

COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

RECONCILING FAMILY AND PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES

What policies and practices should be adopted to enable working women and men to reconcile professional and family life more successfully. This was the theme of the "Europe 93 - Enterprises and Families" symposium, organized on 30 and 31 March in Brussels by the European Commission and the Belgian Ministry of Employment and Labour, and attended by some 300 delegates from employers, trade unions, governments and women's and family organizations.

It was the opportunity to exchange information on subjects such as childcare, adapting work structures and other positive mobility experiences (for example, cultural adaptation for male partners and children).

In conclusion, European Commissioner, Ms Vasso Papandreou, announced that a working group has been set up comprising of employers and trade unions, to identify good practice; to stimulate new initiatives and to disseminate them via seminars, brochures and publications; and to promote innovative accompanying measures in the area of mobility.

The conclusions of this symposium will be available in September.

Information: Michèle Teirlinck, Family Measures Unit (DG V/C/1), Directorate-General Employment, Industrial Relations and Social Affairs, Commission of the European Communities, 200 rue de la Loi, B-1049 Brussels.

NEWS FROM THE NETWORKS

Vocational Training for Women

The Working Group on Vocational Training for Women met in Brussels on 6 April. It met with a representative of the Community's NOW (New Opportunities for Women) initiative, who presented news on the projects. Operational programmes for all Member States have now been approved and projects now await approval by individual gover-



WOMEN OF EUROPE NEWSLETTER

NEWS ON THE EQUALITY POLICY OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY

Dear Readers,

French-speakers are facing a linguistic dilemma. Should a woman minister be addressed as Madame le Ministre (the traditional form) or Madame la Ministre? Behind this linguistic argument lies a new reality. Given the more and more important position women hold in European society today, one can confirm without too much danger that decision-making can also be feminine.

Whilst, initially, this recognition is welcomed, we still need to ensure that the advisory and legislative bodies working for equal opportunities continue to carry out serious and in-depth work.

This is the vocation of the "Women in the Decision-Making Process" Network, recently set up to assist the European Commission in developing practical action aimed at facilitating women's access to power and to provoke a public debate.

This Network of national experts has taken upon itself the task of bringing to light the workings of a number of key-sectors which remain closed to women. Even though examples of women in positions of command and decision-making can be found, such as Irish President Mary Robinson, Ms Stella Rimington, the head of the British secret service or Ms Betty Boothroyd, elected Speaker of the British House of Commons — after 600 years male-domination of this post — they remain relatively rare and would appear to be the exceptions which confirm the rule.

But the trend is changing and recent national elections give grounds for some hope: at present 9.8% of Italian senators are women; 9.2% of British, 10% of Portuguese, 28% of Dutch and 33% of Danish Members of Parliament are women. A file to be followed closely.

Ana Paula Laissy.

Ana Paula Laissy

nements. The Working Group congratulated IRIS (European Network of Women's Vocational Training Programmes) for its role in setting up these transnational projects.

A preliminary report on the evaluation of the network, highlighted its dynamic growth, from 71 members in 1989 to 469 in 1992. The report's recommendations should help provide pointers for the next stage of IRIS. A major IRIS Fair on vocational training for women in Europe will be held in Brussels this autumn. It will provide an update on existing IRIS members as well as pinpoint future priorities.

Information: M. Pinto, Equal Opportunities Unit.

Local Employment Initiatives for women

Meeting in Brussels on 15 April, the Local Employment Initiatives (LEI) network looked at the network's progress to date and redefined its working methods. The network has set up a series of *ad hoc* working groups to look more specifically at problems facing women wishing to create their own enterprises. A newsletter has just been published, presenting the latest news from the network, a number of case studies and an outline of the situation of women's enterprise creation in each Member State.

The 1991 budget for grants to assist the creation of local employment initiatives by women was fully used. The first selection round in 1992 has proved extremely difficult: 1,200 applications were received, whilst funds, though higher than in previous years, are only available for 280 projects.

Coordinator: Caroline Turner, Breakthrough Consultants, 14 Victor Hugo Street, GR-54625 Thessaloniki.

Women and Decision-Making

A new network created to support the activities of the Equal Opportunities Unit met for the first time in Brussels on 6 May. Its priority task is: to develop persuasive arguments to create public debate on "the absence of women: an anachronism which is slow to die". Initially, the network will focus on three areas: politics, trade unions and the public sector. Its first task is to prepare a summary of existing obstacles and to evaluate strategies and results obtained in these three key-areas.

A European conference bringing together women in decision-making positions will be held in Athens in November, with the participation of

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European Commissioner Ms Vasso Papandreou. A Charter will be signed at this conference.

The network, the Charter and the publication of a brochure will form the basis of an awareness-raising and action campaign for 1993-1995, a focal point of which will be the 1994 European Parliament Elections. The network has already involved the European Women's Lobby in its activities and meetings.

Coordinator: Sabine de Béthune, rue Mercelis 33/A, B-1050 Brussels.

Application of Equality Directives

The Expert Network on the Application of Equality Directives, meeting in Brussels on 6 May, welcomed the publication of the first issue of a "Network Letter", an internal publication to help facilitate and structure discussion. The network looked at the data gathering process, through questionnaires, on progress made in the application of Directives in the Member States and on the concept of indirect discrimination. The coordinators' report should be ready by September. It went on to discuss recent developments on three Directives relating to pregnant women, night-work, and the structuring of working time, as well as the latest judgements of the European Court of Justice, social security and the implications of the Maastricht Treaty.

Specialist conferences are currently being prepared. Subjects include law and social security. A key European meeting will be held this autumn at Louvain-La-Neuve (30 September - 3 October). It follows a symposium held there in 1985, which produced essential basic documents on the subject.

Coordinator: Sacha Prechal, Europa Institut, Faculteit der Rechtsgeleerdheid, Turfdraagsterpa 1, NL-1012 XT Amsterdam.

Women's Training and the Social Dialogue

Following on an initial seminar in Madrid last February, the social partners re-met to examine the recognition of qualifications as well as vocational training for women, an area recognized as being of primary importance. A working group has been set up to discuss these matters in greater detail and will prepare a draft "common opinion" by September on this topic. Other opinions adopted covered: basic education; pre-

training and vocational training for adults; the transition to adult and professional life; and access to vocational training. ■

Women's studies

A women's studies seminar was organized in Brussels on 18 May. It was attended by two experts from each Member State, to examine the impact of women's studies on programme contents and teaching. ■

Information: GRIF, 29 rue Blanche, B-1050 Brussels.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION

Europe for Women

The Women's Information Service has just published a clear and precise brochure presenting the roles and aims of the various European institutions (Commission, Council of Ministers, Parliament, Court of Justice and the Economic and Social Committee), the Third Community Action Programme for Equal Opportunities (1991-1995) as well as useful addresses. Available in all 9 official EC languages, the brochure can be obtained from the Women's Information Service or from the Commission's representative offices.

Seville – where history and the 21st century meet

The European Community is present at the World Exhibition in Seville with its pavilion "From Renaissance Europe to the Renaissance of Europe", evoking the major features of reconciliation within the Community of countries which have traditionally been enemies for centuries, as well as major scientific successes which will create the Europe of the future. A large cultural programme is planned, including an exhibition of young European sculptors, the European Cinema Festival and Night of the Media, the "Jean Monnet Chairs" symposium on European citizenship, Cancer Information Day, BRITE-EURAM days, and the awarding of the European Design Prize and the Fourth Young Scientist Prize. At the pavilion opening ceremony on 20 April, European Commissioner Mr Dondelinger, declared that the "Seville World Exhibition" was the show-case of both our heritage and our dreams and offered a triple message: the

success of Spain, the success of the European Community and a meeting with history.

Women's history

The Women's Information Service has played its part in the development of women's history by donating a collection of more than 400 posters collected over the last 15 years, illustrating diverse women's activities in the Member States. This gift was made to the International Library of Contemporary Documentation (BDIC), which specializes in the study of international relations in the contemporary world. BDIC collects documents of every kind and also has a sizeable picture library.

Musée d'Histoire contemporaine, BDIC, Hôtel National des Invalides, F-75007 Paris.

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

COUNCIL OF MINISTERS

Encouraging the sharing of family responsibilities

The European Council of Social Affairs Ministers adopted on 31 March a Recommendation requesting that Member States adapt work structures and leave to parents' needs. The Recommendation invited Member States to take initiatives to enable parents to "have access to local childcare services", whether private, public, individual or collective. These services should be provided at an affordable price, make sufficient provision for children's safety and health, have a pedagogical approach, be available both in cities and rural areas, be accessible to children with special needs and meet the requirements of single-parent families. The Recommendation emphasises the need to attach greater value to the work of childcare personnel and to ensure that they are trained "in line with the importance and the social and educational value of their work".

More generally, the Council of Ministers required that the organization of holidays take account of women's incre-

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ased participation on the labour market. Member States should, "whilst respecting individual autonomy", encourage greater participation by men in the care and education of children, in order to ensure a more equal sharing of parental responsibility between men and women, and to enable women to participate more effectively on the labour market.

However, the Recommendation far from responds to the reiterated demands of the European Parliament for a Directive containing precise objectives as to the number of creches and kindergartens to be developed over the next 5 years (cf. **Women of Europe Newsletter no. 22**). ■

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

PLENARY SESSION

Women's night-work

During its April plenary session, the European Parliament adopted a Resolution on women's night-work.

The ban on night-work for women only is a subject of controversy since the European Court of Justice's "Stoeckel" judgement of 25 July 1991, which declared any differential treatment of the two sexes in this area to be illegal. For the European Commission, this ban constitutes a discrimination which Member States must put an end to. For its part, the European Parliament underlines that the Court's decision condemns only the inequality of treatment between men and women and it deplores the lack of seriousness of the Commission which, in demanding that Member States abandon their current legislation, gives the green light to the non-respect of minimum standards.

European Commissioner, Ms Vasso Papandreou, recalling the Court's decision, demanded that Member States who are not in compliance — Belgium, Spain, France, Greece, Italy and Portugal — must adapt their legislation accordingly. Ms Papandreou emphasized the urgency of this question, as the agreement can only be amended every 10 years. However, equality should not, according to the Commissioner, lead to a worsening of working conditions, and Member States should also ratify the 1990 ILO agreement aimed at im-

proving night-work conditions for both men and women.

The Resolution adopted by Parliament insists that problems linked to night-work be tackled as part of legislation on working time and demands rapid adoption by the Council of Ministers of the proposed Commission Directive on working time. During the debate, Parliamentarians reminded their colleagues of the risks of night-work for women, demanded that minimum rules and collective agreements be drawn up and that this type of work be voluntary and specially compensated. Parliament also demanded that the Commission propose an action programme on the possibility of reconciling professional, social and family activities.

Protection of pregnant women

During its May session, Parliament approved, in a second reading, the proposal for a Directive on the protection of pregnant women, following a report presented by J. Rønn (see below). The unanimously adopted text, contains amendments which are acceptable to the European Commission. Given its importance, the next issue of the **Women of Europe Newsletter** will examine this subject at greater length. ■

WOMEN'S RIGHTS COMMITTEE

During its 22-23 April meeting in Brussels, the European Parliament's Women's Rights Committee moved in favour of strengthening the provisions of the draft Directive on the protection of pregnant women at work which should be adopted by the Council of Ministers in June. During discussions on the report presented by Joanna Rønn (Soc, DK), Committee members expressed their indignation at the way the Directive implicitly assimilates pregnancy to sickness. The Committee also demanded two major amendments: maternity leave of 16 and not 14 weeks, on 80% pay. At present, only Portugal provides for maternity leave of less than 14 weeks. Most members expressed the wish that this leave should not lead to any loss of salary, but the Committee believed that such a demand risked blocking the adoption of the Directive.

The Committee noted with satisfaction that certain of its proposals, particularly on nursing mothers, health risks and medical monitoring without salary loss, were included in the text proposed to the

Council. Other amendments concern women's right to request exemption from night-work and the reversal of the burden of proof for all cases of infringement going to court.

Housewives and assisting spouses

The Committee also examined the report by Hedwig Keppelhoff-Wiechert (EPP-Germany) on housewives and assisting spouses. The report demands that the European Commission prepare a Recommendation making provision for separate social security rights, return to work after bringing up children, greater flexibility of working structures and recognition of house-work in the event of divorce.

Women after Maastricht

The Women's Rights Committee formulated its recommendations on the measures proposed by the President of the European Commission, Jacques Delors, in the document entitled "The Resources for our Ambitions", a series of measures which the Committee qualify as "minimal". Christine Crawley (Soc, UK) Committee President, reminded delegates that economic and social cohesion should introduce in actual terms the fundamental principle of equal treatment between men and women. The Committee also emphasized that women's training should be a key element in the reform of structural funds. In the area of EC foreign policy, sufficient resources should be made available to assist women from developing countries and central and eastern Europe.

Future Committee meetings will be held on 20-21 May in Brussels, and in June in Dublin. ■

A woman at the head of monetary affairs

Christa Randzio-Plath (SOC, Germany) will chair the new sub-committee of the European Parliament's Economic Committee, set up to investigate monetary problems within the Community. "We will ensure that all Europeans, both men and women, can count on the same stable currency", she declared. ■

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

IN BRIEF

Congress of European Women Christian Democrats

The Women's Congress of the European Peoples Party (EPP) and the Union of Christian Democrats was held on 7 and 8 May at the European Parliament in Brussels. "For a social dimension in Europe – The role of women" was the central theme of the congress. A series of well-known European women took part in the discussions, including Ms Miet Smet, Belgian Minister of Employment and Labour, Ms Maria Bello de Guzman, President of the World Union of Women Christian Democrats, Ms Rita Süßmuth, President of the German Bundestag and Ms Erna Hennicot-Schoepges, President of the Luxembourg Parliament.

COPA: Survey by the Women's Committee

Representatives of women farmers from Member States, meeting at the end of March in Brussels with Ms Boerave in the chair, decided to launch a survey among the organisation's members on the application of the 1986 Directive on self-employed women. Among other things, they want to investigate whether farmer's wives have non-discriminatory access to banking facilities and whether they make use of these.

Unemployment

According to EUROSTAT, the official statistics office of the European Communities, the seasonally-corrected unemployment rate within the Community was 9.2% in February 1992, back to the February 1989 level.

But unemployment was much higher among women (11.3%) than among men (7.7%), and among young people (18.2%) than adults (7.3%).

SEMINARS

As part of the programme for the integration of the five new German Länder, the Equal Opportunities Unit is organizing two events:

- 16 June 1992, Brussels: seminar on Community law in the field of equal opportunities, for legal experts from the new Länder.

- 28 September 1992, Brussels: seminar on women's employment and unemployment within the European Community, for economists and persons in key economic posts in the new Länder.

List of events co-financed by the European Commission:

- 2-4 July 1992 – Oxford
TUC-ETUC seminar on job evaluation, job classification and equal value
- 6-10 July 1992 – Paris
Round table on "Women and Mathematics" at the European Mathematics Congress
- 2-4 September 1992 – Copenhagen
Women's International Shipping and Trading Association (WISTA) Conference
- 9-11 September 1992 – Heidelberg
Conference for Locally and Regionally Elected Women organised by the European Council of Communes and Regions
- 23-25 September 1992 – Copenhagen
Conference on parental employment and caring for children; policies and services in EC Member States and Nordic countries
- 27-29 September 1992 – Brussels
Conference on "Strategies and Proposals in Promoting Equal Opportunities in the Field of Education" organized by the European Trade Union Committee for Education (ETUCE)
- 28-30 September 1992 – Ennis
Conference on "Girls into Technology" organized by the Department of Education in Ireland
- 15-18 October 1992 – Bruges
"Young Liberal Women in Politics", organized by LYMEC (Liberal and Radical Young Movement in the EC)
- Oktober 1992 – North of Italy
Seminar: Women in agriculture (organised by COPA)
- November 1992 – Budapest
Symposium "Women entrepreneurs and the internal market" (organised by FCEM – World Association of Women Entrepreneurs)

PUBLICATIONS

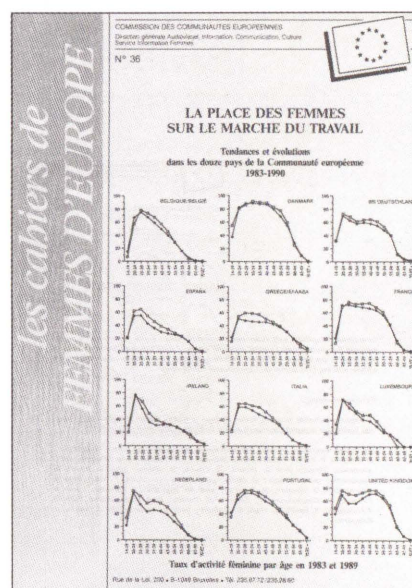
Women of the South in European Integration: Problems and Prospects, V/694/92-EN, Diotima (Centre for Research on Women's Issues). This

research, carried out for the European Commission, examines women's living and working conditions in four Southern European countries (Greece, Italy, Spain and Portugal). Available in English, French translation being prepared.

Equality of Opportunities between Women and Men: Catalogue of Documents available. V/686/92-FR.

Presentation of documents available at the European Commission's Equal Opportunities Unit between April 1991 and April 1992.

To obtain these publications, please contact the Equal Opportunities Unit, Commission of the European Communities, Directorate-General Employment, Industrial Relations and Social Affairs, 200 rue de la Loi, B-1049 Brussels.



The Position of Women on the Labour Market. Trends and Developments in the 12 Member States of the European Community (Women of Europe Supplements – No 36). Document summarizing the report of the European "Women in Employment" network, available in the 9 official Community languages from the Women's Information Service, 200 rue de la Loi, B-1049 Brussels or from the Commission's Representative Offices.

Editor in Chief and coordination:

Ana Paula LAISSY

WOMEN'S INFORMATION SERVICE

Commission of the European

Communities

Directorate-General for Audiovisual

Information, Communication and Culture

Rue de la Loi 200, B-1049 Brussels

Tel. (32.2)299.94.11