

Women of Europe

Commission Delegation

W

survey

Editorial

In the last issue, Ana Paula Laissy promised you a detailed analysis of the survey we carried out on the *Women of Europe Newsletter*. I am arriving in the Section to replace her just as we are presenting a breakdown of your suggestions and comments. On this occasion, I would like to greet you and say how delighted I am to be given the opportunity to become involved in the Information for Women Section.

Your criticisms, which were positive and constructive, will help us to improve the *Newsletter*, both from the point of view of content and presentation. We will do our best to provide a rapid response to your suggestions.

Finally, I would like to congratulate Beatrice Rangoni Machiavelli who has just been nominated President of the new Economic and Social Committee. While giving her our support, we wish her every success in her new role.



Olga Profili

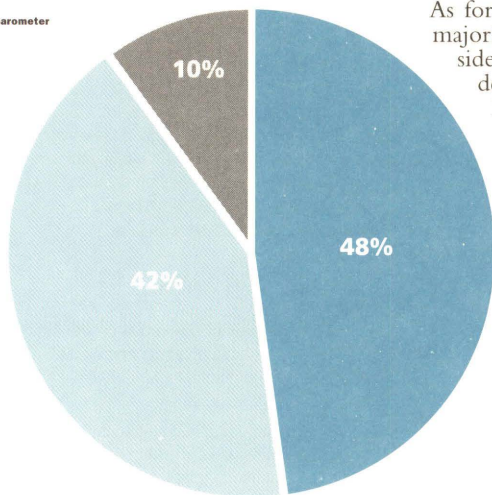
Olga Profili

Head of Section - Information for Women

Does the Newsletter provide useful information for ...?

- your daily life
- your professional life
- both

Source: Eurobarometer



Readers rate Newsletter highly

A total of 1205 Women of Europe readers filled in and returned the questionnaire included with the May and June issues of this Newsletter. Reactions to the presentation, format, contents and periodicity of the Newsletter were globally positive. Readers' suggestions and comments are being taken into consideration to ensure the Newsletter can respond even better to their information needs.

Most of the survey respondents are women, with a median age of 45 years, who are professionally active (only 3% of those who replied said they had no professional activity). Many work in NGOs, women's associations or in academia. An estimated two to three people were reported to read each copy of the *Newsletter*.

The vast majority of respondents (90%) said they found the *Newsletter* useful for their professional lives. Researchers, documentalists or librarians and those from the academic world found the *Newsletter* most useful for

professional purposes while just under half of self-employed women, women working in journalism, in NGOs or in women's associations found it useful for both their professional and private lives.

Bigger and bolder!

Most respondents rated the general presentation (colour/typeface) and layout highly with six in 10 people believing it was excellent or good. Respondents in the 18 to 30 year-old age group were the most positive. Amongst the suggestions made for improvements were bigger and bolder characters and the use of colour photographs to give the *Newsletter* a "less official" look.

As for the 4-page format, again the vast majority (83%) of those who replied considered it satisfactory. Some respondents said, however, that they would like additional pages to accommodate more in-depth articles.

The current periodicity of 10 issues a year was "about right" for 81% of respondents while 13% felt it was "not often enough" and 6% "too often"! Among the suggested alternatives were making it a quarterly or bringing out five or six issues per year.

Clarity essential

The majority of those surveyed said the information contained in the *Newsletter* was clear (69%). Only 4% said it was unclear. A breakdown by age group and language revealed slight differences, however. Nearly eight in 10 respondents in the 18 to 29 year age group thought the information was clear as opposed to 65% of the 50-59 year age group.

The information was considered clearest by 86% of those reading the publication in one of the four southern languages of the EU, but less clear by those reading it in French (79%), English (69%), the Scandinavian languages (58%) or Dutch and German (56%).

Just over half of respondents said they would be prepared to read the *Newsletter* in another language than their own. English emerged as the preferred alternative language followed by French, Spanish, German and Italian.

Coverage expanded

Some 70% of respondents said they would like more coverage of social issues or national questions concerning women and just under half wanted more on cultural issues. Over 50% thought the coverage of economic and political issues and subjects relating to the third world and science was about right. Some respondents recommended more in-depth coverage of these issues.

The inclusion of a regular column profiling or interviewing women who have played a role in promoting women's affairs or who have "something new" to say was also suggested as was a regular letters to the editor section. Some readers recommended reporting on prominent women in EU Member States while others suggested more coverage of women in the third world.

As for improvements to the *Newsletter's* five main sections, 72% of respondents wanted to see the "Infos" further expanded and 53% the "Agenda". Events featured in the Agenda should be announced earlier and followed-up afterwards, some suggested. Up to 75% of respondents said the

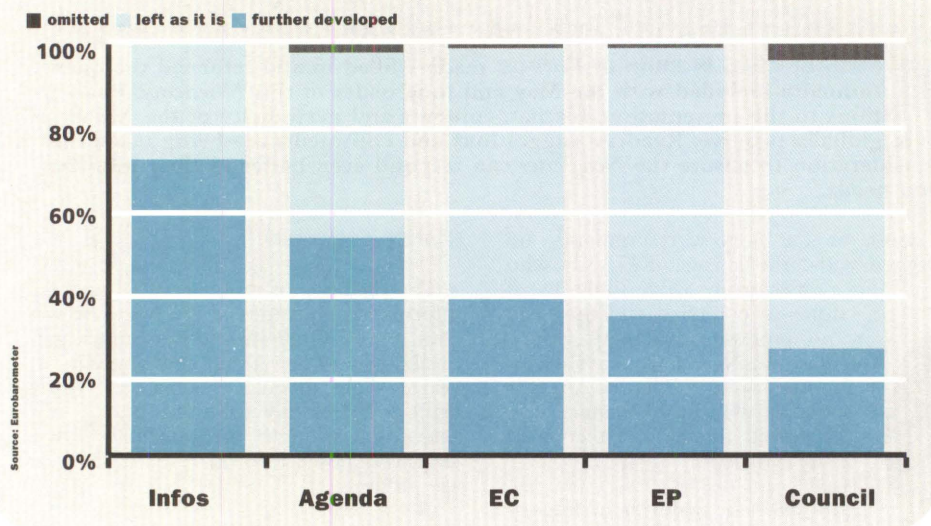
Council, Parliament and Commission sections should be left as they are.

Yes to a website, no to replacing printed Newsletter

The survey revealed widespread interest in a women's information website with 86%

of readers saying they would find it useful and 61% that they would take part in discussion forums/debates on the site. However, respondents said this site should "in no way replace the printed Newsletter". ●

How would you like to see each of the following sections developed in the future?



commission

Equality - a major component of all future policies

Two major forward-looking conferences on equal opportunities were organised by the European Commission in September.

"Equality is the future"

Over 500 people attended this conference and exhibition, organised as part of the 4th medium-term action programme on equal opportunities. The event aimed to highlight the Community's equal opportunities policies as well as the achievements of the action programme, particularly the work of projects, expert groups and researchers.

Opening the event, the European Commissioner in charge of Social Affairs, **Pádraig Flynn**, said that the combined commitment to equal opportunities in the EU's employment strategy and the funding power of the revised Structural Funds were "a powerful set of tools for equal opportunities" in the future.

Commission President **Jacques Santer** and European Parliament Vice-President **Antoni Gutiérrez Díaz** opened the exhibition displaying the work of projects co-funded under the programme, European Commission products and publications on equal opportunities and some 20 stands rep-

resenting different equal opportunities organisations from the Member States. In a statement, President Santer said the event reflected the Commission's deep attachment as well as his own personal commitment to promoting equal opportunities between women and men.

During the discussions in six thematic workshops over the two days, a number of pointers were outlined for future work on equal opportunities in the fields of mainstreaming, equality law, equality in the media, the employment market, women in decision-making and the reconciliation of work and family life. A report on this conference will be available in the new year. ●

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A new drive for equality in the Structural Funds

On 13 to 15 September, over 300 people from across the EU met in the small seaside town of Viana do Castelo in northern Portugal at the invitation of the Portuguese government and the European Commission. The meeting aimed to evaluate what

had been achieved since the 1996 Brussels conference on promoting equal opportunities between women and men in the Structural Funds.

The presence of **Monika Wulf-Mathies**, European Commissioner responsible for regional policies, and **Pádraig Flynn**, European Commissioner responsible for employment and social affairs, as well as several Portuguese ministers, notably **João Cravinho** and **Eduardo Ferro Rodrigues** provided an excellent stimulus for the creativity of the proceedings.

Eight thematic workshops focusing on the one hand on the specific needs of women (in urban and rural development, entrepreneurship and on the labour market) and, on the other, on implementation procedures (programming, monitoring and evaluation, partnerships, access to information) resulted in a large number of proposals and suggestions being put forward for the next programming period (2000-2006).

They included:

- the need to continue collecting information and carrying out research to better identify the needs, expectations and potential of women in regional development. "A better identification of the problems and a clear formulation of goals for equality in regional programmes already contributes to solving them."
- the use of new development indicators, taking better account of existing links between different sectors of activity, local participation or the quality of negotiation at social level
- the use of some of the technical assistance credits provided for in the programmes or the design of new financial tools to help small groups initiate projects and create, in this way, "support structures that allow new ideas to be developed and put into practice"

The extension of partnerships to include administrations and organisations in charge of women's affairs suggested by the Commission in its proposal for Structural Fund reform raised expectations among participants. Obtaining a place in the consultation process "before, during and after" the implementation of the regional development plan is likely to make the promotion of equality more effective.

The phrase by Commissioner Wulf-Mathies "without the inclusion of those responsible for a region's well-being and identity, regional development cannot prosper" was widely confirmed. ●

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parliament

Women in society, employment and development

Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) called for more national and EU-level action to tackle the problems faced by single mothers and unemployed women during the September plenary session. Recommendations were also made to promote the job-creating potential of enterprises in the social economy and women's cooperatives. Parliament reiterated its call to integrate gender into all EU development policies.

In the EU, there are nearly seven million lone parents with dependant children, an increase of 9% on 1983 figures, representing 14% of all families with dependent children, according to a recent Eurostat report.

Between 80% to 90% of single-parent households are headed by women according to estimates contained in the report by **Ludivina García Arias** (PSE, Spain). The majority of these parents are in a "very vulnerable situation", she said. In its resolution, Parliament called for improvements in Member State tax, social security and housing policies to help single parents as well as changes to legal systems and practices obliging both parents to fulfil their responsibilities towards their children. It urged assistance to single parents to be included in the eligible criteria for the revised Structural Funds.

"Never have there been so many women in work, but never have there been so many women out of work" said **Elena Marinucci** (PSE, Italy) in her report on the impact of unemployment on women. In its resolution, Parliament called for a wide range of measures to boost women's employment and a re-definition of what constitutes unemployment. A lot of emphasis was placed on better training access for women, including in-company training for part-time workers. To strengthen legal provisions, it wants to see a framework agreement on all forms of atypical work and a framework directive on childcare services. It also urged the individualisation of social protection rights and improvements in Community provisions for parental leave for women and men, with "proper payment" during the leave period.

Cooperatives and social economy enterprises play a pivotal role in job-creation, said **Maria Colombo Svevo** (PPE, Italy) in her report. These companies, often run by women and employing many women, combine economic goals and entrepreneurship with social provision. Parliament backed her report calling for the promotion of the social economy as part of the EU's overall employment strategy. It urged a strengthening of the legal framework for such enterprises and better financial incentives and support including through the European Social Fund.

Reacting to the Council of Minister's commitment to integrate gender issues into all aspects of development cooperation (see *Newsletter No 81*), **Karin Junker** (PSE, Germany) wanted to strengthen the proposed Council regulation by ensuring that financial resources for this work are not limited to a five-year period (1999-2003) as proposed and that a greater proportion of funds for operational development cooperation projects are used for measures specifically targeting women. Adopting her report, the Parliament agreed with these changes. ●

Committee on Women's Rights

Barbara Prammer, the Austrian minister for women's affairs and consumer protection, addressed the Committee in September outlining the Austrian Presidency's priorities for women. As part of the effort to increase women's employment, she said she

wanted a stronger equal opportunities dimension in the EU's employment strategy. Other areas that the Presidency would be working on included the promotion of women in information and communications technologies, tackling violence against women and looking at the issue of equal opportunities in countries seeking to join the EU.

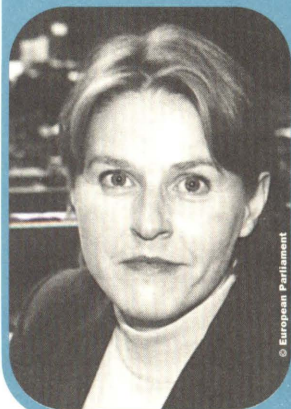
fishing industry also needed better recognition and support.

Anna Karamanou (PSE, Greece) introduced her opinion on the proposed 5th Research and Technological Development Framework Programme calling for greater priority to be given to equality and regretting that gender had not been given the attention it deserved. Member States should appoint more women to scientific committees, she said.

The Committee supported a suggestion by **Astrid Lulling** (PPE, Luxembourg) that the Commission should withdraw its proposal to amend the directive on equal treatment for women and men and re-table a new proposal once the Amsterdam Treaty has been ratified. An opinion by **Thomas Mann** (PPE, Germany) on the Commission's social action programme (1998-1999) and a report on the 1999 budget by **Lissy Gröner** (PSE, Germany) were also adopted. ●

New Committee president

Heidi Hautala (Greens, Finland) has replaced **Nel van Dijk** (Greens, the Netherlands) as chair of the Committee on Women's Rights. Heidi Hautala was elected to the European Parliament in 1996 and has been a member of the Women's Rights Committee since 1997. She is first Vice-President of the Parliament's Green Group and also a member of the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs and Industrial policy.



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“Europa – eine Chance für die Frauen”

Written by Hilde Albertini-Roth, who worked at the Women's Information Section for 17 years, this book (Europe, an opportunity for women) looks back over 20 years of the women's information service and the development of equal opportunities policies in the EU. Published in German only. ●

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Women's Rights and the Treaty of Amsterdam

Published by the European Parliament's Directorate General for Research in its *Women's Rights Series*, this report offers an analysis of the implications for women's rights of the Treaty of Amsterdam. It includes a comprehensive overview of Community law on equal treatment for women and men including the texts of the relevant Directives plus European Court of Justice case law in this field and an extensive bibliography. Available in English, French, German, Spanish and Italian. ●

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Committee has new woman president

Beatrice Rangoni Machiavelli was elected President of the new Economic and Social Committee (ESC) which took office in October. The Committee's 222 members are nominated by Member State governments every four years and represent three socio-economic groups: employers, workers and "other interests", an umbrella of a wide range of interests extending from farmers to lawyers and consumers. Beatrice Rangoni Machiavelli has presided this latter group since 1990. An Italian national and a journalist by training, Ms Rangoni Machiavelli was editor of the weekly *La Tribuna* magazine for 10 years and acted as Italian correspondent for the *Women of Europe Newsletter* for many years. ●



Beatrice Rangoni Machiavelli

Women's support for euro at all time high

With only a few months to go before the arrival of the single currency, approval for the euro has reached its highest level since the European Commission's Eurobarometer unit started measuring support for it in 1993. The Eurobarometer opinion poll (No 49), carried out in April and May 1998, revealed that 60% of EU citizens were favourable to the euro against just over 50% in the autumn of 1997. The gap in support levels between women and men is also narrowing with 56% of women now in favour (against 46% last year) and 65% of men (57% last year). Support is highest (66%) among those living in the 11 countries due to introduce the single currency on 1 January 1999, particularly in Italy (83%) and Luxembourg (79%). ●

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Pregnant worker's dismissal discriminatory

A pregnant woman cannot be dismissed because of a prolonged absence due to complications arising from her pregnancy, according to a ruling by the European Court of Justice (ECJ). Mary Brown, who was unable to work because of pregnancy-related complications, was fired because the terms of her contract stipulated that she would be dismissed if she took sick leave for more than 26 weeks continuously. After unsuccessful legal action challenging her employer's decision, the case was referred by the British House of Lords to the ECJ. In its ruling, the Court said contracts that gave employers the right to dismiss workers after a stipulated length of absence could not apply in cases of pregnancy. Such a dismissal can affect only women and therefore constitutes direct discrimination on grounds of sex. ●

Case C-394/96

Mary Brown v. Rentokil

A copy of this ruling can be downloaded from the Court's Internet site:

<http://www.curia.eu.int>

Women key players in services

Nearly 80% of all working women in the EU are now employed in the services sector compared to 16.3% in industry and 4.2% in agriculture. But despite the huge majority of women in the sector, certain service activities remain male-dominated, according to two reports published in September by Eurostat, the EU's statistics office. Personal services (89.7%), health and social work (75.7%) and education (65.8%) employ mostly women. But car sales, car servicing and repairing, sewage treatment or refuse disposal remain a male preserve.

A separate five-country survey also revealed that the software and computer services industry is not woman-friendly. The percentage of women employed in this sector ranged from 21.4% in the Netherlands, 31% in the UK, 32.6% in Finland, 35% in Spain to 48.1% in Italy. ●

Eurostat, Statistics in Focus,

Distributive trade, services and transport

No 8/98 "Employment in Services"

No 9/98 "Business service statistics:

software and computer services"

Available from:

Office for Official Publications, L-2985

or from national sales points

agenda

Women's Entrepreneurship

30 November-2 December

Stockholm, Sweden

NUTEK event in collaboration with the European Commission

Fax: (46.8) 19 68 26

IST 98: Living & Working in the Information Society

30 November-2 December

Vienna

European Commission and Austrian Presidency event

Fax: (32.2) 299 19 26

Internet: <http://www.cordis.lu/ist98>

Training 2000

3-4 December 1998

Brussels

European Commission event

Fax: (33.1) 43 67 79 00

Based on information available at the time of going to press