the Ministry of Women and Youth gave an outline of the programme and of its application in Germany, which has just been included in the "Relaunch East" programme for the inclusion of women in the work force, and in the role to be played by NOW, through which the five Länder, classed as "Objective 1",

will be able to receive aid. Readers are reminded that Objective 1 relates to the promotion of less developed regions, with priority given to women who are unemployed, threatened with the loss of jobs or in insecure work situations. These regions include Ireland, the United Kingdom (Northern Ireland), Italy (Mezzogiorno), Portugal, Greece, part of Spain and, in France, Corsica and the Overseas Territories.

Representatives from various social groups and the European Parliament also commented on the application of the programme. Marlène Lenz (PPE) complained of the lack of information on Community measures and the fact that several directives were blocked at Council of Ministers level. However, the Third Programme is an important measure, as was stressed by Mrs Junker (Soc), in particular the measures provided for childcare. The double responsibility for family and career and indirect discrimination remain a barrier to the equality of women, according to Mrs Tölle from the European Trades Unions Confederation (ETUC).

Participants complained of insufficient measures given mounting unemployment, with women being sent back to the home and the loss of childcare infrastructures. They demanded better information on assistance provided by the European Commission.

*Women's Information Service, Directorate-General, Audiovisual, Communication, Information, Culture, Commission of the European Communities, 200 rue de la Loi, B-1049 Brussels*

## COUNCIL OF MINISTERS

**D**uring the informal meeting of the Council of Ministers held on 13 May in Luxembourg, representatives of Member States limited themselves to outlining the type of actions which their respective administrations intended to undertake to improve the status of women. To the great regret of Mrs. Vasso Papandreou, Member of the Commission in charge of Social Affairs, no Member State has expressed the political will to give priority to these questions. Whilst certain representatives proposed organizing a Council of Minis-

ters officially devoted to the position of women, this initiative has little chance of materializing. It was also disappointing that no Minister participated in the meeting. The principal measures affecting women which must be adopted before 1992, such as the Directive on the protection of pregnant women at work and the Directive on atypical work, will in fact be discussed in the Council of Ministers within the more general framework of social policy.

## EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

### HELENA, A NEW EUROPEAN PRIZE FOR WOMEN

**I**t is natural that the European Parliament, which is at the forefront of the combat for women's rights, should, at the dawn of the XXIst century, take the initiative to create a European prize emphasizing women's value", according to Mrs Carmen Llorca Vilaplana (Spain, PPE) in her report to the Committee on Women's Rights.

Parliament voted unanimously in favour of her proposal in Plenary Session on 14 May. The HELENA prize rewards women who have distinguished themselves in the arts, industry and commerce, science and scientific research or by their human value. Candidates will be selected by national juries, consisting of representatives of Member States, the European Commission and of Parliament as well as personalities from the areas in question. The winner will be voted by a jury under the presidency of the Committee on Women's Rights.

This prize will complement the **NIKE prize**, which honours a television programme highlighting the role of women in society and the **WOMEN OF EUROPE** prize which crowns the exemplary contribution of a woman to the construction of Europe. Both these prizes have been created and are sponsored by the Women's Information Service of the European Commission and have existed since 1988 and 1987 respectively.

This initiative, if implemented, will further stress the importance of this type of positive action in improving the perception of the importance of women in society, which is still often undervalued.

## WOMEN'S RIGHTS COMMITTEE

The Women's Rights Committee met in Lisbon on 29 to 31 May. Opening the working session, Mr. Dias Loureiro, the Portuguese Minister for Parliamentary Affairs, stressed that a "significant difference" continued to exist between rights on paper and in real life, despite the changes which have undoubtedly taken place in Portugal in recent years to improve women's status. As in numerous other countries, public and political life remains a male bastion: women have a minority position in government (at national, regional and local level), in political parties and in the trades unions.

Nonetheless, considerable progress has been made, the Minister declared, in particular in secondary education, in which girls are in the majority, and in universities, in which they are well represented in "traditionally male" areas. According to the Minister, Portuguese women have one of the highest employment rates in Europe (42%), but the salary gap remains considerable, with women earning on average 70% of men's pay in most sectors. The Committee then listened to Regina Tavares da Silva, President of the "Comissão para a Igualdade e Direitos das Mulheres" (ex-Commission of Women's Position in Society) and Ana Vale, President of the European Women's Lobby.

### Children at the centre of several reports

The Committee devoted part of its work to questions relating more specifically to children. It approved the proposed opinion by Brigitte Ernst de la Graete (Greens, Belgium) on child exploitation, as well as that of Astrid Lulling (PPE, Luxembourg) on parents' participation in education, and began work on the subject of working conditions of women and children in developing countries, based on a draft opinion prepared by Margaret Daly (ED, United Kingdom).

## WOMEN OF THE LEFT ORGANIZE THEMSELVES

The "Women of the Left" Inter-group, which meets during parliamentary sessions in Luxembourg,

held its second conference for women in politics in Brussels on 4-5 June. Delegates from parties to the left of the political spectrum from the twelve Member States discussed the common political interests of women in the 90s. The conference decided to create a permanent network of women politicians on the political left in the European Community and in other European countries.

Moreover, the 38 women (out of 179 MEPs) of the Socialist group within the European Parliament will now have a stronger voice within the group. In order to make good the imbalance within the Executive Committee, the group decided on 7 May to introduce a proportional representation rule. As a result, three more women were elected to the Committee on 5 June – Pauline Green (UK), Heincke Salische (Germany) and Barbara Dührkop (Spain), giving five women out of 23 members. This temporary ruling will be reviewed after the 1994 elections. In the meantime, awareness campaigns will be launched to encourage the election of women.

*Useful address: European Parliament, 97-113 rue Belliard, B-1040 Brussels or Plateau du Kirchberg, L-1919 Luxembourg*

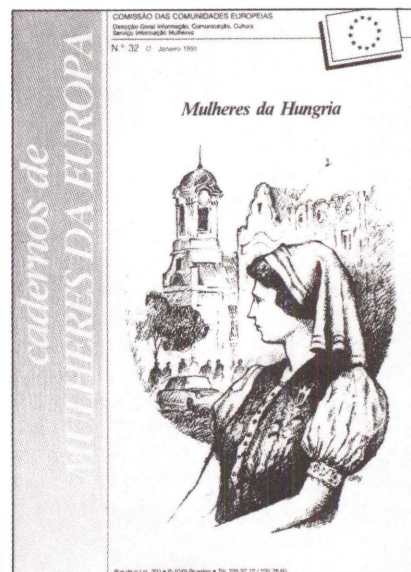
## COURT OF JUSTICE

Unemployment allowances constitute "a minimum guaranteed social wage for families" and a Member State may increase them for a head of family with dependents, even if this means that the majority of beneficiaries are men. This imbalance does not constitute discrimination towards women under Community law, the European Court of Justice considered when giving judgment on an appeal of the European Commission against Belgium, as it relates to a social policy measure which "falls under the jurisdiction of Member States". This decision was given on 7 May in Luxembourg (Case C-229/89).

*Court of Justice of the European Communities, Plateau du Kirchberg, L-2925 Luxembourg*

## PUBLICATIONS

"Women of Hungary", **Women of Europe Workbook no. 32**, available in the 9 official languages.



*Women's Information Service, Directorate-General, Audiovisual, Information, Communication and Culture, Commission of the European Communities, 200 rue de la Loi, B-1049 Brussels.*

**Girls and boys in higher secondary education.** Analysis of statistical data on their distribution by sex.

Published, at the request of the European Commission, by the European Unit of Eurydice.

*Information: Eurydice, European Unit, 17 rue Archimède, box 17, B-1040 Brussels.*

**Towards women's equal participation in employment,** dossier of the IRIS seminar in Walferdange (Luxembourg) on 27-28 September 1990. Available in French and in English.

**Women and enterprise: training strategies for Europe 1992,** dossier of the IRIS Belgian national seminar, Brussels, 15-16 October 1990. Available in French, English and Dutch.

*Information: IRIS Unit, c/o CREW, 38 rue Stévin, B-1040 Brussels.*

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