

## Editorial

Concrete progress was made on EMU during the Amsterdam Summit and the Member States agreed on the resolutions to be adopted to proceed, on 1 January 1999, to the third phase of monetary union which will see the Euro becoming a fully-fledged currency. But is this really a monetary revolution for all citizens?

Women are both more reticent about adopting a European single currency and less well informed than men. Surveys reveal that the increase in positive attitudes recorded over the past few months on the single currency is clearly higher among men than among women. Consequently, a greater information effort targeting women must be made by the Commission.

The Commission's communication strategy on the transition to the single currency requires that responses are given to all questions, whatever their origin, public or private, and to explain to all categories of users and the different kinds of public the natural evolutionary process of the currency in Europe.

But women count also - and above all - on the media to be better informed. When their media "consumption" patterns are taken into consideration, the conclusions are that television, followed by radio and the print press have a particularly significant role to play in explaining to them what is at stake with EMU, to reassure them about its effects and inform them what arrangements to make.

Questions can be raised about women's scepticism and indifference to the single currency and whether they have been sufficiently involved in the preparation of EMU. Have their multiple roles in society, both in the social and professional spheres, not been under-estimated and led to the negative effects we see today? Has an information strategy been developed which is adapted to these roles? Have the macro-economic aspects of EMU not been highlighted to the detriment of its practical advantages? Are women effectively convinced that the single currency will contribute to combatting unemployment and boosting employment?

It is high time to communicate with women on a more realistic level and one that is closer to their everyday preoccupations as citizens. It is on this condition that the third phase of EMU can be approached with serenity and conviction by all European citizens. ●



Véronique Houdart-Blazy

Head of Section - Information for Women

## Citizens at the heart of the new Treaty

**The Amsterdam Treaty** adopted in June gives for the first time the European Union's human dimension the same importance as economic or financial concerns. Respect for fundamental rights and human rights, the right to high levels of employment, to equality of opportunity, to free movement, to decent standards of living, good health and a clean environment are in the Treaty either as new provisions or strengthened ones. But reactions to this new Treaty are mixed, as witnessed in a series of interviews given to *Women of Europe Newsletter* by women politicians and citizens (pages 2 and 3).

The Amsterdam Treaty sets a new legal framework for the European Union which makes social needs and civil rights more central to its functioning. Although some observers remain critical, the new Treaty is the result of a consensus reached between the 15 governments, even though there was serious disagreement amongst them concerning how much decision-making should take place at a European level and how much should remain solely with governments and the shape of EU policy itself.

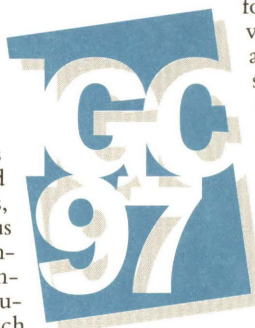
Within these political constraints, the Treaty represents an advance for Citizen's Europe. For the first time, an anti-discrimination clause gives the EU power to outlaw all discrimination based on "sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion and belief, disability, age or sexual orientation". This is in addition to an anti-discrimination ban on the basis of nationality.

The European Union also promises in the Treaty to respect the rights guaranteed in the 1950 European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.

### Equality of women and men

In a revised Article 2, Member States added "equality between women and men" as one of the missions of the European Union in addition to "a high level of employment and social protection, the raising of the standard of living and quality of life, and economic and social cohesion and solidarity among Member States". In Article 3, they state that in all actions and policies, the EU shall now "aim to eliminate inequalities, and to promote equality, between men and women". These additions to the Treaty give, for the first time, a firm legal basis for EU equality action affecting all policy areas and not just employment.

Modifications were introduced to Article 119 of the Rome Treaty to clarify the situation on equal pay and positive action. In the revised text, the now established principle of equal pay between women and men



for "equal work or work of equal value", is confirmed. The Council is authorised to adopt measures ensuring equal opportunities and equal treatment of men and women "in matters of employment and occupation", including pay.

Positive action measures offering "specific advantages" to women to make it easier "to pursue a vocational activity or to prevent or compensate for disadvantages in professional careers" are now allowed under the Treaty. But the provision that these measures should be limited to "working life" and be targeted not just at women but at the "under-represented sex", which in some cases could be men, disappointed many women's organisations. A declaration annexed to this Article says, however, that Member States "should, in the first instance, aim at improving the situation of women in working life" when adopting such measures.

### Employment given new impetus

A new Treaty Chapter on employment now promises that the Union will promote economic and social progress which is balanced and sustainable and a high level of employment and social protection.

Member States will cooperate in the development of their employment strategies. Joint guidelines will be drawn up annually and Member States will report on the principal measures they have taken to promote employment.

They will exchange information and best practice, provide comparative analysis, evaluate actions and promote innovation. What they do not plan to do is bring into line their laws and regulations concerning employment.

An Employment Committee with representatives from all the Member States will take over from the Employment and Labour Market Policy Committee (ELPC) set up in January this year to monitor the job situation.

# points of

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## Towards a people-centred Union

The new Treaty empowers the EU to ensure "a high level of protection and improvement of the quality of the environment" in all its policies so as to promote "sustainable development".

Strengthened commitment to protect the health, safety and economic interests of consumers features in the Treaty, reinforcing EU level action in this field. The EU can also promote the right of consumers to better inform, educate and organise themselves so as to safeguard their interests.

A series of new Treaty provisions also cover issues as wide ranging as sports, culture, voluntary work, animal welfare, the status of churches and non-confessional organisations, public service broadcasting and the abolition of the death penalty.

## Transparency in the mist

The Treaty specifies that EU decisions should be taken "as openly as possible and as closely as possible to the citizen" to make them more transparent. It grants citizens the right of access to documentation concerning decisions of the European Parliament, Commission and Council, even in sensitive areas.

But this right is conditional. The Council can put limits on the grounds of public and private interest and each institution can draw up its own rules and regulations regarding access to its documents. Member States can also request that documents relating to their country are not handed out without their prior agreement.

## Parliament's powers extended

To improve the democratic legitimacy of EU institutions, the European Parliament saw its powers of co-decision extended to 23 areas from the 15 provided for under the Maastricht Treaty.

This gives the Parliament an equal say with the Council in decisions concerning areas such as job creation incentives, equal opportunities and equal treatment (Article 119), public health, transparency, the fight against fraud, customs cooperation, certain aspects of free movement, training, social policy and environmental protection.

## Flexibility now a possibility

The much debated idea of allowing certain Member States to move ahead faster in certain policy areas without being hampered by a minority of reluctant governments is now in the Treaty.

But the possibility for such "closer cooperation" is couched in careful terms and is subject to strict voting procedures. It is in the field of police and judicial co-operation that Member States are given the greatest freedom to move forward at a different tandem than their colleagues. ●

*The Commission's DGX has published a citizen's guide to the Treaty entitled:*

**A new Treaty for Europe**

*The guide is available from European Commission representations and offices in the Member States or on the internet:*

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

**Lydia Zaid, a journalist at EUDIF, a Women's European network of documentation and information, would have liked the Treaty to have made equal**



Lydia Zaid

Photo: EUDIF

**opportunities a right which goes beyond employment related issues.**

*Are you satisfied with the new Treaty's equal opportunities provisions?*

There has been some progress but my general assessment remains negative. Progress has been made as a result of Articles 2 and 3 which means that equality is now written into the Treaty. This is an important gain. But the problem is that it is not evident how this will be put into effect. Everything will depend on the political will of the Member States and of the European Commission. The Commission can use Articles 2 and 3 in a dynamic way, integrating equality actively in all fields of Community action. It can also reinforce its mainstreaming policy through evaluation and monitoring of EU actions and laws.

On the issue of equal pay, the new Treaty provisions are very positive. They meet completely the demands of women's organisations as the principle is clearly stated that there should be equal pay for equal work or work of equal value.

*What other provisions would you have liked to have seen included?*

There was agreement among women's organisations that equality should have been recognised as a fundamental right covering all areas of life leading to equal status and parity. Regrettably, the Treaty has stuck to the more classic and traditional mould of an anti-discrimination approach which depends on progressive and corrective measures. In the past, this has not succeeded in achieving substantial equality.

The provision on positive action also poses a problem. It states that positive action measures can be taken in favour of the "under-represented" sex. This is both restrictive and ambiguous. The Treaty also places positive action firmly in the professional sphere and does not extend it to other areas. We

## Main advances of the Amsterdam Treaty

### Freedom, Security and Justice

- EU action possible to outlaw discrimination on grounds of gender, race, religion, sexual orientation and age
- Sanctions can be taken against Member States violating human rights and fundamental freedoms
- Free movement of people guaranteed throughout the EU but with the UK and Ireland retaining border controls
- Unanimity required for at least five years on decisions concerning immigration, visa policy and asylum

### The Union and the Citizen

- New Chapter on employment providing for coordinated strategies on employment at EU level
- Social Protocol incorporated into the main body of the Treaty
- Principle of equal pay extended to "work of equal value"
- Positive action in the workplace authorised
- Citizens to have better access to documents unless Member States oppose disclosure

### An Effective and Coherent External Policy

- Council's Secretary General to represent EU foreign policy together with the current Council President

### The Union's Institutions

- Agreement in principle that the Commission should have only 20 members after enlargement, with one member per state
- More co-decision powers for the European Parliament

### Closer Cooperation - "Flexibility"

- Some Member States can decide to move ahead faster than others in limited areas

# view

## 1 reactions to the new EU Treaty

would have liked to see a broadening of the scope of positive action.

By locking positive action measures into the "under-represented sex" category, there is also a risk of jeopardising equality policies and measures developed in Scandinavian countries because these explicitly target women.

*What is your opinion on the Treaty's non-discrimination provision?*

It is better than nothing. The problem is that it is conditional. On the one hand, actions can only be taken if there is unanimous agreement. Secondly, it has no direct effect, unlike the ban on discrimination based on nationality. Finally, its formulation does not oblige Member States to take action to combat discrimination but leaves it up to them to decide. ●

## Progress slow

**Claudia Roth**, a Member of the European Parliament and President of the Parliament's Green Group, remains critical of the IGC and finds the new Treaty could have gone further in protecting citizen's rights.

*Do you think the Amsterdam Treaty has brought the EU closer to its citizens?*

First, for me, it should not be called the Amsterdam Treaty but the revised Maastricht Treaty. This is because a promise was made to review the mistakes and deficits of Maastricht I. One of these shortcomings was that the Union was not a Union for its citizens. We were promised that the IGC would bring the Union closer to its citizens. This has not yet happened.

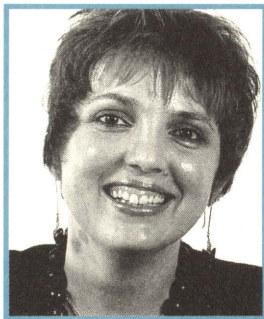
One example is the Treaty's Chapter on transparency. First it states that any EU citizen has a right to access EU documents. But then it goes on to say that each EU institution can lay down its own specific rules concerning access. A declaration accompanying this Chapter also gives Member States the right to ask the institutions concerned to refuse access to documents originating from their country. It is always one step forward and two steps back.

*What are the most important advances for EU citizens, particularly women, in the new Treaty?*

Women are mentioned in several parts of the Treaty but the provisions are weak. I do not feel anything has substantially changed. Let's look at the amendments to Article 119. There is nothing new in them. These are lifted from the Social Protocol. Equal rights and equal opportunities are reduced to the workplace and that is not enough. The

question of the role of women in society remains unresolved.

The famous anti-discrimination article should have been stronger clearly excluding all types of discrimination irrespective of their source.



Claudia Roth  
Photo: European Parliament

The same can be said for employment. The inclusion of an employment Chapter is to be welcomed. But, if you examine it closely, there is no guarantee that anything will come out of it. All that is promised are "incentive measures" or "exchanges of experience". I hope that the unemployment Summit in Luxembourg will give better results. Let's be clear, the Chapter is more than just lip service. It is a promise for action but it does not bind Member States and that's a problem.

*Are you satisfied with the European Parliament's role and the scope of its new co-decision powers?*

No. More co-decision power is given in some important fields. But Parliament should have been given a real say in home affairs, in foreign affairs, in security questions, in monetary and economic union, in the structural funds, all social policy, taxes, and the environment. ●

## Lip service to equality

**Gertrud Wartenberg**, President of the European Women's Lobby (EWL), explains her organisation's reaction to the new Treaty. The EWL had lobbied constantly during the IGC talks to



Gertrud Wartenberg  
Photo: European Women's Lobby

strengthen the equality provisions of the Treaty.

The Lobby welcomes the fact that equality has been enshrined in Articles 2 and 3 but we are disappointed by the lack of a clear commitment to equality. All in all, I would say

the Treaty of Amsterdam is not a woman friendly Treaty.

We repeatedly called for a firm legal basis that would guarantee equality in all areas of life. Judging by the Treaty provisions, governments viewed equality in the workplace as a sufficient objective.

The inclusion of positive action in the Treaty will be helpful in the future. We can rely on it. But what is really troubling us, is its reference to the 'under-represented sex'. We wanted the word 'women' here instead. This reference could result in dangerous situations for women. Take for example a shop with 20 women employees and one man who is the head. He becomes the under-represented sex. We will have to watch how this situation develops.

We expected from the Treaty a clear commitment to positive action measures and we don't have this. We consider this to be a fundamental right.

The IGC process and the Treaty have done nothing to harmonise relations between policy makers and citizens. The gap is wide and getting wider. ●

## Committee on Women's Rights

**R**epresentatives of the advertising industry urged a continuation of current self-regulation rules on the portrayal of women at a hearing on discrimination against women in advertising, organised by the Committee on Women's Rights in June.

Mr Arke d'Anethan from the *World Federation of Advertisers (WFA)* said the industry was aware that 70% of purchases were made by women. "Responsible advertisers" had no wish to offend one half of their potential customers, he said. Advertising was after all consumer led and had to respond to changing attitudes and concerns.

But many MEPs remain sceptical. Marlene Lenz (PPE, Germany), author of the Committee's report on the industry, said advertising was increasingly aggressive often distorting the image of women and young people. Many MEPs joined her in condemning the use of anorexic-looking young women or images of very young girls which, they said, risked provoking child sexual abuse. They also criticised the industry for focusing on women as purchasers of household products which "fixed them in the role of housewife and mother".

Stricter controls on advertising with a tough EU code of conduct for the industry

were demanded with some wanting to go further by putting in place a clear legislative framework.

But Dr Oliver Gray, Director-General of the *European Advertising Standards Alliance (EASA)*, which coordinates 23 self-regulatory bodies, said at the hearing that a EU-wide survey of his members revealed there were few complaints on this issue. In most Member States, he said, only 5% of complaints received between 1992-1995 were related to the portrayal of sexes. But in three countries - Austria, Spain and Germany - complaints were much higher between 25% to 50%.

In defence of his members, he said that in many Member States the self-regulatory bodies had specific rules concerning the portrayal of the sexes. In addition, all his members adhered to the advertising code which specifies that advertising "should avoid endorsing discrimination based on race, religion or sex".

### Mainstreaming and equal opportunities

The Committee debated Angela Kokkolla's (PSE, Greece) report on mainstreaming. Proposals were made on how to strengthen the role of the Structural Funds so that they can take account of the promotion of mainstreaming. MEPs stressed that mainstreaming should not replace specific policies for promoting equal opportunities.

An initial exchange of views was held on a draft report by Marie-Paule Kestelijn-Sierens (ELDR, Belgium) on the Commission's annual report on equal opportunities. Although she welcomed the report as a "useful tool", she said it lacked statistics, evaluation and analysis and failed to mention major areas of concern such as violence against women, women and health and the environment. ●

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## infos

### Recognising women's health

The first comprehensive review of the state of health of the European Union's 191 million women, just published by the European Commission entitled *The state of women's health in the European Community*, shows that women in the EU continue to enjoy a high level of health and can now expect to live beyond their eightieth birthday, well over six years longer than men. The report, looks at health problems which mainly affect women such as eating disorders and osteoporosis as well as diseases traditionally associated with men, such as heart disease and HIV/AIDS, to which women are increasingly vulnerable. It said to a large extent, the two major causes of women's mortality (heart disease and cancer) are preventable through primary (healthier life styles) or secondary prevention (early detection through, for example, screening). It concludes by saying that because of biological, social and other reasons, women's "health concerns are different from those of men, and that deserves recognition." ●

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### "Silence is cancer's best friend"

This is the slogan of this year's European Week against Cancer which targets women. Throughout the week of 6-12 October, the campaign in all Member States will seek to make women more aware of the importance of early detection of breast and cervical cancer and encourage them to participate in screening programmes organised in their areas. These particular forms of cancer are curable if detected early enough but many women are still reluctant to talk about them or be tested for them. Television, radio and the press will play a key role in this information effort. ●

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### Women inventors celebrated



A prestigious prize ceremony is planned this year as part of a series of celebrations highlighting the achievements of contemporary women inventors. The event will mark the 130th anniversary of the birth of Marie Curie and is organised by the *International Federation of Inventors' Associations - Women Inventors Network (IFIA-WIN)*. The ceremony will take place in November, in Warsaw, the city where Marie Curie was born. *UNESCO* and *WIPO* (*World Intellectual Property Organisation*) will present prizes to top woman inventors. *ANVAR*, the French Research Agency, will also present an innovation prize to a French woman who has combined the skills of an entrepreneur with being an inventor. As part of the celebrations, *UNESCO* is minting a special Marie Curie Medal. ●

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