

Women of Europe

European Commission Delegation

Women and science

Edith Cresson, Member of the European Commission responsible for science, research, education, training and youth

Edith Cresson spoke to *Women of Europe Newsletter* at the two-day conference jointly organised by the European Commission and the European Parliament in Brussels in April and outlined her plans for the future.

After the first conference on this subject in 1993, it was time to analyse the ground covered and to define specific actions to be taken. Current events within the European Union are particularly propitious. At a time when the 5th Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development is under discussion within the Council of Ministers, I felt that it was important to analyse in depth the equal opportunities di-

mension, one of the European Union's priorities for 1998. The structure, approach and content of the programme were sufficiently flexible to integrate such priorities.

I have listened carefully to women scientists present at the conference, to their concerns and proposals. I share many of their expectations. As a woman, I too have had similar experiences in the world of politics. From these two days of debate, I have retained two things in particular: the pressing requirement to produce reliable statistics regarding the participation of women in scientific careers - this aspect is essential if we are to base our actions on an objective reality, and the need for a strong drive to encourage women to take part in European research programmes.



Edith Cresson
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pendent or isolated entity. Its first task will be to assemble concrete data on women in the world of science. This body will also endeavour to form balanced research teams and to ensure the significant presence of women in the consultative and advisory bodies, for example in the new "advisory groups", which will be called on to evaluate projects within the 5th framework programme. In order to make Member States aware of these questions, I will also produce a Communication on the subject of "Women and Science" before the end of the year. This Communication will cover not only the question of women in research systems but will also deal with educational aspects. The conference has proved that prejudices against women in science exist as early as the school years.

I hope that in this way European research will be able to make the most of the tremendous potential represented by women, with their different sensitivities and creativity. ●

Editorial

This month we have invited Commissioner Edith Cresson to outline the conclusions of the highly successful Women and Science conference held recently in Brussels and ways in which the gender imbalance in this field can be redressed.

We also look at a survey grouping women's differing attitudes towards the European Union into broad categories, ranging from the *sympathisers* to the *sceptics*, and the different factors which can influence and form women's opinions.

The place given by the European Commission to women at its decision-making levels is paramount to improve its own image in the public eye: the appointment of a Commission's Spokeswoman is no doubt the best way to prove its commitment to equality.

Finally, we look at an issue gaining an increasingly high profile on the political agenda: violence against women, and the measures that the EU is taking to combat it.

Thank you to those who have returned the survey. If you have not yet done so, please return it by the end of July. ●

Ana Paula Laissy.

Ana Paula Laissy

Head of Section - Information for Women

poll

Women hold wide-ranging views on the European Union

Opinion polls measuring feelings towards the European Union have generally shown women to hold a less favourable opinion than men. A Eurobarometer report tried to go further by measuring the degree of support or opposition amongst women. It revealed that not all women share the same opinion when it comes to the EU.

By analysing further a series of questions asked in the Eurobarometer survey, five groups of women were identified: *sympathisers*, *pragmatics*, *middle-of-the- roaders*, *undecideds* and *sceptics*.

The report reveals that over a quarter of Europe's women are *sympathetic* to and want a strong and large EU deciding on policy issues. One in five women, the *pragmatics*, consider the EU represents a positive devel-

opment but are reluctant to give it full decision-making powers. The *middle-of-the- roaders* make up 14% of the women interviewed supporting some actions and not others. 22% are *undecided* and when they do have an opinion, it is usually negative. The remaining 19% are *sceptics*.

Strongest EU support amongst women is found in Italy and Luxembourg (scoring 66% of *sympathisers* and *pragmatics*), followed

by the Netherlands (57%), France (53%), Spain (52%), Greece (51%), Belgium (49%) and Ireland (43%).

In seven Member States, the *undecisives* and *sceptics* outnumber EU supporters. These are the UK (60%), Sweden (54%), Austria (53%), Portugal and Finland (both 50%), Germany and Denmark (both 46%).

Who's who...?

The analyses show that *sympathisers* and *pragmatics* have much in common. The majority of both groups are under 40 years-old, likely to be well educated, place themselves to the left or centre-left of the political spectrum and rank themselves above average in opinion leadership qualities. They are more likely to be self-employed, hold managerial or professional positions (36% for *sympathisers*, 37% for *pragmatics*) and less likely to be housewives (22% and 19%, respectively).

The *undecisives* tend to be older, have left full-time education earlier, are more likely to be manual workers or retired, do not know where to place themselves on the left-right political scale and are less likely to be opinion leaders. The *sceptics* comprise the oldest and least educated group. They are either retired or housewives, are more likely to be right of centre and score lowest on the leadership index.

About Eurobarometer

This report on women's attitudes to the European Union is one of the many prepared by the Public Opinion Analysis Unit in DG X, the European Commission's Directorate-General for Information, Communication, Culture and Audiovisual.

The Unit deals with several different surveys and research instruments, among them the Standard Eurobarometer (EB) survey, which forms the basis of this particular study. EB surveys are representative of the EU population in the 15 Member States. The EB has been carried out between 2 to 5 times a year since 1974 and consists each time of about 1,000 face-to-face interviews per country. For the study on women, all female respondents on the EB 47.1 survey (fielded in the spring of 1997) were included in the analyses.

The Unit is headed by Anna Melich who, prior to joining the European Commission in 1988, was a professor in Political Sciences at the University of Geneva, Switzerland. She has headed the Unit since 1994. The report on women was written by Daphne Ahrendt who was a survey researcher in the Netherlands and the UK before working at the Commission.

The study can be downloaded from the European Commission's Internet site:

<http://www.europa.eu.int/en/comm/dg10/infcom/epo/eb/eb47/typology.html>

The *middle-of-the-roaders* are a bit older than pro-Europeans but significantly younger than anti-Europeans, more likely to be white collar workers or unemployed, range from left of centre to right of the political spectrum and rank themselves below average or very low on the opinion leadership scale.

... and what are their views?

The *sympathisers* are more supportive of new countries joining the Union than other groups. Nine out of 10 *sympathisers* believe that the EU should have a common defence and military policy, compared to only 66% of other women, and 3 out of 4 agree that the euro should replace national currencies.

Almost as many *pragmatics* (74%) also support the introduction of the euro, although fewer support enlargement. They are also more likely than other women to know how the EU is organised and works. They are more supportive of their country's membership of the EU (67%, against 63% of *sympathisers*) and more likely than other groups to think their country has benefited from EU membership (63%, against 51% of *sympathisers*).

From the *undecisives*, who feel ill informed about the EU, only 7% say they know "very well" or "quite well" how the EU works. But less than 2 in 10 of this group feel they need to know more while 38% are happy with what they already know. Support among the *undecisives* is also low on the introduction of the euro (64% against and 20% who don't know) but high for a common foreign policy (68%).

A high 34% of women *sceptics* fear European integration more than problems such as AIDS, poverty, racism or unemployment in Europe. Most hold negative views about the EU with under 40% supporting a joint EU defence policy, under 30% a joint foreign policy and under 20% the single currency.

The tendency amongst *middle-of-the-roaders* is to accept the existence of the EU, and recognise the benefits of membership. They are against a joint defence policy (59%) and more likely to oppose a common foreign policy. 59% of this group are against the introduction of the euro. ●

employment

Women's "employability" takes centre stage

An informal meeting of the 15 European Union ministers responsible for Equality and for Women's Affairs was held in Belfast in May, to discuss how to improve women's 'employability'. The ministers promised to meet at least once a year in the future.

Improving employability and equal opportunities for women and men on the labour market were two areas singled out for action in the employment guidelines agreed at the November Jobs Summit. But at the Belfast meeting ministers warned, "much more needs to be done" to improve

women's employability and to help them balance their work and family lives.

Women account for the largest increase in employment in Europe in recent years but in many countries more women than men are unemployed, or work in precarious jobs. Their average earnings are generally lower than men.

A further difficulty, said the ministers, was the "unequal share of family and caring responsibilities" which can make it difficult for women to compete for jobs on equal terms with men.

Commissioner Flynn (left) with European Union Ministers responsible for Equality and Women's Affairs at the Belfast meeting

© John Harrison Photography



Focus on care

They promised more "affordable, accessible and high quality childcare, parental and other leave schemes as well as family-friendly working policies" to overcome some of these barriers to work.

A progress report on the implementation by Member States of the 1992 Childcare Recommendation,

published in February by the European Commission, showed that it had reinforced the debate in Member States. The 1998 employment guidelines were expected to result in real improvements in childcare provision.

Mainstreaming essential

Mainstreaming equality into all employment policies at both national and EU level was also essential, said ministers at the Belfast meeting, so that measures adopted to improve employability and support the unemployed took the rights and needs of both women and men into account. They recommended facilitating access to training and employment in all areas of the labour market for women and further action to promote equal opportunities and equal pay. They asked the Commission to ensure gen-

der mainstreaming was reinforced in the 1999 employment guidelines.

The meeting ended with a promise by ministers that individually they would work to ensure women's employment needs were better addressed in their own countries. They said a joint meeting of Social and Women's Affairs Ministers in July, under the Austrian Presidency, should provide a further opportunity to ensure that "women's interests are at the heart of the EU, and of national employment strategies".

National action plans provoke a spate of pre-Summit activity

By late April the European Commission had received all the national employment action plans as promised in December 1997

by EU Heads of State and Government, as part of an EU co-ordinated effort to combat unemployment.

European Commission President Jacques Santer and Commissioner Flynn unveiled an initial assessment of these action plans on 13 May and Social Affairs ministers discussed them at a meeting on 4 June, prior to the Cardiff Summit on 15 June.

The European Women's Lobby also organised a women's employment summit, in Cardiff on 5 June, focusing on the gender perspective of employment and employment creation. Recommendations from this meeting were presented to the Cardiff Summit of Heads of State and Government on 15 June. ●

parliament

Committee on Women's Rights

A number of employment-related issues were discussed at the Committee's April meeting. Fiorella Ghilardotti (PSE, Italy) welcomed the extension of the burden of proof directive to the United Kingdom but regretted the three-year time limit for its implementation. Astrid Lulling (PPE, Luxembourg) reported on the conclusions of a mini-hearing held in January on the European Court of Justice's ruling in the Marschall case.

Co-operatives can improve women's employment, both in terms of quantity and quality, according to Paola Colombo Svevo (PPE, Italy) who is preparing a report for the Committee on this issue. They play an important role in the social economy and their wide presence in the business world means they can make a real contribution to women's labour market integration. Ms Svevo wants the Commission to evaluate jobs created by the social economy and look at how entrepreneurship can be developed in these sectors.

Nel van Dijk (Greens, the Netherlands) welcomed the Commission's Communication on the state of women's health in the EU but said it had three main shortcomings: there was no data on health differences between women and men, no conclusions had been drawn and no policy statements made on actions to be taken in the future. Her suggestion that the Commission should now put forward an action programme to promote women's health won the Committee's support.

An opinion by Heidi Hautala (Greens, Finland) urged greater access for migrant women to health services, education and training and a strengthening of their rights.

The idea by Hadar Cars (ELDR, Sweden) to set up a Mainstreaming Monitoring Board to oversee and promote equality on all Parliament Committees was supported

Action urged to combat violence against women

A petition launched by Lissy Gröner (PSE, Germany) collected some 350 signatures calling for 1999 to be designated European Year Against Violence Against Women. This came at the same time as a European Parliament declaration on this issue was sent to the European Commission and the Council of Ministers.

In its declaration, Parliament repeated its call, expressed in a September 1997 resolution, for a campaign of zero tolerance of violence against women, and urged the Commission to initiate it. In response, European Commissioners Anita Gradin and Pádraig Flynn are co-organising a series of events in 1999 including a conference on 8 March on violence against women and a major conference in November 1999.

At the end of May, the European Commission adopted a Communication concerning measures relating to violence against children, young persons and women. One of the purposes of the Communication is to encourage Member States to contribute to the campaign against violence towards women which the Commission, in conjunction with the Council of Ministers, is preparing for next year.

The Communication proposes an extension of the DAPHNE programme for the years 2000-2004 with a budget of 25 million ECU. This programme was launched in 1997 with 3 million ECU and was given a

further 3 million ECU in 1998. It aims to prevent violence against children, young persons and women, protect potential victims and provide rehabilitation support by promoting exchanges of experience and good practice and creating or strengthening networks of non-governmental organisations working in the field. Another European Commission programme, STOP, addresses the problem of trafficking in human beings, particularly women and children, by providing support for those responsible for combating the phenomenon, namely the police, judiciary and customs officials. ●

European Parliament: mobilising for an assembly with more women

Women are starting to prepare for the next European Parliament elections, which will take place between 10 and 13 June 1999 in all EU Member States. A joint appeal by EUDIF, a Brussels-based women's information and documentation centre, and the European Women's Lobby, called for equal participation of women and men in all areas of political, economic, monetary and social decision-making.

Women make up just over 27% of European Parliament members, a figure that is still higher than in many national parliaments. Only Sweden, with 40.4%, Finland (33.5%), Denmark (33%) and the Netherlands (31.3%) have more women parliamentarians. France with 10.9% and Greece (6.3%) have the fewest.



Martine Reicherts

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Woman appointed to top Commission press post

Martine Reicherts, from Luxembourg, has been appointed head of the European Commission's spokesman's service, the first woman ever to hold overall responsibility for providing information on European Union affairs to the world's press. A lawyer by training, Martine Reicherts has worked for the Commission since 1984. Starting in DG XII (research and development) and DG XXI (indirect taxation), she subsequently became advisor to Commissioner Jean Dondelinger, responsible for the audio-visual aspects of the Internal Market and legal questions, and assistant to the Director General of DG III (industry) from 1990-92. In 1993, she joined the cabinet of Agriculture Commissioner René Steichen as deputy head where she worked until 1995. She then became an advisor to President Jacques Santer and by 1996 was appointed deputy head of his cabinet. The appointment of a woman to this prestigious job reflects the current trend at the Commission to raise the number of women in decision-making posts.

Another woman, Maria Conceição Van Dunem, has just been nominated as spokeswoman for João de Deus Pinheiro, European Commissioner responsible for relations with developing countries.

More women (30) than men (26) were appointed heads of unit or advisors in the period from 1 January 1997 to 1 January 1998 in the Commission, bringing the percentage of women in these posts to 14.9%, compared to 13.5% the previous year. ●

Better guarantees in sight for consumers

European consumers are set to enjoy improved after-sales service and a two-year guarantee on all new or used goods bought in another Member State. This follows the backing by European Union Consumer Ministers of a European Commission proposal to strengthen and harmonise consumer rights. When the legislation comes into force in 2002, EU consumers who have purchased a defective good will be able to ask the seller to have it replaced or repaired free of charge, for a price reduction or their money back. For new goods, consumers have to lodge the complaint within two years of the date of purchase but for second-hand items the seller's liability period may be reduced to one year if agreed by both parties. The ministers also approved a proposal granting consumers the right to take action in the courts of another Member State. ●

EU law documents available on-line

The European Commission has launched a new on-line service, EUR-Lex, providing direct and free access to EU documents and legislation. Initially, EUR-Lex will give free public access to documents published in the last 20 days under the 'L' and 'C' series of the Official Journal of the European Communities, the EU's founding Treaties, legislation in force and recent judgements of the European Court of Justice. By the end of 1998, users will also have access to all preparatory legislative texts and texts accompanying the legislative process. ●

The multi-lingual site is updated daily and can be found on the EU's Internet site:

<http://www.europa.eu.int/eur-lex>

Marcelle Devaud: itinerary of a French woman politician

A new book has come out on Marcelle Devaud, one of France's pioneering women politicians who played a key role in advancing the rights of women in France and at European and international level. Since 1960, she has worked closely with the European Commission to promote women's equal rights at work and in society and has represented France at the United Nations and the Council of Europe. The book is written by Victoria Man and published by Editions Eulina Carvalho. ●

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agenda

Gender and Human Settlements Conference

10 - 12 June 1998

Hameenlinna, Finland - Eurofem

Fax: (358.9) 667 675

E-mail: info@tsgcongress.fi

Eurofem homepage:

<http://www.htk.fi/hml/Eurofem>

Conference on Mainstreaming Sex Equality in the Public Sector

22 June 1998

London - UK Presidency event

Contact: Equal Opportunities Commission

Customer Contact Point, UK

Fax: (44.161) 835 1657

E-mail: info@eoc.org.uk

European Forum on Social Policy

24 - 26 June 1998

Brussels - European Commission (DG V) event

Fax: (32.2) 295 37 36

E-mail: info@dg5.cec.be

Internet:

<http://www.europa.eu.int/socialforum98>

Informal Joint Council - Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities

10 July 1998

Innsbruck - EU Council event - under Austrian Presidency

Know How Conference on the World of Women's Information

22 - 26 August 1998

Amsterdam - International Information Centre and Archives of the Women's Movement (IIAV)

Fax: (31.20) 66 55 812

E-mail: knowhow@iiav.nl

Internet:

<http://www.iiav.nl/knowhow/index.html>

Based on information available at time of going to press