

Women of Europe

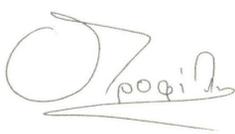
campaign

Editorial

The events of recent months have shown us that European integration needs total commitment and constant alertness. And yet, current difficulties should not make us forget that the European Union has achieved one crucial goal – establishing lasting peace between its Member States. The armed conflict on the borders of the European Union reminds us painfully how fragile peace is. In order to be able to play a useful role in conflicts beyond its borders, Europe must be strong: it must be able to rely on the political determination of its leaders and the support of its citizens. The European elections are an important occasion for citizens to show that Europe matters to them. These elections are also an opportunity to elect more women to the European Parliament in order to reach a 'critical mass' which will enable women to exert a genuine influence over decision-making. In this issue, we will return to the question of the European elections and, more specifically, the place of women in political parties.

This year, another complex and sensitive theme will be at the centre of our concerns: domestic violence against women. Our sector is co-ordinating an information campaign addressed to all European citizens, and, more specifically to the actual or potential aggressors, children, the witnesses of family violence, and women victims of violence. On 7 April, as part of the campaign, we have published a call for proposals on information projects relating to domestic violence which can be downloaded from the Commission's Internet site: <http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex>. Later in the year we will be putting out two single-theme issues devoted to violence.

This newsletter will be the last in this layout. We will be coming back to you in May with a new look. We are also in the process of putting together a website – 'Women' – on the Europa server, on which we will give you all the information you need.



Olga Profili
Head of Section – Information for Women

Zero Tolerance of Violence Against Women

An EU-wide information and awareness-raising campaign calling for zero tolerance of violence against women is under way, organised by the European Commission in cooperation with the European Parliament. It responds to the Parliament's demand in 1997 for such a campaign and is part of the EU's follow-up to the Platform for Action adopted at the UN Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995. The aim of the campaign is to lift the taboo and break the silence surrounding violence against women, particularly domestic violence, generally considered as a strictly "private matter".

Speaking about the campaign to Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) on International Women's Day, 8 March, Anita Gradin, European Commissioner responsible for Justice and Home Affairs, said "for many years the issue of violence against women has been described as a 'women's problem'. But it is not the women who are a problem," she explained, "the problem is men who argue with physical force and violence instead of words".

Domestic violence kills

Exactly how many women die every year as a result of domestic violence is unknown. Swedish MEP Marianne Eriksson (PSE), who drew up a European Parliament report on the issue in 1997, said the Swedish authorities estimated that one woman was killed every 10 days as a result of domestic violence in that country. At EU-level, the few available statistics suggest that one woman in four has experienced violence at some stage in her life, that violence was "endemic" in EU societies and affected women daily.

With an estimated budget of 3.7 million euro, the activities of the Commission's information campaign will aim to closely involve non-governmental organisations (NGOs) as well as local, regional and national government authorities in Member States. Its main focus will be the prevention of domestic violence. It will target women but also young men, men with a history of violence or those likely to perpetrate violent acts.

The key campaign messages will be that violence against women cannot be tolerated and that the elimination of all forms of violence, including domestic violence, is vital.

It will aim to change attitudes and behaviour by promoting a culture of mutual respect.

Getting the message across

A major European conference, held in Cologne at the end of March under the auspices of the German Presidency, kicked off the campaign's activities. A second is scheduled towards the end of the campaign in March 2000.

An information kit, also to be made available on CD-ROM, will be designed. It will comprise a logo and a series of texts, slogans, posters and leaflets. It will be produced in the 11 EU languages for use on the radio, television and in the print media in all Member States. A television commercial is planned for later in the year as is a special campaign site on the Internet.

An EU-wide opinion poll is already under way on people's attitudes to violence against women. The results will be presented to the press in mid-June. A statistical report, funded under the DAPHNE initiative, will also be produced providing EU-wide data on the extent of violence against women.

In September, a meeting will bring together leaders of transnational projects, funded under the EU's DAPHNE initiative, which aims to combat violence against women and children, and the STOP programme, concerning trafficking in women (see also page 4 of this Newsletter).

Some 20,000 white ribbons are also being produced as part of the campaign. During her Parliamentary address on 8 March, Anita Gradin invited "all men today to support the campaign by wearing a white ribbon. This ribbon is a sign that you say NO to violence against women".

For further information on the campaign, contact:

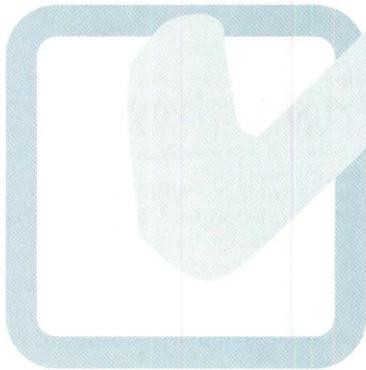
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Anita Gradin
European Commission

elections 1999

On the campaign trail ...



The European election campaign is getting into full swing throughout the EU with parties finalising lists of candidates, fine-tuning manifestos and pasting up electoral posters. The main political groups in the European Parliament, which represent the different national political parties and tendencies, have put together their common platforms. Candidates will use these alongside their national party manifestos when campaigning. Promoting equality between women and men is central to many of them.

Projects Keeping women informed

Four of the 13 projects selected for funding under the "Information for women and young people" call for proposals published by DG X in 1998 focused specifically on information campaigns for women in the run up to the 1999 European elections. The others informed women about European integration, the EU institutions, about their social and civic rights and equal opportunities.

The French project, *L'Europe a besoin des femmes* (Europe needs women), coordinated by CNIDEFF, is responding to questions raised by women on the elections and is organising seminars for women on the subject.

Two studies carried out in Italy and Germany on women in political decision-making were the basis for further reflection by another French project *Participation équilibrée des femmes à la vie économique et politique* (A balanced participation of women in economic and political life). This project also involves MEPs, the French government and local authorities in Seville and the French Champagne Ardenne regional authorities.

In Greece, the cross-party group of women politicians is working to get a balanced participation of women and men in political decision-making (see interview) while in Italy, a group of women journalists is motivating women to vote in the elections in the *Euroland* project, coordinated by the *Rete delle giornaliste del Mediterraneo*.

The manifesto of the Party of European Socialists (PSE), the largest of Parliament's political groups made up of Socialist and Social Democratic parties, makes a strong commitment to equality between women and men and to stamping out discrimination. "To exclude anyone from fair access to education, employment or democratic participation is to diminish society," it states. The manifesto advocates a shared responsibility by women and men for family, society and work and to combat domestic violence. It says participation in political structures "must be open equally to both genders."

Redressing imbalances

A commitment to redressing "the current imbalance between men and women in representation at all levels and in every area", is made by the Group of the European People's Party (PPE), the Parliament's second largest group, comprising Christian Democrats, Christian Socialists, Conservatives, right and centre-right parties, in its action programme for 1999-2004.

The PPE proposes moving towards equality in family and professional life through an expansion of part-time work, career breaks and parental leave and the introduction of a system of time-credits over a person's entire working life. It supports positive measures aiming to stop discrimination against women in recruitment, pay and workplace promotion.

Making the difference

"Making the difference" is the slogan adopted by the party of the European Liberal Democrats (ELDR) in its draft electoral manifesto. One of the group's goals is "for a society of active citizens" based on equality of opportunity.

The Group stresses that a modern European society is one in which "political self-expression is enhanced, and in which men and women have true equality". It strongly supports the extension "in principle and practice" of non-discrimination.

A Green vision

Improving the quality of life by raising ecological, social and democratic standards to the highest level to benefit all citizens is at the heart of the "Green vision" outlined

in European Green's joint manifesto. Europe's Green parties already work on the principle of "pure parity" between women and men, explained Isabelle Zerrouk, the Group's press advisor. This means a 50/50 representation of women and men on all candidate lists for the forthcoming elections.

In their manifesto, Europe's Green parties say they want to see measures guaranteeing the equal participation of women and men. They are also promoting an equal sharing of domestic work and care services to end the current unequal distribution of work between women and men, enabling women to take full part in economic and political life.

A new way forward

The Confederal Group of the European United Left/Nordic Green Left (GUE/NGL), bringing together a number of national leftwing and green parties is calling for a socially and ecologically progressive Europe based on democracy, solidarity and peace.

The end of discrimination between women and men, the promotion of democracy and citizenship, of the rights of individuals, of anti-racism and the respect of nature and sustainable development as well as a social and economic model based on promoting human rather than financial interests are amongst the policies actively promoted by the GUE/NGL in the run-up to the elections.

The manifestos of other political groups – ERA (European Radical Alliance) and UPE (Union for Europe) – were unavailable at the time of writing this Newsletter. Speaking for the UPE, Natacha Scriban said the group fully supported equal treatment, particularly in terms of equal access to employment and equal pay for women and men. But she explained that the group was against positive action measures to promote more women into decision-making. The group considered quotas to be incompatible with the principle of equal treatment, she explained. What is needed are direct or indirect incentive measures to encourage political groups to present more women.

interview

Women working across the political divide

Anna Karamanou (PSE, Greece) tells *Women of Europe* readers about a cross-party project she initiated in Greece to get more women onto the electoral lists and into political decision-making.

Who initiated the Women's Cross-Party project and whom does it involve?

I initiated the project in 1993 when I was the national expert for the European Commission's *Women in Decision-making Network* as part of its campaign to increase women's participation on the lists for the 1994 European elections. I contacted all the women in the different parties represented in the Greek Parliament. We agreed to work together and set up the "Cross-Party Women's Committee". We were somewhat successful when you consider that Greece had no women MEPs from 1989 to 1994 and now there are five.

After the 1994 elections, we decided to make this cooperation official. We set up a political association of women, representing five political parties, with its own statutes. Thanks to funding from DG X, under the 1998 call for proposals for information projects targeting women, we are now campaigning for the forthcoming European elections to increase women's participation on party lists and to raise awareness of the

need for more women at all levels of political decision-making. Greece has the worst track record of all Member States in this respect. Out of 300 members in our national parliament, there are only 20 women.

How is the campaign going?

So far, our campaigning has been successful. We even mobilised the *Nea Dimokratia* President. We had a meeting with him and he called a press conference afterwards stating his support for women. He addressed a message to women on International Women's Day, something that had never been done before.

How are women faring on the lists for the European elections?

There has been no announcement to date by any Greek party about lists for the European elections. We are pressing for more women. The leader of *Pasok* has promised that women's position will be enhanced on the lists. We hope that other big parties, such as *Nea Dimokratia*, will have some women. What we want are lists alternating women and men, and there is wide support for this.

Will you be standing for election and what are your priorities if elected?

I hope to be standing for election to the Parliament again, but that's up to my party, *Pasok*, to decide. My priorities are human rights, especially women's human rights, environmental protection, greater regional cohesion, social rights and employment. I would also like to see the introduction of an alternative foreign policy, solving problems through dialogue and peaceful means, not war. If women get a good balance of power with men, I believe they can bring issues neglected by traditional politics onto the political agenda.

Imbalances in the distribution of power between women and men result in further imbalances in other spheres, for example, the widening gap between rich and poor. I firmly believe that more women in politics can make a better world. ●



Poll Parliament gaining in popularity

The European Parliament is winning the hearts of increasing numbers of EU citizens, according to the results of a public opinion survey by Eurobarometer, the European Commission's public surveys unit. A poll carried out in the Autumn of 1998 revealed that 55% of EU citizens felt the Parliament had a "very important" or "important" role to play in the life of the European Union, against 47% in 1997.

Although more men (58%) than women (53%) claimed to be enthusiastic about Parliament's role, fewer women (23%) than men (29%) dismissed it as "not very important"

or "not at all important". When asked if they wanted the Parliament to play a more important role, 49% of men and 41% of women said it should, against, respectively, only 11% and 9% who felt it should play a less important role and 24% and 23%, respectively, who felt it should play the same role as now.

An overwhelming 72% of women and men said they intended voting in the European elections in June this year against 13% who said they would not and 12% who had not made up their minds. Broken down by gender, 70% of women and 73% of men said they would be voting, against an equal

proportion of women and men (13%) who said they would not and 13% and 11%, respectively, who remained undecided.

Eurobarometer No 50 of March 1999 is based on fieldwork carried out in October-November 1998. ●

For further information, contact:

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Europe for women, women for Europe

Why should women vote in the June European Parliament elections and why should they vote for women? A brochure prepared by the European Commission's Equal Opportunities Unit jointly with the European Parliament's Committee on Women's Rights gives some of the answers. It provides figures on women's current representation in the Parliament and traces EU achievements in the equality field. It gives addresses of departments dealing with women's issues in the Commission, Parliament and Member States. A ready-made campaign kit to get more women elected to the Parliament has also been produced by the Equal Opportunities Unit comprising a CD-ROM, campaign material (logo, slogan, print ads, posters, TV commercials) and guidelines for their use in all EU languages. ●

For information, contact:
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Rue de la Loi 200
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More women in research

More EU research by, for and about women at EU-level is needed, according to a recent Commission Communication on "Women and Science". In it, the Commission said it was planning a wide-ranging debate with the Member States on women's participation in research. Among the measures proposed is a 40% threshold for women's participation in the Marie Curie research scholarships as well as on consultative bodies and evaluation panels of the EU's Fifth Framework Programme for Research (1999-2004). To coordinate this work, a "Gender and Science Watch System" will be set up. It will collect and disseminate statistics, promote a dialogue with the Member States and the scientific community and act as a contact point. The Communication will be presented to EU research ministers on 20 May. ●

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Equal opportunities in 1998

The Commission's third annual report on equal opportunities took stock of the main developments and trends at national and EU level in 1998 and identified key issues for 1999. According to the report, the dual strategy combining the EU's mainstreaming policy with activities specifically aimed at women produced tangible results in 1998 in areas such as education and research, development cooperation and the reform of the Structural Funds. For 1999, ratification of the Amsterdam Treaty is expected to give a further impetus to equality because of its provisions to eliminate inequalities and promote equal opportunities in all activities and policies. ●

The report is available from the Equal Opportunities Unit (see address above) or can be downloaded from the Commission's Europa server:
http://europa.eu.int/comm/dg05/equ_opp/news/report_en.html

EU birth and death rates falling

The number of babies born in the European Union in 1998 was estimated by Eurostat, the EU's statistical office, to have fallen to nearly 4.01 million, the same post-war low as in 1995. This compares to 4.05 million in 1997. Eurostat expects the number of births to continue falling as the women born in the mid-1960s "baby boom" move out of peak childbearing age and are replaced by a smaller number of women born in the late 60s and early 70s. The annual number of live births in the 15 EU Member States stood at 2 million higher in the mid-60s than today, the report said. The number of deaths registered in 1998 fell to 3.69 million from 3.71 million in 1997. This, said Eurostat, should lead to a corresponding drop in the EU's natural population growth (live births minus deaths) from 336,000 in 1997 to 320,000 in 1998. ●

Eurostat Statistics in Focus, Population
and social conditions, No 1/99

"Slightly fewer births and deaths in 1998"

Available from:
Office for Official Publications
L-2985 Luxembourg or from national sales points

DAPHNE initiative: calls for proposals 1999

Two calls for proposals for the DAPHNE initiative, which promotes measures to combat violence against children, young people and women, were published in March. The first concerns projects working on helplines providing assistance and counselling for children and young people at risk of violence, exploitation or abuse or helping to trace and recover missing children and young people. The deadline for this call is 8 May. The second call aims to support other activities organised by NGOs or voluntary organisations in this field and has a deadline of 18 June. Examples include training and exchanges, pilot projects, the creation of networks, studies and research, information dissemination and cooperation between NGOs and public authorities. ●

Both calls were published in the Official Journal of the European Communities: C-60 of 2 March and C-69 of 12 March, respectively. They can be downloaded in all official languages from:
<http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex>

For information, contact:
European Commission
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Agreement on fixed-term contracts

The EU social partners signed an agreement in March aiming to end discrimination against those employed on fixed-term contracts and creating a framework to prevent abuse arising from the use of successive contracts of this type. As with the part-time work and parental leave agreements, the social partners have asked the Commission to use this agreement as a basis for introducing EU-wide legislation on fixed-term contracts. ●

The full text of the agreement can be downloaded from the Commission's Europa server:
http://europa.eu.int/comm/dg05/soc-dial/social/fixed_en.htm