

# Women of Europe

council

## Editorial

For 15 months, European public opinion has lived at the pace of the Intergovernmental Conference. At times the negotiations inspired hope at the significant advances in European construction and at other times bitterness at the blockages between Member States which seemed to want to overturn the very rights acquired at Community level.

A new Treaty finally emerged at the Amsterdam Summit. But what can be said about this laboriously drawn up text? Many people have mixed feelings about it. But the issues which gave rise to the toughest negotiations are of the greatest value and we should rejoice at the huge progress made by the 15 Member States on European construction.

Maastricht opened the way for economic and monetary union and Amsterdam largely confirms progress towards the single currency by laying down a framework for the euro and by placing employment at the heart of the Union. For the first time, a chapter on employment and a social chapter are included in the Treaty.

A citizen's Europe supersedes a worker's Europe by strengthening free movement and by setting in motion the means of guaranteeing security for all. The 15 Member States decided to define important joint strategies so as to reinforce Europe's presence in the world and to allow the Union to speak with one voice. Institutional reform did not come about although it should have paved the way for future enlargement of the Union. However, the process of enlargement itself is under way and will take concrete form with the start up soon of membership negotiations with several countries.

For many people, the final position adopted on equality between men and women is unfortunate in so far as a concept of non-discrimination is referred to rather than one of respect for a fundamental right. We will examine these issues in greater detail in the next issue of *Women of Europe Newsletter*.

These results can be considered as very average. Nonetheless, looking back, newly drafted texts often instigate developments which go way beyond what negotiators originally found so hard to put down on paper. For my part, I am tempted to believe this and I am convinced that the Amsterdam Treaty, as President Jacques Santer said, "lays the foundations for the Europe we want to build in the twenty-first century".

Veronique Houdart-Blazy

Head of Section - Information for Women

## Social Europe strengthened at Amsterdam Summit

**A**t the June Amsterdam Summit, the 15 European Union Heads of State and Government gave a social dimension to Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) and closed the Intergovernmental Conference (IGC) with the adoption of a new Treaty. Institutional reform is the last stumbling block with agreement only partially secured. A final decision has been postponed until enlargement takes place, negotiations with applicant countries are expected to start early next year. A special Summit on employment will take place in the autumn and EU leaders will return to Amsterdam in October to formally sign the new Treaty.

Under pressure from the French Prime Minister Lionel Jospin, EU leaders adopted a resolution promoting employment to accompany the German-inspired Stability and Growth pact agreed in principle in Dublin last December. This gives EMU both a social and an economic face clearing the way for the third and final stage of Economic and Monetary Union. As a result, the introduction of the euro should go ahead as planned from 1 January 1999.

The employment resolution sets as immediate objectives the development of "a skilled, trained and adaptable workforce," the modernisation of social protection systems and greater coordination of Member States' economic policies to promote jobs. Although the resolution does not foresee any extra EU funds for job creation, it opens the possibility for the European Investment Bank (EIB) to finance socially useful employment creation projects.

To maintain the momentum in fostering economic growth and fighting unemployment, it was agreed to meet again in the autumn at a special employment summit to be held in Luxembourg. The Summit will examine Member States' employment policies and initiatives looking for good practice examples and seeing how the EIB can better support job creation.

### Employment enters the Treaty

A chapter on employment, strengthening Europe's social dimension, is now in the



Treaty. Each Member State will retain control over its own employment policy but from now on must fit into a coordinated European strategy to promote jobs. This gives the European Commission a clear legal base to develop employment creation measures. The 1991 Social Protocol for the protection of workers has also been incorporated into the Treaty following the British government's agreement to sign it.

The Treaty reaffirms that the Union is founded "on the principle of liberty, democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms and the rule of law". It gives powers to suspend certain rights of Member States found guilty of "a serious and persistent breach" of human rights.

For the first time the Treaty clearly states the EU can take action to outlaw all discrimination based on "sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion and belief, disability, age or sexual orientation".

Equality between women and men "with regard to labour market opportunities and treatment at work" is now a firm principle confirming the EU's power to act in this field. The Treaty also explicitly allows Member States to introduce positive action measures in favour of the "under-represented sex".

The last obstacles to freedom of movement were removed, leaving the UK and Ireland as the only two remaining Member States to retain border controls. Some spe-



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cial arrangements stay for Denmark. To accompany this freedom, greater cooperation is planned concerning immigration, political asylum, and a number of civil and judicial matters.

### A European voice in the world

Under the new Treaty, the EU will be able to speak with one voice in world affairs. The 15 have agreed to be formally represented in foreign affairs by the President of the Council. She or he will be assisted by the Secretary General of the Council of Ministers, the top civil servant of this institution. Their job will be to defend common EU foreign policy positions which have received unanimous agreement by the 15 governments. A new policy planning and early warning unit will monitor international events and their possible implications for the Union.

The adoption of the new Treaty means the EU's enlargement process enters a new phase by opening negotiations with potential new members. Cyprus is first in line followed by applicant countries in central and eastern Europe.

### Decisions made easier

All the governments agree that a change in the EU institutions and a simplification of decision-making is necessary for enlargement and crucial to speed up the EU's decision-making procedures.

But the Summit did not make sufficient progress on this front. It postponed some of the harder institutional decisions until enlargement actually takes place. These include the changing of voting in the Council of Ministers so as to better reflect the distribution of the population across Europe.

Some reforms did go through. The European Parliament, for example, was given co-decision powers with the Council in additional areas. The Council will be able to decide more policy areas by a qualified majority of 71% of the votes instead of unanimity as is the case now. National parliaments are to be given more time to scrutinise EU policy proposals so as to be able to play a greater part in Union affairs. The Commission will be limited to 20 members until the institutions are reformed and the European Parliament to 700.

All in all, the Amsterdam Summit, although disappointing on institutional reform, ensured that both enlargement and the EMU can go ahead as scheduled and that the EU's social dimension is reinforced. ●

For further information:

<http://www.europa.eu.int/en/agenda/igc-home/amst.htm>

# parliament

## Committee on Women's Rights

**Francisca Bennasar Tous (PPE, Spain) urged "real action" to tackle the problem of child sexual abuse and exploitation in an Opinion discussed in May by the Committee on Women's Rights. In it, she said this should include a reinforcement of the legal rights of children throughout the EU and early ratification of the Europol Convention on cross-border police cooperation.**

In an interview with *Women of Europe Newsletter*, Francisca Bennasar Tous said she did not want to limit her examination solely to the issue of child sex tourism as asked by the Parliament's Committee on Civil Liberties and Internal Affairs which had requested the Opinion. Instead, she covered the broader question of child sexual abuse.

Some "90% of children abused in the EU are abused within their own families and this problem remains invisible", she said. "It is like a submerged iceberg of which sex tourism and organised paedophilia is only the tip." She called for research and statistics to identify and profile both paedophiles and men who abuse women and children within the family. It is important to know "which sort of men they are". She also called for "help lines" to be set up in all Member States for missing and abused children.

### The scourge of sex tourism

Francisca Bennasar Tous called for tough measures to eradicate sex tourism which should really be called "travelling abroad to sexually abuse children". The challenge is to reach the "ordinary" men bound for Thailand or Cuba and companies using these countries as destinations for incentive travel. "These people should be made aware that they are not simply on an exotic holiday but are abusing children, no matter how sexually mature or different they seem from European children. Children are children wherever they are in the world."

She urged Member States to convict individuals known to have abused children in a country where it was not considered an offence and to draw up agreements to ensure sex offenders cannot escape prosecution by merely moving to another Member State.

"It is vital to name the abusers", said Francisca Bennasar Tous, a view not shared by all Committee members, with some arguing this could breach individual rights. She wants the proposed EU register of paedophiles to include all convicted child sex offenders, including those involved in sex tourism.

"It is particularly important to get the message to the tourist industry. Sex tourism does not just affect the small sleazy end of the hotel market but many 5-star hotels," she said. She called on the industry to draw up a register of agencies, operators and hotels involved in sex tourism. The National Travel Agents and Tour Operators Associations within the EU have already declared that they would ban from membership any agent shown to have been involved in sex tourism. Francisca Bennasar Tous wants to take this further by publishing a register of companies and agencies that have been involved in sex tourism.



Francisca Bennasar Tous

Photo: European Parliament

### Mainstreaming in focus

Major changes are needed in attitudes and traditions, at the root of all inequalities, if equality between women and men was to be achieved, said Angela Kakkola (PSE, Greece). Introducing a draft report on the Commission's Communication on mainstreaming (see *Women of Europe Newsletter No 59*), Angela Kakkola said she considered the term "mainstreaming" inappropriate and called for efforts to be concentrated on the full integration of all citizens in society with women being given more opportunities to achieve equality in practice.

One way the EU could better contribute to this effort is by giving a far greater share of the Structural Funds to projects promoting women. She called for a special budget line for mainstreaming and said positive actions should continue to exist in parallel.

Committee members regretted that the three Commissioners responsible for the Structural Funds were unable to address the Committee despite repeated invitations. ●

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# interview

## European Parliament President a supporter of equality

**S**panish Christian Democrat José-María Gil-Robles Gil-Delgado was elected President of the European Parliament in January this year (see *Women of Europe Newsletter No 69*). Since the beginning of his two and a half year term in office, he has been a fervent supporter of citizen's Europe. He pushed for this throughout the IGC talks alongside a demand for greater powers in EU decision-making for the European Parliament. In this exclusive interview, José-María Gil-Robles Gil-Delgado talks about how he sees equal opportunities and the role played by Parliament's Women's Rights Committee.

*How do you consider the issues of equality and mainstreaming?*

I think we need to develop a comprehensive strategy in order to incorporate equality of opportunity into all Community policies. Such a strategy should take into account (women's) starting point in any given area and clearly establish the specific objectives to be pursued. It would be paradoxical if women's working conditions were to deteriorate in the interests of equality.

In order to achieve a situation in which there is genuine equality of opportunity, positive action (I do not like the term 'positive discrimination') should in certain cases be envisaged.

The aim should be to create a fairer society in which better use is made of the human resources available (human resources is Europe's greatest source of wealth) and in which it is easier to combine a career with a family. And this is something which should be within the reach of everyone, men and women alike.

*How can the principle of mainstreaming be best incorporated into the work of the Parliament, both in the policy work of its committees and in its staff policy?*

As in many other areas, Parliament has carried out pioneering work in including in the institutions' political agenda the development of a comprehensive equal opportunities policy. The cornerstone of Parliament's action has been its Committee on Women's Rights which has produced opinions designed to ensure that the equal opportunities dimension is incorporated into the work of Parliament's other committees.

As regards Parliament's staff policy, it needs to prepare its administration for the demands of the future in which information technologies will play a major role. I believe that, by means of a combined training and internal restructuring policy, Parliament's Administration will be able to open up new opportunities for career promotion and encourage the involvement of women at all levels.

*What do you think of the work of the Committee on Women's Rights?*

As I have already said, I believe it plays an essential role in the development of a comprehensive equal opportunities policy by

means of its opinions drawn up for the other committees and its legislative work as the committee responsible for considering the legislative initiatives proposed by the Commission in this area.

However, I would like to put forward a criticism - or, rather, a self criticism. The membership of the Committee on Women's Rights, with its overwhelming majority of women could be viewed as evidence of a degree of indifference on the part of male MEPs. This is perhaps a long standing tradition which needs to be overturned.

*What are your main priorities as President of the European Parliament?*

A fundamental priority is for the European Parliament to make an effective contribution to the success of the Union in tackling such major issues as enlargement of the Union, the introduction of the single

currency or the revision of the financial perspective. I can say now that it has played a very constructive role.

Within Parliament itself, I have given myself two main priorities. Firstly, to introduce transparency and rationality as regards the legal, political and economic rights and duties of the Members by means of a single statute or set of rules for Members and, secondly, to change the way in which Parliament's work is timetabled so as to allow Members to have much more contact with the electorate. I believe the Members themselves are the best people to put across Parliament's message. ●

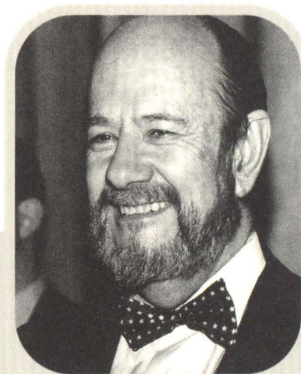


Photo: European Parliament

### Portrait of a President

**José-María Gil-Robles Gil-Delgado** was born in Madrid in 1935, the son of a politician. He spent most of his childhood and youth in exile with his parents in Estoril, Portugal.

In the *interview* he revealed that the greatest influence on his political career was his father, José-María Gil-Robles Quinones, a founder and president of the *Peoples Action Party* and the *Spanish Confederation of the Autonomous Right* and a Defence Minister during Spain's Second Republic.

His years in exile "meant that I grew up in a multinational environment which helped me with foreign language learning, and helped nurture the tolerance that comes from contact with people of different cultures and political ideologies." This experience, he said, "helped me to understand from a very early age that only democracy allows people to live with real dignity."

On his return to Spain in 1952 to study law, "I immediately became involved in clandestine political activity campaigning both for democracy and for European integration."

His political activities continued throughout his student life and after graduation where he combined his political life with that of a practising lawyer. He was a member of the executive of the Spanish christian democrats and Secretary general at their first party congress in 1977. Active in the Spanish wing of the European Movement, he entered the European Parliament in 1989.

His interest in European politics started at a young age. "The idea of democracy and the idea of Europe are very closely linked in the way my fellow citizens think and act. In Christian Democrat circles, this link was concrete proof that we had recovered our freedom and it was a guarantee we were not going to lose it again." He concluded "I see European politics as more than just an essential counterpart to national politics." ●

## Equal opportunities at the Commission

The European Commission adopted on 2 April 1997 its *Third action programme for equal opportunities at the Commission* to be implemented in its own services from 1997 to 2000. This programme builds on the "Second programme of positive action in favour of female personnel" which ended in 1996 and introduces a new "mainstreaming" dimension. This approach, reflected in the programme title, is an integral part of Community policy in this field. It aims to include in personnel management "male and female values and to take account of differences in attitude, priorities and specific needs linked to gender" by acting at a structural level through personnel policies, at a horizontal level through accompanying measures and at the level of different professional categories through "positive action."

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## The Diversity Dividend - Language, Culture and Economy in an Integrated Europe

The link between a well functioning economy and the promotion of cultural and linguistic diversity is clearly shown in this publication by the *European Bureau for Lesser Used Languages*. Examples and case studies from EU regions where minority languages are used in social and economic life illustrate the report's findings. It concludes with practical suggestions on how to promote cultural and linguistic diversity within the EU.

Available in English, French and Welsh from:

**The European Bureau for Lesser Used Languages**  
**Rue Saint-Josse 49**  
**B-1210 Brussels**  
**Tel.: (32.2) 218 25 90 - Fax: (32.2) 218 19 74**

## Investing in Knowledge

Major investments are needed in information and communication technologies at all educational levels if Europe is to prevent a "serious economic decline", warned the *European Round Table of Industrialists (ERT)*, a group of some 40 European industrial leaders. In a report called *Investing in Knowledge*, the *ERT* said technology must be firmly entrenched in European education systems.

The cost, which could be as high as 20 billion ECU to provide one terminal for every five pupils, should be shared between governments, industry and citizens.

Available from:

**European Round Table of Industrialists**  
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## An urban agenda for the European Union

An EU-wide debate on the future development of Europe's towns and cities has been launched by the European Commission with the publication of a Communication *Towards an urban agenda in the European Union*. In it, the Commission urges an integrated and coherent response to problems of urban unemployment, pollution, traffic congestion, poverty, exclusion, poor housing, crime and drug abuse.

It is clear, it said, "that new efforts are necessary to strengthen or restore the role of Europe's cities as places of social and cultural integration, as sources of economic prosperity and sustainable development and as bases of democracy."

Some 80% of EU population lives in cities and towns, making Europe the most urbanised continent in the world. This trend towards an increasing urbanisation of European societies is forecast to continue in the future although at a slower pace.

The Commission recommends better coordination of actions at local, regional, national and European level and the involvement of city associations and non-governmental organisations to tackle the regeneration of cities and address the "cumulative legacy of urban deprivation." The Commission said it plans to organise an Urban Forum in 1998 to discuss the outcome of this EU-wide debate.

Further information from:

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**Avenue de Tervuren 41**  
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## Equal treatment for part-time workers

An agreement between European trade unions and employers has established the principle of non-discrimination for part-time workers, the majority of whom are women, more than 10 years after the European Commission proposed legislation in this field. Under the agreement, part-time workers are guaranteed the same treatment in terms of pay, holiday and sickness benefits as their full-time colleagues as well as equal access to company organised schemes. Statutory social security provisions are not covered. This agreement, the second to be reached under the EU's social protocol, contains a firm commitment by both sides of industry to ensure part-time working is carried out on a basis acceptable to both employers and workers.

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## Joint action for refugees and displaced people

The European Commission has tabled proposals to introduce EU-wide minimum levels of protection and access to education, housing, social welfare and the labour market for refugees and displaced people seeking a temporary safe haven in the EU. This move came in the wake of the war in the former Yugoslavia when an estimated two million people fled their homes with some 800,000 people seeking asylum in the EU. Although most Member States offered some form of temporary protection, the rights, entitlements and benefits granted to refugees and asylum seekers varied greatly from one country to another. To prevent such a situation in the future, the Commission has proposed joint action so that Member States can decide together when they open up their borders to displaced people, for how long and what minimum rights they will offer.

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