From 6 to 9 November, a key European seminar was held in The Hague on the protection of the dignity of women and men at work. Organized jointly by the Dutch Employment and Social Affairs Minister and the Equal Opportunities Unit, it marked a major initiative by the Dutch Presidency. One of the aims of the seminar was to increase public awareness of the Council Resolution of May 1990 on the protection of the dignity of women and men at work and the Recommendation and the Code of Good Conduct being proposed by the European Commission, which should be adopted in the near future. A further aim was to encourage implementation of these initiatives by presenting examples of good practice and suggesting means of evaluation.

Some one hundred participants attended, including government representatives, national equal opportunities bodies, the social partners and women's organizations specializing in problems of sexual harassment. During one of the most enlightening sessions, chaired by the Dutch Secretary of State, Elske ter Veld, representatives of Member States had a chance to outline their plans for implementing the European Commission's proposed Recommendation and Code of Good Conduct. Sexual harassment was also discussed in detail at the last meeting of the Steering Committee for Equal Opportunities in Radio and Television, held on 14 October 1991 in Brussels. On this occasion, the Steering Committee invited Michael Rubenstein, the author of the 1987 study for the European Commission on «The Dignity of Women at Work – Report on the Problem of Sexual Harassment in the European Community», as well as Ligia Amacio from Portugal, who has carried out research into the nature and extent of sexual harassment in the European Community.

Contact: Evelyn Collins, Equal Opportunities Unit

Dear Readers,

Nine million people work full-time in farming in Europe today. 3 million of these are women, working on family farms. In certain southern European countries, women make up 40% of the farming population. For this reason women are very concerned by the development of this sector of activity. The reform of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), aimed at introducing changes into Community farming, will also affect their lives as active participants in the farming economy, and, more generally, in the social and economic life of the rural world.

As Mrs Cécile Boerave, President of the Women's Committee of COPA, stated during a seminar organized in collaboration with the Women's Information Service at Barbouin in France, women play an essential role in the management of Europe's farms, the overwhelming majority of which —90% of all Community farms—are family-run. "Take away women's work from farms and you will destroy most of them", Mrs Boerave remarked.

Conscious of the fundamental role of women in farming but also of their specific needs, the Commission also made provision, when adopting Council Directive 86/613/EEC of 11 December 1989 (on the application of the principle of equal treatment for self-employed women, including in farming) for the possible revision of this Directive. Article 13 of the Directive requires Member States to provide the Commission during 1991 with "appropriate data to enable it to prepare a report evaluating its application". The Commission is now analyzing the replies provided by the Member States. Based on the situations in different Member States and the opinions expressed by the social and professional organizations, the Commission will decide on whether there is a need to revise the Directive. Any revision should be presented to the Council of Ministers before 1 July 1991.

The opinions presently expressed will enable the Commission to take account of the wishes of women in the farming and rural worlds.

Fausta Dehnes La Velle

Contact: Margarida Pinto, Equal Opportunities Unit

Positive action and women's training

A practical handbook on the creation and management of in-service positive action programmes and training for women, based on the experience of experts from the former "Diversification of Vocational Choices for Women" network, will soon be available. This network of experts, created in 1984, established and followed up positive action in the twelve Member States. The handbook draws on their experience in this field, presenting basic principles and suitable procedures for implementing such activities and outlines the steps to be taken at both the preparatory and management stages. As such, it can serve as a guide to anyone wishing to introduce women's training or in-service positive action programmes in order to improve the conditions and status of working women.

Contact: Janet Hemsley, Equal Opportunities Unit, Directorate-General for Employment, Industrial Relations and Social Affairs, Commission of the European Communities, 200 rue de la Loi, B-1049 Brussels
POVERTY 3: PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED IN RESEARCH

A publication prepared under the «Community Action Programme to Foster Economic and Social Integration of the Least Privileged Groups», reports on research work presented at a conference organized in Bath (United Kingdom) on 30 and 31 October 1990. In carrying out their work, the researchers had three objectives: to provide a summary overview of the subject area, to offer new perspectives and research at national level, and to put forward proposals for comparative international research. These studies are grouped under different topics: the relationship between poverty and inequality in family structures; the labour market and social policy; and geographic and social localization of poverty; equal opportunities and protection; geographic and social localization of poverty.

A round-table discussion provided women entrepreneurs from East and West with an ideal opportunity to exchange views. This was followed by more concrete contact for future relations with women from the USSR, Czechoslovakia, Rumania and Hungary.

Women entrepreneurs from the new German Länder also exhibited a range of their products during the congress.

Contact: Hilde Albertini, Women's Information Service.

The European Women's Lobby presents its strategy

Officially founded one year ago, the European Women's lobby, which provides a forum for women's non-governmental organizations in the twelve Member States and European organizations, held its second General Assembly in Brussels on 18 to 19 October. The General Assembly unanimously agreed to support a Community Directive guaranteeing the protection of pregnant women at work. The meeting also decided to begin action to defend acquired fundamental women's rights and to oppose in particular recent moves to limit the voluntary termination of pregnancy. The 1992 work programme includes the insertion of the principle of equal opportunities into the present reform of the Treaty of Rome and supporting the implementation of the Third Action Programme for Equal Opportunities in the twelve Member States. The Lobby will also develop and support action aimed at accelerating women's access to decision-making posts, with special attention being paid to the presence of women in Community institutions. The working programme will also include questions specific to migrant women.

Information: European Women's Lobby, 22 rue du Méridien, B-1030 Brussels, Tel. (32.2) 217.90.20, fax: (32.2) 219.84.51

Women's Information Service, Directorate-General Audiovisual, Communication, Information, Culture, Commission of the European Communities, 200 rue de la Loi, B-1049 Brussels
DIRECTIVE IN 1992. SHE
Parliament's definitive 'position
th(s~lon
European
satisfied, however, and considers that the
sufficient
level of protection of working women
remuneration».
Commission proposal. Although
minority vote.
Community, which should treat complaints
violation. Finally,
Commission which stipulates that
«additionality» which stipulates that
national administrations. Parliament
should also examine the problem of political preferences which, she recognized,
played a part in government's selection of programmes. Finally, the European
Commission is preparing to review the principle of «additionality» which stipulates that
national or regional authorities must match the amount of Community aid. MEPs have
pointed out that this requirement leads to an underutilization of available funds in the
poorest regions.

THE OTHER ITEMS ON THE AGENDA, THE DIRECTIVE ON WORKING HOURS AND THE SECOND REPORT

MEETIN G IN BRUSSELS ON 28 AND 29 OCTOBER, THE WOMEN'S RIGHTS COMMITTEE EXCHANGED VIEWS ON «WOMEN'S INFORMATION POLICY» WITH MS COLETTE FLESCH, DIRECTOR-GENERAL AT THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION FOR AUDIOVISUAL, COMMUNICATION, INFORMATION, CULTURE. MS FLESCH LISTED COMMUNITY INITIATIVES FOR PROVIDING INFORMATION TO WOMEN IN EUROPE. EVEN IF WE CAN EXPECT CHANGES WITHIN THE INTERNAL STRUCTURES OF THE COMMISSION, THE ACCENT WILL REMAIN ON INFORMATION TO WOMEN, WHICH IS A POSITIVE ACTION PAR EXCELLENCE, MS FLESCH DECLARED. THE WOMEN'S RIGHTS COMMITTEE REGRETTED THE DISAPPEARANCE OF «WOMEN OF EUROPE» AND EXPRESSED THE HOPE THAT «WOMEN OF EUROPE NEWSLETTER» WOULD BE DISTRIBUTED TO A WIDER AUDIENCE, AND ALSO TRANSLATED INTO 9 LANGUAGES. REPLACING PROPOSALS AND QUESTIONS, MS FLESCH WELCOMED THE SUGGESTION TO PREPARE A FILE ON THE PRESENT STATE OF LEGISLATION ON VOLUNTARY TERMINATION OF PREGNANCY IN ALL MEMBER STATES. THE NEED TO EXTEND THE DISTRIBUTION OF INFORMATION TO WOMEN IN THE NEW GERMAN LANDER AND IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE HAS ALSO BEEN TAKEN INTO CONSIDERATION BY MS FLESCH (SEE THE BROCHURE ANNOUNCED BELOW).

CHILD CARE


MOTHERSHIP PROTECTION: INITIAL AGREEMENT


UNDER THE DIRECTIVE, THE DISMISSAL OF A PREGNANT WOMAN WILL BE FORBIDDEN, EXCEPT FOR REASONS NOT LINKED TO HER CONDITION AND WHICH ARE PERMITTED BY NATIONAL LEGISLATION OR PRACTICE.

AGREEMENT ON THE DIRECTIVE WAS OBTAINED BY TWELVE VOTES WITH TWO ABSTINENCES (UNITED KINGDOM AND ITALY). THIS IS A NEW DEVELOPMENT, AS THE PROPOSED DIRECTIVE FELL INTO THE SOCIAL SECURITY CATEGORY BY VIRTUE OF ARTICLE 118A OF THE TREATY (HEALTH AND SAFETY), THEREBY PERMITTING A QUALIFIED MAJORITY VOTE.

THE OTHER ITEMS ON THE AGENDA, THE DIRECTIVE ON WORKING HOURS AND THE SECOND REPORT ON POVERTY, WERE NOT EXAMINED.
... a discussion document on the financing of childcare.

The «Women and Youth» Committee of the German Bundestag

The Women's Rights Committee welcomed members of the «Women and Youth Committee» set up just under a year ago when the first government of the reunited Germany was being established. Its president, Edith Niehuis, stressed the need for information, in particular on the consequences for women of the Single Market. Parliamentarians from the two «Women's» committees expressed the hope that they would become superfluous in the long term, as other committees paid more and more attention to women specific problems.

Exchanges with the Council

Ms Elske ter Veld, Dutch Secretary of State for Social Security and Emancipation, reported on progress and delays in a number of directives concerning women. The directive on the protection of pregnant women at work (see above) is being slowed down by discussions on questions about its legal basis, whilst the directive on atypical work would already have been adopted «if more men were in this type of employment», Ms. Elske ter Veld said. She said she hoped that the Council of Social Affairs Ministers would adopt the childcare Recommendation on 3 December. The Women's Rights Committee also unanimously adopted the draft report presented by Ms Ria Oomen-Ruijten (PPE, Netherlands) on the application of the Third Council Directive on the progressive implementation of the principle of equal treatment for men and women in matters of social security (Directive 79/7/EEC). Parliamentarians went on to exchange views on the opinion presented by Marijke Van Hemeldonck on the labour market after 1992, and its consequences for women.

Useful address: ESC, 2 rue Ravenstein, B-1000 Brussels, tel.: (32.2) 519.92.07/519.92.02/519.93.20.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON EMPLOYMENT

The Standing Committee on Employment, comprising representatives from Member States, the European Commission, the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) and the Union of Industrial and Employers' Confederation in Europe (UNICE), met in Brussels on 7 November. The Committee was chaired by Mr De Vries, Dutch Labour and Social Affairs Minister.

The meeting examined a European Commission document on the situation of women's employment in the European Community (part of the «1991 Employment in Europe Report»). The Committee assured the European Commission of its support for promoting training and employment of women within the framework of the Third Action Programme for Equal Opportunities. «Economic growth alone is not enough to ensure the full integration of women in the labour market», the Committee recognized, adding that «active policies at appropriate levels are also necessary in order to remove the specific handicaps which women encounter». The Committee invited the Commission to take account of the specific needs of women in its education and training programmes and to encourage women to enter sectors in which they are under-represented. The Committee emphasised that the social partners have an important role to play, in particular in respecting equal opportunities in recruitment and promotion and protecting the dignity of women and men at work. Finally, it reaffirmed the essential participation of the structural funds and regional policy in ensuring economic and social cohesion which should be strengthened and made more effective.

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE

At its plenary session of 30 and 31 October, the Economic and Social Committee (ESC) adopted an own-initiative opinion on single-parent families presented by Ms Slipman (United Kingdom, various interests group). Faced with a substantial growth in the number of single-parent families in all Member States, the ESC is asking the European Commission to adopt an integrated strategy, aimed at giving these families equal access to social and economic benefits and advantages. The measures being recommended by the ESC are an attempt to respond to the specific needs of single-parent families. They include extending childcare infrastructure to meet the needs of both parents and children; improving opportunities for qualifying vocational training to facilitate returners to the labour market; tax benefits for working single parents; increased availability of good quality social housing and services offering information and advice to single parents.

Useful address: ESC, 2 rue Ravenstein, B-1000 Brussels, tel.: (32.2) 519.92.07/519.92.02/519.93.20.

PUBLICATIONS

IRIS dossiers: «1990 Inter-programme Exchange Visits» and «An Evaluation of the IRIS network by its members». Available in English and French, IRIS Unit, CREW, 21 rue de la Tourelle, B-1040 Brussels.

The impact of the introduction of new technologies on the health and safety of women at work, V/2741/93-EN, Nexus Europe, annotated bibliography.

ERGO: Répertoire européen de projets locaux. (European Directory of local projects). A directory of 1,700 activities to combat unemployment throughout Europe. This information is also available «online» from the ECHO information retrieval centre.

Information: ERGO, CEI Consultants Ltd, 205 rue Belliard, B-1040 Brussels.

Frauen in Europa (Women in Europe), by Marlene Lenz, MEP, presents equal opportunities policies within the European Community. Available in German only. Information: Europa Union Verlag, Europa Zentrum, Bachstr. 32, Postfach 1529, D-5300 Bonn 1.

Europa für die Frauen: (Europe for Women): produced jointly by the Women's Information Service of the European Commission and the Permanent Representation of the European Commission in Germany, this brochure aimed especially at women in the new Länder, presents the Third Action Programme for Equal Opportunities between Women and Men 1991-1995, the Community's new NOW initiative as well as various Community measures and institutions dealing with equal opportunities issues.


Editor in Chief: Fausta DESHORMES LA VALLE
Head of WOMEN'S INFORMATION SERVICE
Coordination: Paula LAISSY
Commission of the European Communities
Directorate-General for Audiovisual Information, Communication and Culture
Rue de la Loi 200, B-1049 Brussels
Tel. (32.2)235.28.60