

Women of Europe

commission

"Agenda 2000": outlook for the development of the EU

Editorial

This issue of *Women of Europe Newsletter* looks at the future of Europe and, on the eve of a new millennium, its future shape, substance, institutions and policies. This allows us to look forward to a stronger, more caring Europe and one which is more social, more cultural and perhaps, in the final analysis, closer to its citizens.

In signing this last editorial before taking on other responsibilities within the Commission, my conviction is that women with their motivation, their perseverance, their determination to invest in the public sphere, will become players in the new model of European society which will be based on a true democracy.

But first and foremost democracy means information. This is why it is important to inform and explain current European affairs to women, to report on the work of the institutions, to contrast different and opposing political, economic, social, cultural tendencies before decisions are taken at Community level.

The information we provide should be a real instrument of learning and understanding what exactly is at stake in the construction of Europe. It should be disseminated and reverberate in such a way that its echoes lead women citizens to become involved in this future society and union on an equal footing with men.

The enlargement of the Union is going to lead to an even greater diversity at the level of individuals and ideas. Difficulties will arise notably in the field of equality of opportunity where references may not be the same, where laws may be worlds apart, where daily life may be different from the life we know. But, in spite of this, I am convinced that women, East or West, North or South, will nonetheless overcome all these obstacles and, in addition, will be able to take advantage of this rich diversity.

I have faith in Europe and in women...

Véronique Houdart-Blazy
Head of Section - Information for Women

The European Commission unveiled its communication "Agenda 2000," its comprehensive response to a request from the European Summit in Madrid in December 1995 to provide a broad outlook for the development of the European Union and its policies beyond the turn of the century. This Communication looks at the impact of enlargement on the Union as a whole, examines some of its key policy areas such as the Common Agricultural Policy and the Structural Funds and looks at the future financial framework beyond 2000. Its contents are marked by the prospect of an enlarged Union of over 500 million people stretching from the Baltic to the Balkans and from the Atlantic to the Aegean.

Presenting "Agenda 2000", European Commission President Jacques Santer said the EU needed to "set about adapting, developing and reforming itself" to prepare for enlargement. This, he said, represented "a historic turning point for Europe (...) an opportunity which it must seize for the sake of its security, its economy, its culture and its status in the world".

The Commission set the Communication against a background which it considers a broadly positive review of European integration from the 1986 Single Act to the Treaty of Amsterdam in 1997 and which takes account of both internal and external future challenges. But, it stressed, the real successes of the Union over this period should not "obscure the difficulties" such as the "unacceptable level of unemployment" which had made Member States' own budget and structural reforms harder to accomplish.

To smooth the transition to the 21st century and a wider Europe, the Commission recommends tighter rules on aid under the Cohesion Fund, a revamp of the Structural Funds and financial reforms to maintain economic and social cohesion. The prospect of enlargement encompassing new countries with widely diverging levels of development makes this more necessary than before, it commented.

A complete overhaul of the EU's Common Agricultural Policy is proposed which will build on previous reforms to transform it into a system relying on world market prices and direct income aids.

The Commission considers the time is ripe for a fully operational foreign policy which, accompanied by the Single Currency, will make the EU a key financial player and important leader on the world arena. This has to be accompanied by internal

changes. The institutional reforms left over from the last round of IGC talks must be tackled, the Commission said.

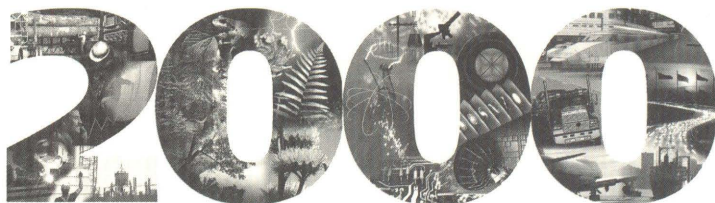
Between now and the year 2000, the Commission proposes that the political decision is taken concerning the reweighting of votes in the Council of Ministers and the reduction in the number of Commissioners to one per Member State. A new Intergovernmental Conference (IGC) is urged after the year 2000 to agree these remaining reforms before the first wave of enlargement takes place at the beginning of the next century. Improvements in the Commission's management, co-ordination and monitoring capacities are also planned, to make it

more efficient and at the service of European citizens.

"Special attention must be given to the growing participation of women in the world of work and society and to changing family patterns," according to "Agenda 2000". The suggested reforms would ensure the best possible conditions to welcome more than 100 million new EU citizens which would give "a new impetus" to the development and integration of the European economy and a European cultural diversity which represents a "source of creativity and wealth".

Expansion to the East ...

The bulk of the 1,300-page "Agenda 2000" is given over to the Commission's assessment of applications for EU membership from 10 Central and Eastern European countries (CEECs). Its opinions are based on the three criteria for accession laid down by EU heads of state in Copenhagen in



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June 1993. This means that applicant countries must show they have:

- the institutional stability necessary to guarantee democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities;
- a functioning market economy and the capacity to cope with competitive pressure and market forces within the EU;
- the ability to take on the obligations of membership including adherence to the aims of political, economic and monetary union.

The Commission concluded that only five CEECs - Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Estonia and Slovenia - would be in a position early next year, in addition to Cyprus, to begin negotiating membership. But it is ultimately EU heads of state, meeting for their bi-annual summit in Luxembourg in December, who will say which countries will be allowed to join.

... but nothing about gender

In an interview with *Women of Europe Newsletter*, Birgitta Ahlqvist (PSE, Sweden), who is reporting on enlargement for the Committee on Women's Rights, said references to women and equal opportunities were few and far between. In its assessments of applicant countries, the document reduces this whole issue to "a couple of sentences telling us that legislation on equal opportunities is in place." But "this is not enough," Birgitta Ahlqvist said.

The Commission admitted that although "adequate" equal treatment legislation already exists in the Central and Eastern European countries applying for membership, this was no guarantee. "Enforcement is severely hampered by the unequal way which present difficulties affect women and men."

The Commission warned that support for a broad social policy could be weakened in the EU as a whole if new countries did not adapt their legislation sufficiently to EU law. "Further development of Community policies (equal opportunities, labour law, co-ordination of social security schemes) could be hampered," it said.

Birgitta Ahlqvist agrees with this observation but wants the Commission to use the negotiations to push for action. The issue of equal opportunities and social policies should become an important part of the pre-accession talks, she said.

The Commission's assessment "tells us nothing about the situation or the reality of the lives of women in these countries." For example, she said, "in Eastern European countries, people are being told how important it is for the development of children and for family life that the wife and/or mother stays at home. Women are even being offered incentives to stay at home."



Birgitta Ahlqvist
European Parliament

A study published in 1996 by the European Parliament's Directorate General for Research entitled *Central and Eastern Europe Women: A Portrait* confirms this. Although legal equality for women as workers is still enshrined in law, "women's rights per se still remain absent from political agendas." It added "much of pre-Communist gender

stereotypes have resurfaced and women are once again being positioned in their customary roles as caretakers of the young and old".

Birgitta Ahlqvist stressed the importance of properly informing all women. "Women in applicant countries should be told about the positive and negative aspects of joining the EU. Awareness raising and information campaigns are vital."

"I personally do not feel that monetary and economic union is the most important question," she said. "Working closer together on issues such as equal opportunities, education, training and culture would be of much greater mutual benefit." ●

A number of resolutions and opinions were adopted during the July and September meetings of the European Parliament's Committee on Women's Rights. They concern the European Commission's first annual report on equal opportunities between women and men, its Green Paper on relations between the EU and ACP (African, Caribbean and Pacific) countries and discrimination against women in advertising. A wide range of other topics were also discussed at length including the Commission's 5th framework programme for research, technological development and demonstration activities (see below our interview with Eryl M. McNally).

Keeping a watch on advertising

The report by Marlene Lenz (PPE, Germany) on discrimination against women in advertising was adopted by a large majority. The report calls for stricter checks on advertising to stop the demeaning portrayal of women. It recommends portraying a more

interview

Seeking women: 5th framework programme for research & tech

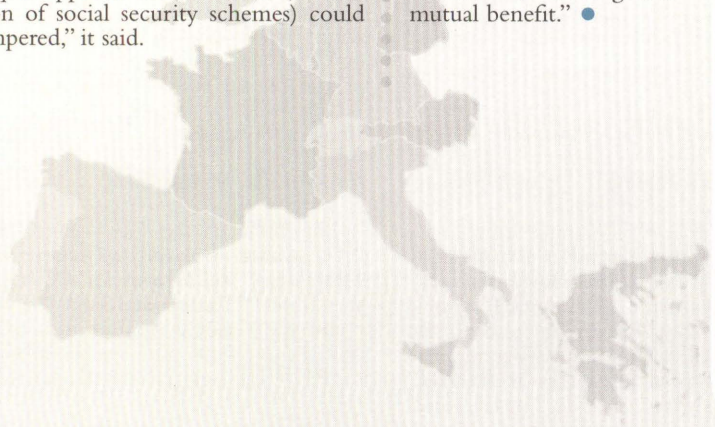
The European Commission's proposed 5th RTD framework programme worth 16 billion ECU (see Newsletter No 71) is now being examined by the European Parliament and Council of Ministers. In an interview, Eryl Margaret McNally (PSE, UK), who is drafting an opinion for the Committee on Women's Rights, explains her position.

"I am extremely disappointed at the lack of an explicit reference to women and equal opportunities in the 5th RTD programme", said Eryl McNally emphatically. "The words 'mainstreaming', 'equal opportunities', 'gender perspective' or 'equal rights' do not appear once in the proposal." It is difficult to see how women can feel they will be "taken into account in the research being done in their name at EU level".

For her, the concept of mainstreaming means "not sidelining women's issues into a ghetto but incorporating them as part of the general flow". But this will not happen unless the people drafting documents make a "determined effort". She warned against the other extreme of "unnatural and ridiculous attempts" to include mainstreaming in all policies at all costs "for reasons of political correctness."

The 5th framework programme is now being examined by the Council of Ministers and the Parliament. Eryl McNally is optimistic that it is still possible to influence its content and introduce changes. She wants to see a specific reference to equal opportunities and the extension of areas of research to cover those of particular interest to women such as health and reproductive health and related ethical issues.

The whole area of information technology research in the programme needs careful examination said Eryl McNally "to see it is designed with a gender balance in mind". She will be call-



Committee on women's rights

realistic image of women which reflects their important role at work, in the family and in public life. Marlene Lenz said the report's recommendations were trying to achieve a balance between the freedom of the advertising world and respect for the dignity of women.

Green paper on EU-ACP relations

The lack of gender considerations in the Commission's Green Paper on relations between the EU and ACP (African, Caribbean and Pacific) countries, and its complete disregard for mainstreaming, represented a "10 year set-back" for gender in EU development policy, said Sergio Ribeiro (GUE/NGL, Portugal), who is drawing up the Committee's report on it. Like many Committee members, he was critical of the paper, which was prepared as part of the forthcoming review of the Lomé Convention. He said it focused too much on trade and investment and ignored women's role, their economic contribution and the violation of their fundamental rights, notably their reproductive and sexual rights.

The guidelines on gender and development, drawn up and adopted by EU development ministers in 1996 (see

Newsletter No 61), seem to have been forgotten by the Paper's authors, said Sergio Ribeiro. Development aid had to target women, who must also be involved at all stages in the design, implementation and evaluation of projects and programmes, including in drawing up and renegotiating Lomé.

Women's rights suffer because of low status at work

Women dominate the EU's low paid, low status and precarious jobs with serious consequences on their social security rights and training opportunities.

Finding themselves in the least protected jobs, many women have to depend on rights derived from their spouses to have access to social protection systems. The problem is accentuated by the fact that these systems continue to be based on the model of the man as the main breadwinner, said Maria Sornosa Martinez (GUE/NGL, Spain), whose opinion on modernising and improving social protection systems in the EU was adopted by the Committee. Her report calls for the introduction of a "universal system" giving individual rights to all citizens, women and men. She said there is an urgent need for social protection systems to take account of women's specific situation. The report also calls for measures to improve women's access to the labour market and facilitate the possibility to combine work and family life. One recommendation is EU legislation laying down minimum provisions for access to childcare.

Women's status at work also has consequences on their training opportunities. As the majority of part-time and atypical workers, they are excluded from many continuous training programmes. Commenting on a Commission report on access to continuing training, Jessica Larive (ELDR, the Netherlands) warned against a labour market that views women as an economic resource to be drawn on in times of labour shortages rather than as a human resource with the same rights as men to gain new skills. She said vocational training is still assessed on its short-term economic merits, particularly in terms of competitiveness, focusing on sectors dominated by men. In sectors employing a majority of women such as public administration, health and

education, training opportunities are more limited.

Balancing flexibility

The need to strike the right balance between flexibility and security contained in the Commission's Green Paper on the organisation of working time was welcomed by Committee members. The paper is the beginning of a wide consultation procedure on the shape of future labour markets. The Committee made clear that improved flexibility must not be achieved at the expense of those in work.

Karin Jöns (PSE, Germany) criticised the agreement reached on part-time workers by the EU's social partners as "weak" (see *Newsletter No 73*). She is drawing up a report on this agreement for the Parliament's Social Affairs Committee. She feared the agreement would do nothing to improve the situation as it allows Member states too many exemptions.

1998 budget criticised

Lissy Gröner (PSE, Germany), who is drafting an opinion on the Union's 1998 budget, examined to what extent the two guidelines laid down by the Committee - to promote specific actions targeting women and ensure mainstreaming is applied effectively - have been taken into account. A greater awareness of mainstreaming was needed in the Commission, she concluded. "Men as much as women must work towards equal opportunities", she said, recommending raising gender-awareness among all those responsible for designing and coordinating programmes. She criticised the Council for slashing the proposed budget for the Fourth Action Programme on equal opportunities from 10 to 6 million ECU and called for the original amount to be reinstated.

Trafficking in women

Sue Waddington (PSE, the UK), rapporteur for the Committee, supported the STOP and DAPHNE programmes proposed by the Commission to combat trafficking in women and children. She recommended increased resources, a legal base for DAPHNE and a sharper focus on victim support and preventive measures. She also urged the introduction of hefty sanctions against those found guilty of trafficking. She said equal support should be given to projects dealing with trafficking in women and those concerning the sexual exploitation of children. ●

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Eryl Margaret McNally
European Parliament

Technological development

ing for special attention to be paid to older women "who currently suffer from lack of access to new technologies because of past discriminations".

She expressed concern for women scientists and researchers who miss out badly in mid-career because of family commitments. They risk losing out on the programme's extensive provisions encouraging the mobility of researchers if "efforts are not made to meet their needs, to cover childcare expenses or to provide additional grants if they travel with children".

In the field of SMEs and innovation, one of the programme's priority research areas, she said women creating their own businesses often show "great originality and determination" despite obstacles. These women should be given better access to results of the latest research in their area of activity and to funding. "Europe's jobs are no longer going to come from heavy manufacturing and unless we appreciate that innovation covers much more than new materials, too often the focus of RTD, we will not crack Europe's no. 1 problem which is unemployment."

Eryl McNally said a better and wider public education and information effort was necessary to encourage women to apply for funds.

"There is a need for more monitoring, analysis and evaluation of this programme, involving women, to ensure women's concerns and needs are being addressed," Eryl McNally concluded. "So far no genuine attempt has been made to include gender in EU research and development programmes. It is high time this happened."

Culture programmes now on course

After long negotiations, two EU cultural programmes were adopted by the EU Council of Ministers. ARIANE, which aims to promote literary creation, translation, books and reading, was granted a 7 million ECU budget for an operating period of two years (1997-1998). RAPHAEL, which aims to support and supplement Member State activities in the field of cultural heritage, will run for four years (1997-2000) with a budget of 30 million ECU. The Commission has been asked to submit a proposal by May 1998 for an overall framework programme to ensure the continuity and further development of EU action in this field. ●

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Women of fishing families to receive support

The European Commission has launched a pilot programme, worth 4 million ECU, to explore possible further action to improve the situation of families who depend for their income on small-scale coastal fishing, an activity of major socio-economic importance in EU coastal regions. The programme aims to assist fishermen and their women family members who play a key role in the business side of the activity. For the fishermen, actions can focus on training, representation structures and exchanges of experience. Projects targetted at the women can help them set up business structures and cooperatives, train them in accounting, marketing and management, or support exchanges of experience. Projects are currently being selected and will have to be implemented within 18 months. ●

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Age becomes her, older women in the European Union

The latest *Women of Europe Dossier* looks at the situation of older women in the European Union. With increasing numbers of women living into old age (one in four women were aged over 60 in 1992), older women are set to represent an important segment of the population in years to come creating new needs and new challenges for our societies. This *Dossier* explores the roles older women play, their attitudes to and perceptions of age and aging, their health and social needs. It also looks at some of the prospects for the future. ●

The *Dossier* is available in all official EU languages.

To obtain a copy, contact :

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More women at work now and in the future

Women will continue to be the main source of employment growth in years to come, according to the European Commission's 1997 *Demography Report*. It based this prediction on women's activity rates which have increased sharply over the last 30

years. The growing importance of work for women, said the report, "means that, more than ever before, the question of equal opportunities is a fundamental dimension of economic and social change". A separate study entitled *Youth in the European Union*, published by Eurostat, the Statistical Office for the European Communities, confirms demographic predictions that women are having fewer children and having them much later in life. It revealed that only 57% of young women aged 15-24 consider it "essential" or "very important" to have a child compared to 74% of women in the 40-54 age group. Young people, particularly young men, are living longer with their parents and increasing numbers of youngsters aged 15-24 are living in one-parent families (over 20% in the UK and Finland). ●

The 1997 *Demography Report* is available in all official EU languages from:

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DG V - Documentation Centre

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Youth in the European Union:

from education to working life is available in English and French from:

Eurostat Data Shop

Rue Joseph II 121, 3/235

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Changing the image of women on television

The Prix Niki was created by the European Commission in 1988 in response to a proposal from the European Parliament. The prize is awarded to national public or private television stations for programmes which provide an insight into the situation of women today and which focus attention on women's efforts to play an equal and active part in society. Over 90 entries from some 28 countries have been received for this year's prize. Three awards will be presented to programmes in three separate categories: fact, fiction and programmes for children aged 6 to 12. The awards ceremony will be held on 1 November in the Greek city of Thessaloniki, this year's European Capital of Culture. It will be transmitted live by the Greek regional television channel ERT3. The Commission is also organising a two-day Prix Niki conference, *Changing Images - Changing Attitudes*, also to be held in Thessaloniki on 31 October and 1 November. The conference is aimed at programme and policy makers in broadcasting. ●

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