



COMMISSION  
OF THE EUROPEAN  
COMMUNITIES

Jean Monnet House  
8 Storey's Gate London SW1P 3AT  
Telephone: 071-973 1992  
Fax: 071-973 1900

ISEC/15/92  
26 November 1992

**PRESS RELEASE**

**WOMEN OF EUROPE AWARD**  
**BRITISH WINNER**

**EMBARGO: FOR AUTOMATIC USE AT 12.00 HOURS, 26 NOVEMBER 1992**

Valerie Strachan, Deputy Chairman of HM Customs and Excise, has won the 1992 UK Woman of Europe Award, it was announced today (Thursday).

The presentation was made by Helena Kennedy QC at the offices of the European Commission, 8 Storey's Gate at 12.00 noon. UK President of the Women of Europe Award, Alison Parry, together with MPs, MEPs, journalists and other guests attended the award ceremony hosted by John Drew, Head of the Commission's UK offices.

The Women of Europe Award was set up in 1987 under the auspices of the European Commission, the European Parliament and the European Movement. The UK winner is chosen by a jury of national media journalists with special interests in European and women's affairs.

The Award is presented each year to a woman whose contribution in the past two years to promoting the interests of Europe in Britain and of Britain in Europe has been both valid and topical; and whose devotion to Europe is beyond the call of duty, not solely dependent on professional activities. In short, the winner is a woman with a "European state of mind".

Valerie Strachan is the driving force behind the openness and positivism with which HM Customs and Excise has embraced the Single Market programme. As well as leading the UK negotiating team on indirect tax affairs in Brussels, and the implementation team in the UK, she has had the responsibility for motivating the 26,000 Customs and Excise staff to rethink all aspects of their work including an attitude to Customs work ingrained over the centuries; in all a daunting task in 1992, the year of the final push towards a barrier-free Europe.

Within Customs and Excise, Valerie has led a transformation of attitudes, creating a modern department, fully conscious of its European responsibilities. Customs and Excise aims to approach European issues in ways, which, while respecting the national interests of all Member States, also promote co-operation and the sharing of skills. Valerie has aimed to build up good relations with other European customs and fiscal administrations and has supported the growth of staff exchange schemes.

Valerie is a model of pragmatic British commitment to the idea of an open Europe, an exceptional official, open-minded yet dedicated, friendly yet firm.

Valerie will join national winners from the other eleven Member States tomorrow for the overall European Women of Europe Award to be presented at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office at 6.00 pm by the Minister of State, the Rt Hon Tristan Garel-Jones.

Valerie's CV is available from this office or from Lorna Sinclair Tel: 071-865 5665 / 5468 or Fax: 071-865 5625.

For further information on the Women of Europe Award and suggestions for nominations and sponsorship for 1993, contact Alison Parry, Tel: 081 891 1021 or Fax: 081 744 1980.

\* \* \* \* \*



**WOMEN OF EUROPE AWARD  
UK WINNER**

Women of Europe Award  
Prix Femmes d'Europe  
Preis Europäische Frauen  
Vrouwen van Europa Prijs  
Premio Mujeres de Europa  
Premio Donne d'Europa  
Prêmio Mulheres da Europa  
Europæiske Kvindes Pris  
Βραβείο Γυναίκων της Ευρώπης

**VALERIE STRACHAN  
Deputy Chairman of HM Customs and Excise**

Valerie Strachan was educated at Newland High School, Hull and Manchester University before joining HM Customs and Excise as a graduate trainee in 1961. She went on to work in several UK government departments, including the Department of Economic Affairs, the Home Office, the Treasury and the Cabinet Office.

From 1985 to 1987, Valerie headed the joint Treasury/Cabinet Office unit which led the programme of financial management reforms for the Civil Service.

Valerie Strachan represents the United Kingdom on a top level group of officials of Member States charged with the achievement of the Single European Market in fiscal affairs. She travels extensively to other Member States in order to advance the group's work in solving the practical problems of indirect taxation, the mainstay of the Single Market.

Within Britain, her responsibilities include ensuring that British businesses are prepared for the customs and indirect taxation aspects of the Single Market. Valerie has directed a vigorous publicity campaign to make UK businesses aware of the effects of the Single Market.

Both by example and as a policy-maker, Valerie Strachan has also worked to advance the position of women in the public service. She is one of only 11 women in Grade 2 of the UK civil service and the only woman to have reached that level from Customs and Excise. She has helped establish networking organisations for women in Customs and Excise and in the public service as a whole to help women realise their talents and overcome their sense of isolation. In 1991, Valerie was awarded the honour of the Companion of the Order of the Bath (CB), becoming one of the very few women to be admitted to this senior public service order.

Valerie Strachan is married with two children.

\* \* \* \* \*