

## EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

### COMMITTEE ON WOMEN'S RIGHTS

The European Parliament's Committee on Women's Rights met in Brussels on 30 November and 1 December 1993 with Christine Crawley (PSE, United Kingdom) in the chair.

#### Activity report of the Belgian Presidency on equal treatment for women and men

The report was presented to the Members of Parliament by Miet Smet, Belgian Minister for Employment, Labour and Equal Opportunities. Outlining all the work of the Council (Social Affairs), Miet Smet reported on the directives on equal opportunities blocked in the Council since the end of the eighties, namely parental leave and the reversal of the burden of proof. Since these directives must be adopted unanimously, they could not be ratified in the face of the opposition from the British Government. The situation could be summarized as follows: the United Kingdom could accept the text of the directive on parental leave only if it included a derogation confining it to mothers. The Belgian Presidency requested the United Kingdom to try to reach an agreement during the Greek Presidency. It should also be noted that Luxembourg formulated a reservation given that its legislation in this field differs from that laid down by the Community directive. The directive on the reversal of the burden of proof in matters of equality between women and men is also blocked; the United Kingdom considers that its legislation is adequate to guarantee the rights of the victims of discrimination.

Miet Smet drew the meeting's attention to the seminar on "Equal pay for men and women", which had been held in Brussels during the Belgian Presidency at the end of October 1993. During the seminar, Mr Pádraig Flynn announced that the Commission was shortly going to adopt a Memorandum on equal pay for men and women. A majority of the participants in the seminar expressed the hope that the Commission, once it had adopted the Memorandum, would prepare a code of conduct for equal treatment in the systems used to evaluate and classify jobs. In this context, the Minister sets store by the pressure which Parliament can bring to bear on the Council, more especially during the Greek Presidency.



# WOMEN OF EUROPE NEWSLETTER

Dear Reader,

*On a proposal from Mr Pádraig Flynn, Member of the European Commission, the Commission has approved a Green Paper on the future of European Social Policy (see Women of Europe Newsletter No 35). The Green Paper is intended to provoke a wide-ranging debate on this subject in all the Member States. The basic issues are to know what kind of society we want in Europe and what measures and policies must be implemented at European level to achieve it. These issues are real challenges at a time when European social policy is entering a critical stage. Europe is at a turning point. With the ratification of the Maastricht Treaty, the Union has made a great stride forward. While Europe is coming increasingly closer to the citizen, European solidarity is necessary to ensure that European social policy should not be based on the idea that social progress takes second place to restoring economic competitiveness. The decisions taken on the eve of the 21st Century will determine social policy for many years. The Green Paper is a basis for studying the options to be considered as European social policy enters a new phase. It is the product of several contributions from the Member States, other bodies and a few individuals. The European Women's Lobby and the Advisory Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, amongst others, have made their contribution. The decisions to be taken affect all citizens, both women and men. Women should therefore make their opinions known now. They should contribute to the Green Paper and thus to the future of European social policy.*

*Anne-Blanche Haritos*

Anne Blanche Haritos

#### Address by Colette Flesch, Director-General of DG X

Colette Flesch was invited by Christine Crawley to give the Committee an account of the restructuring of DG X, (Information, Communication, Culture and Audiovisual Media). She described the new approach set out in the communication from Mr João de Deus Pinheiro, Member of the Commission, while emphasizing that information should be transparent, consistent, relevant and user-friendly. The new structure is based on the new approach; the Citizens' Desk in the General Public Unit will mainly provide information for women. Women will also be given some priority in other units such as "Information relays and networks", "Trade unions and social affairs" and "Fairs, exhibitions and publicity" etc. She confirmed that a multi-annual plan "Information for Women" (1994-95) would be presented to the Committee in February.

Christine Crawley opened the debate by expressing her concern about the dissemination of "Information for Women" which, according to her and several Members of Parliament, would create a coordination problem. In reply Ms Flesch reassured the audience: it was obvious that "Information for Women" would have a high profile and that the Citizens' Desk would be for women as well as for men. She also stressed the importance of cooperation, both with women's networks and associations and at national level.

Several Members of Parliament underlined the importance of having special information for women. They requested that the Commission take measures in view of the elections to Parliament and that a media campaign be mounted to make known the women candidates standing for election in June 1994.

Ms Flesch stated that the Commission and Parliament had no plans for joint action on the elections since Parliament had abandoned the idea, but the Commission would give the elections its attention during the first half of 1994. It was preparing regional brochures which could include references to "Information for Women".

Finally, she promised to reconsider the matter of republishing the "Women of Europe" magazine and called on the Members of Parliament in the Committee to work within their political parties to have women candidates put forward in the 1994 elections.

#### Progress reports

Raymonde Dury (Soc, Belgium), rapporteur on the opinion on the membership applications from Norway and Finland, stressed that the women of these countries were concerned about joining the European Union. Current opinion polls show that 57% of Norwegian women would say no to membership of the European Union. This opposition appears to stem from the fact

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Norway offers more social protection to women and has more policies geared to women's needs than most of the countries in the Twelve. Norwegian women are much better represented on political bodies than women in the twelve Member States. In Norway, 38% of the members of parliament are women and the country has a woman prime minister. Raymonde Dury emphasized the need to assure Norwegian women that their legal rights would not be curtailed following accession to the European Union. Térésa Domingo (NI, Spain) emphasized how important the equal opportunities policy was in Norway and Finland, which should serve as an example to the Community.

Draft reports on the situation of women in agriculture and on the pension rights of divorced or separated women, and a draft opinion on the problems of elderly women were adopted at the same meeting and are scheduled to be debated by Parliament in January 1994.

Drafts relating to poverty among women in Europe, women in the decision-making process and European citizenship will be reviewed at the meeting in January. We shall return to this subject later.

Finally, the Members of Parliament were addressed by Faiza Kefi, President of the National Union of Tunisian Women, who represented a delegation of Tunisian women. She described the economic and social situation of Tunisian women and expressed the wish for closer cooperation with Community bodies in these fields.

The next meeting will be held in Brussels on 25 and 26 January 1994.

*Information: European Parliament, 97-113 rue Belliard, B-1049 Brussels, tel. (32 2) 284 21 11 or the Kirchberg Plateau, L-1919 Luxembourg.*

## COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

### ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN AND MEN

The 31st meeting of the Advisory Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men took place on 11 and 12 of December last, chaired by Rena Lampsa (Greece).

After a brief discussion of recent developments in the field of equal opportunities in the Member States, Mr Fina, Director for Employment and Equal Opportunities in DG V, informed the Committee of the latest developments at Community level. Speaking on the Green Paper on Social Policy, he invited the Committee to make an active contribution. After his presentation of

the White Paper on competitiveness and employment, the Committee emphasized the need to protect men's and women's rights in the context of the restructuring and the flexibility of the labour market.

Jennifer Wannan of DG V outlined the role of equal opportunities in the Community's human resources initiatives. She stressed that since its recent reform, the Social Fund had become a more flexible instrument, and that some progress had been made now that equal opportunities were one of the Social Fund's stated objectives.

There is now scope for many new initiatives and training programmes promoting equal opportunities and directly relevant to women; it is up to the Member States to use this scope when establishing the priorities they will present to the Commission before mid-1994.

During the meeting, the Committee also discussed the Fourth UN World Conference on Women which will take place in Peking in September 1995. A conference organized by the International Labour Organization specifically on the subject of women's employment is planned for March 1994 in Turin. A preparatory Community conference will be held in Toledo in April 1994 by the European Commission and the Spanish Institute for Women. The purpose of this conference is to help the Commission prepare a draft common position for the European Union for the UN's European regional conference which will take place in Vienna in October 1994. The European Women's Lobby will receive a special grant from DG V to begin preparation of the NGOs' Peking platform. Irene Kingston from the Equal Opportunities Unit in DG V informed the Committee that a meeting with the coordinators from the Member States would take place in January 1994 to prepare the ground for the Toledo conference.

The Committee also took the opportunity to examine the mid-term evaluation of the Third Community Action Programme on equal opportunities for women and men. Although the evaluation is not yet complete, it is already clear that the Commission and the Member States will have to step up their cooperation during the second half of the programme, in particular through the Advisory Committee. The Equal Opportunities Unit therefore suggested to the Committee that a national awareness campaign on Community equal opportunities policy be launched, involving all members of the relevant working groups and networks, for an experimental period of one year.

Various suggestions were made for the rapid development of relations with the women of Eastern Europe. The ETUC representative reported on a conference of women trade unionists from Eastern Europe, and pointed out that a Commission budget heading had been used in 1993 to co-finance NGO initiatives involving women from Western and Eastern Europe.

Maria Stratigaki of the Equal Opportunities Unit in DG V also briefed the Committee on the activities of "Women in decision-

making" network. A seminar on strategies used to bring about greater involvement of women in the decision-making process is to be held in 1994.

Finally, Agnès Hubert called on the Committee to actively deliberate on the role of women in the building of Europe after Maastricht. Although the Maastricht Treaty has opened up new horizons for women, it must now be asked if women are prepared to play a more visible role in building Europe, particularly in the run-up to the 1996 Intergovernmental Conference. Acknowledging that the post-Maastricht period would be universally difficult, given the economic recession, she asserted that development of the social dimension should help to mobilize women.

The Committee thanked Rena Lampsa for her services as Chairwoman, and also the Vice-Chairwomen for their excellent work. Grete Holmsgard (Denmark) was elected Chairwoman and Gabriele Abild-Schindler (Germany) and Marina Subirats (Spain) were elected Vice-Chairwomen.

*Information: Equal Opportunities Unit, DG V, European Commission, 200 rue de la Loi, B-1049 Brussels.*

## GREEN PAPER ON EUROPEAN SOCIAL POLICY

The fundamental questions which the Green Paper raises (see editorial) are what kind of society we want in Europe and what measures and policies are necessary to achieve it. The answers to these two questions raise several others. The document therefore catalogues the problems and fundamental challenges of social policy which are most important for the Member States and indeed for the Union, such as employment, equal opportunities, the Welfare State, social standards, social exclusion and social dialogue.

The Green Paper suggests possible solutions to all these problems. With regard to women, the following are some of the measures proposed: promotion of imaginative schemes to ease the burden of combining work with family life, such as encouraging flexibility in relation to careers and working hours, with the expansion of childcare facilities; the desegregation of the labour market, including variety in training and in employment and promotion prospects; the elimination of direct and indirect discrimination in the labour market; greater involvement of women in the decision-making process; better access to information for women; wider social dialogue on the problems encountered by women in the labour market.

Speaking at the presentation of the Green Paper, European Commissioner Pádraig Flynn said that a sustained effort would have to be made to find solutions acceptable to everyone, but firm decisions had to be taken now to avoid creating a two-speed



Europe later – a Europe where the creation of wealth would essentially be the responsibility of a highly skilled workforce, helping to support an ever-growing non-working population in the name of a reasonable degree of social justice.

The Green Paper will be distributed in all the Member States, to all those who wish to contribute to the next stage of the Union's social development. In the second half of 1994, the Commission will produce a White Paper based on the specific proposals contained in the Green Paper. The closing date for sending in comments on the Green Paper is 31 March 1994. These should be addressed to H.C. Jones, DG V, "Green Paper", European Commission, RP 11 4/17, 200 rue de la Loi, B-1049 Brussels. The Green Paper is available from DG V, Employment and Labour Market Directorate, European Commission, 200 rue de la Loi, B-1049 Brussels.

## NEWS OF THE NETWORKS

### ASSESSMENT OF THE LEI PROGRAMME (LOCAL EMPLOYMENT INITIATIVES FOR WOMEN) AT THE HALFWAY STAGE

Launched in 1987, the LEI programme provides a limited number of grants for women entrepreneurs and allocates almost ECU 1.4 million per year to businesses run by women in the 12 Member States.

In the context of the Third Community Action Programme on equal opportunities for women and men, the LEI programme is considered a key instrument in the campaign to encourage and support women's employment and the creation of businesses run by women. LEI is now in its second phase and the granting of awards has been entrusted to the Comitato Impresa Donna/CNA Emilia Romagna (Women's Business Committee, Emilia Romagna) on behalf of the Equal Opportunities Unit in DG V of the Commission.

The programme is implemented by two distinct and complementary bodies. The first is the LEI network of experts in each of the European Union countries. It is responsible, among other things, for providing information and assistance to projects. The other is the management authority which takes care of the budget and ensures that the grants are correctly awarded. After two years under new management, the programme is already at the halfway stage, so this is a suitable time to make a preliminary evaluation and to provide some feedback on the impact it has had. Thanks to a Europe-wide publicity and awareness campaign, the number of applications has increased tremendously; more than 6 000 applications have been received since November 1991.

There are almost as many grant-aided projects at the present time as in the previous five years (1987-1991). The statistics available relate to 1991-92. In 1991, 257 projects received financial aid out of 1 231 applications, and in 1992, 306 projects out of 2 785 applications.

*Number of projects submitted by Member State*

	1991	1992
B	3	9
DK	37	93
D	429	514
GR	150	589
E	113	480
FR	44	178
IRL	19	75
IT	281	444
LUX	5	15
NL	9	35
PO	38	88
UK	103	265

*Number of projects financed by Member State*

	1991	1992	TOT
B	2	6	8
DK	12	19	31
D	72	54	126
GR	37	35	72
E	19	41	60
F	16	22	38
IRL	9	14	23
IT	47	39	86
LUX	4	7	11
NL	7	20	27
PO	13	15	28
UK	19	34	53
Tot	257	306	563

### Profile of ILE

Who are the women receiving aid through the LEI programme? Which sectors do they invest in? How do they see their business? All of the information on projects is meticulously compiled and verified in Brussels, which allows the programme's progress to be closely monitored, while treating the statistics, of course, with due care.

In all, 2 143 women (LEI entrepreneurs and employees) were involved in the first two years (1991-92). Thanks to computerization, we can build a profile of these women. Some 70% are aged between 26 and 50 years old (39% between 26 and 35 and 31% between 35 and 50). A little less than half of the women are married with at least one child. The evidence is that the LEI programme also appeals to women who, because of their family situation, have difficulty in finding a job. Let's take a closer look at the entrepreneurs. That group accounts for 56% of the jobs financed, a high percentage which reflects women's willingness to cooperate. A third of the women entrepreneurs have a fairly low education level. Almost 40% of them were unemployed or had never worked. The level

of education of the employees is generally lower and 32% of them (against 25% of the LEI entrepreneurs) were unemployed. In social terms, the LEIs perform a dual function. A significant percentage of unemployed women are setting up businesses which employ mainly other women who would otherwise be excluded from the labour market. Another important consideration is that almost half of the LEIs backed by the Commission are located in economically deprived areas. These projects are equally divided among rural villages, medium-sized towns and large cities. On the other hand, grant-aided LEIs are less common on the edges of towns (4.28%) and in villages situated in industrial areas (6.42%). Let's try out a theory: the local employment initiatives for women will tend to create new activities rather than replace declining industrial activities.

In 1991 and 1992 three-quarters of the businesses backed by the Commission belonged to three main sectors. The highest number (39%) were in the service sector, then came manufacturing industry (21%), and finally distribution (16%). There is however a great deal of variation from country to country. In Germany for example, the overwhelming majority of the LEIs are in the service sector. In Portugal, a high number of projects involve rural activities. In Italy, quite a few are small firms doing sub-contracted work in the clothing sector. There are however some constant factors to be found in this mosaic of information. The women invest very little in traditionally 'masculine' activities. They generally base their businesses on their own flair and personal experience. They are very sensitive to social issues and the protection of the environment. Examples of this phenomenon are childcare and development projects in Greece and projects to assist the elderly in Spain.

### A variety of motives

Do women have a sensitivity which marks them out from the conventional entrepreneur? Reports from various projects agree on this point. Of course, when setting up an LEI, the women want a well-paid job, in a promising market niche. But financial gain is not their only motivation. Some women create their own businesses because in their previous jobs they felt thwarted both in terms of responsibilities and career prospects. Others point to the fact that running their own business gives them a chance to combine work and family life more flexibly and harmoniously. Finally, others emphasize their desire to forge less hierarchical relations with their colleagues and to explore other methods of work organization. As the grants offered by the support programme for local initiatives never exceed ECU 7 500, they can supply only very limited backing. But once again, reports show how useful that encouragement can be.

The start-up phase is undoubtedly the most arduous, largely because of difficulties in



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obtaining credit and financial backing. As well as the problems inherent in setting up a business, the women are subjected to all sorts of discrimination. The quality stamp conferred by the Commission's involvement encourages them to carry on. It helps to overcome the reticence of bankers and other contacts. It is also encouraging to note that women entrepreneurs like to form local networks. Their example gives other women confidence. The spirit of enterprise seems to be contagious.

The success of the LEI programme seems to stem from the direct contact the women entrepreneurs can have with the grant office and with the LEI network's national expert. This continuous dialogue has been a determining factor in the programme's successful adaptation to the changing needs of the entrepreneurs.

### Who is eligible for LEI grants?

In order to improve efficiency, two types of grant will be available from January 1994: the first, to a value of ECU 2 000, is for drawing up a business plan and feasibility study and is designed to help in the early stages of the business by awarding financial aid to those who submit an innovative preliminary feasibility study which is also relevant in a European context. The second, which is a job creation grant for new businesses, is aimed at helping young innovative companies, which have been less than two years in existence, to consolidate their business; it takes the form of an ECU 2 000 grant per full-time job created for a woman. The maximum grant is ECU 10 000 and the minimum grant is ECU 4 000, which presupposes the creation of at least two full-time jobs (or the equivalent in part-time jobs).

The new guidelines for the programme and the new application form will be published in the LEI guide in the nine Community languages. For any further information, please contact: *Comitato Impresa Donna-CNA, Unité européenne de Gestion des Primes ILE, av de la Joyeuse Entrée 1, B-1040 Bruxelles, tel. (32 2) 280 00 54 or 280 09 92, fax (32 2) 280 09 01.*

## INFORMATION/ COMMUNICATION

### WOMEN OF EUROPE AWARD

The European jury of the 1994 Women of Europe Award, jointly chaired by Ms Susanne Tiemann, President of the Economic and Social Committee, and by Ms Angèle Verdin, European Chairwoman

and founder of the Women of Europe Award, and consisting of 55 European dignitaries and accredited Community journalists, elected the 1994 Woman of Europe in December 1993.

Former Belgian Prime Minister Wilfried Martens presented the prizes to two winners (the jury put them in joint first place) who had both distinguished themselves through their work for the people of the former Yugoslavia: Janina Ochojska (Poland) and Paquita Sauquillo (Spain). The latter ran an aid programme for Slovenian, Croatian and Bosnian mothers and children. She is chairwoman of the MDLP, a movement which searches for peaceful solutions. Janina Ochojska heads 'Equilibre', a Polish organization which distributes humanitarian aid in Poland, the former Yugoslavia and other European countries, and is responsible for organizing humanitarian convoys to the former Yugoslavia. We wish them good luck and success in their future ventures.

*For further information contact: Angèle Verdin, Chairwoman of the Women of Europe Award, 193 rue Américaine, B-1050 Bruxelles, tel. (32 2) 649 37 59.*

### WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS: AN OECD - EC CONFERENCE

An international conference entitled "Women entrepreneurs building for the future" was held at Paris - La Défense on 25 and 26 November 1993. The conference brought together 200 participants from OECD member countries and from Central and Eastern Europe. Organized at the joint initiative of the OECD LEI programme (Local Employment Initiatives), the Equal Opportunities Unit of the European Commission and the Comité de liaison de Boutique de Gestion, in cooperation with the NOW and FORCE programmes, the conference looked at the progress made by women entrepreneurs at local level, with a view to planning for the future.

This seminar had three objectives:

1. to publicise NOW initiatives so that they act as incentives in Europe and elsewhere;
2. to explore the possibility of cooperation with other initiatives, such as those developed in the Scandinavian countries and North America or those in need of support, in particular in Central and Eastern Europe.
3. to bring together political and administrative decision-makers and all those involved at a practical or professional level to assess the existing and potential contribution of women to local economies.

*Information: OECD-LEI, Geneviève Lecamp, 2 rue André-Pascal, 75775 Paris Cedex 16, tel. (33 1) 45 24 92 94, fax (33 1) 45 24 90 98.*

## CONFERENCES

In the field of developments initiated by women in rural areas, there will be the closing seminar of the FAIR programme, a three-year rural development programme financed under the NOW initiative and bringing together 50 rural development organizations and agencies working in the field of training for women in France. This seminar will take place on 7 and 8 March in Arras.

*Information: Eric Pallandre, Espace Initiatives Rurales, 1 rue St Omer, BP 18, FR-62560 Fauquem-bergues, tel. (33) 21 95 19 60.*

## PUBLICATIONS

**Athena Synthesis report:** annual report discussing projects involving women, the labour market and training in six European regions.

Available from *Catherine Eva, Gateway Europe, Welsh Development Agency, QED Centre, Treforest, Pontypridd CF37 5YR, tel. (44 443) 84 14 08, fax (44 443) 84 19 66.*

**Social Europe: Evaluation of women's involvement in ESF cofinanced measures in 1990** - results of an evaluation of women's participation in ESF-financed programmes and initiatives, written by experts from the Twelve.

*Available from the Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, L-2985 Luxembourg.*

**The little extra that makes all the difference - LEI Programme - Half-way evaluation.** Available from the *Comitato Impresa Donna-CNA, 1 avenue de la Joyeuse Entrée, B-1040 Brussels.*

**Women and poverty in the European Community - issues in the current debate,** by Pauline Conroy. Doc. V/42/94, available in English, French and German.

**Homeworking in the EC,** report from the ad hoc working group on home working. Doc. V/7173/93, available in English and Greek, other languages to follow.

*These last two publications are available from the Equal Opportunities Unit, DG V/A/3, European Commission, 200 rue de la Loi, B-1049 Brussels.*

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