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supplements



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Women of Europe: 10 years



WOMEN OF EUROPE

**Mirroring the course of women's rights in Europe
(1977-1987)**

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	3
I. WOMEN AND PRIVATE LIFE.....	5
1. Women and their bodies.....	5
Reproductive rights.....	5
The fight against violence.....	9
2. Women and their families.....	13
Parenting.....	13
Equality within the couple.....	16
Changing family structures.....	18
Divorce and separation.....	19
II. WOMEN AND WORK.....	22
1. The logic of alignment: successes and limits.....	23
Changes in the law.....	23
Changes in practice.....	27
The self-employed, too.....	31
2. The logic of broader parity.....	35
Education and training.....	36
For a "mixed" society.....	38
III. WOMEN AND MILITANCY.....	41
1. Working within associations: busy beehives.....	41
New faces.....	41
New struggles.....	42
2. Political activism: the sleeping giant.....	45
The lay of the land.....	46
Women's actions.....	49
The creation of specialised government bodies.....	53
European incentives.....	53
The changing electorate.....	54
CONCLUSIONS.....	58

INTRODUCTION

Women of Europe is ten years old. Between 1977 and 1987 this magazine has accomplished the formidable task of disseminating information in nine, ten, and finally twelve countries. It has carried news in nine languages about changes in women's situations throughout the Community to the press, women's associations and, through the latter, countless European women. In the final analysis, its success has far exceeded its original goal.

Indeed, when the European Commission created the "Women's Press and Organization Information Service"¹, which began publishing Women of Europe in March 1976, at the request of 120 feminist leaders meeting for a colloquium in Brussels, its objective was "to maintain a permanent dialogue with the press and women's organizations to inform them and provide them with documentation about the various aspects of European integration and help them to exchange experience and information between organizations and countries..." (WoE, No. 0, July 1977). The magazine quickly became a sort of OJ of women's rights, despite attempts to prevent this. Flooded with requests for information, its editors had warned, as early as 1978, that WoE was neither an encyclopaedia nor a yearbook and certainly not an Official Journal, but found itself increasingly serving as one. One might have thought that it would confine itself to the area under the European Community's jurisdiction, i.e., occupational equality. However, it is clear that this problem could not be isolated from the group of problems faced by women, that woman's entry into and place in the workforce were closely linked to family planning and the organization of family structures, for example.

If one wants to understand the barriers to and motors of change, to dissect the mechanisms that make it possible to open certain doors or, on the contrary, keep others shut, each question must be analysed within its general context, i.e., against the background of a complex situation in which not all of the elements evolve at the same rate and that varies from one country to the next. Women of Europe understood well the importance of complying with these constraints. That is why a study of the 52 issues² and 25 supplements published to date gives a faithful rendering of the trials and tribulations of European women, who, while making up more than 50% of the population in all of the Member States, were still dependent at the start of this ten-year period, still in a position of inequality when compared with men, gradually won new rights, adopted new types of behaviour, and took their destiny into their own hands much more than before to try to obtain equal rights and more freedom than had been given to previous generations, expressing by their initiatives the ability to implement the fundamental principle of brotherhood and asking, in the name of brotherhood, that men show more solidarity with women.

Helped by their associations, backed by the European institutions, which have forced the national authorities to change rules in effect in their respective countries in more than one domain, supported here and there by political parties and trade unions, women are taking on roles that break with those of their mothers. They are present where, until recently, it was hardly thought that they wanted to tread.

From the Luxembourgers, admitted to the Herrenberg military camp in 1979, to the Greeks, who had to wait until 1984 to carry the post, the Germans, who were allowed by the courts to work on a construction site, the Italians, who received the right in 1978 to decide alone whether to terminate or continue their undesired pregnancies, the Irish, who acceded to the presidency of the Senate in 1982, the Portuguese, one of whom was Head of Government for a few months, the French, who produced a woman

¹Today's "Women's Information Specialized Service"

²Including issues 0 and 00.

President of the European Parliament, the Spanish, who obtained a "Parliamentary Charter for Working Women" in 1979, the Belgians, who saw the adoption of a rape law in 1982, the Dutch, who began working in Amsterdam's Highways Department in 1982, the Danes, who make up 25.6% of their country's parliament (Folketing), and the English, with their record number of shelters for battered women, women across Europe have won, foot by foot, a little more ground on which they can prove their abilities and exercise their free will.

Women of Europe has kept a thorough record of these advances, delays, and changes. However, more than a simple conveyor belt of information, it has also served as an agent for change, firstly because its genuine work in reporting the facts is an action in itself, secondly because it coordinates and supports local and European initiatives such as symposia, seminars, and studies undertaken by associations that would not be able to carry out such undertakings by themselves, and thirdly because it tries to encourage women to emerge from the ghetto by informing women about European policies in such varied sectors as nuclear energy and agriculture.

What can be deduced from this huge ten-year corpus on social change in Europe about the changes affecting women's rights and position and, beyond this, the mores and ethical contexts specific to this geographical area? This is the aim of this special issue. Obviously, it is not possible to reconstitute or even summarise the corpus of data contained in Women of Europe. We shall thus cover the essentials, which is to say, the three main dimensions of women's lives: their private lives, occupations and militancy, while remaining fully aware that dissociating the various facets of reality is a completely arbitrary process.

The developments in these three major areas between 1977 and 1987 have broken sharply with the previous decades, especially due to the Community's action. With the help of the past 52 issues of Women of Europe, which show the constant forward motion as it occurs, and the supplements, which give very precise insights into Community law, such specific categories as women farmers and women in Spain, public opinion or the socio-demographic structures in the Member States, it is possible to reconstitute ten years of European women's history. We can unroll the film of European women's victories and defeats, their breakthroughs, pauses, and unceasing efforts to abolish discrimination, break out of their subjugation and create ties between the women of different countries on the one hand and between women and men on the other, to achieve, in the final analysis, the respect of the values defended by Western democracies.

I. WOMEN AND PRIVATE LIFE

Various feminist movements sprang up in the early '70s, in the wake of the student movements that had shaken a number of European countries at the end of the previous decade. Their numerous, varied demands focused for the most part on the freedom to control one's own body and the equality of rights and duties that had primarily remained the "privileges" of men, especially within the family. "Private life" became a political issue and the related demands were strongly expressed. In the course of the seventies, some of these demands were met, albeit very unequally, depending on the country and the problems involved. The ten-year period between 1977 and 1987 experienced a broadening of the field of what was possible in this area. The articles in Women of Europe show how, little by little, legislation, concerning which many women's demands had previously seemed completely implausible, changed along lines that - with a few rare exceptions - are clearly more favorable to women.

1. Women and their bodies

A trend towards much greater freedom has been observed with regard to physical "self-determination", to the extent that more and more attention has been given to taking into account and trying to reduce the frequency of all forms of violence likely to be inflicted on women, whether unwanted pregnancies, backstreet abortions, or even physical attacks ranging from assault and battery to rape. More concern has also been given to women's health.

Reproductive rights

The women of the fifties and sixties fought to obtain (with varying degrees of success) access to birth control methods other than "natural" ones. The women of the seventies launched a crusade to legalize abortions in order to correct the still too frequent contraceptive errors.

What was the situation at the dawn of the ten-year period being discussed? In 1977, three of the nine EC Member States - Denmark, the United Kingdom and Germany - had already legalized abortion. A fourth member - France - had a temporary law on the books allowing abortions in the event of distress, i.e., at the woman's sole discretion. This law had been adopted in 1975 for a five-year period and had to be resubmitted to Parliament in 1979. The Netherlands had set another precedent. Abortions could be freely practised, even on non-residents, although the legislation had not been changed, simply because the authorities had long given up on prosecuting those who broke the law. Abortions were banned in the other Member States.

Italy joined the first group in 1978. Henceforward, any woman had the right to decide to terminate a pregnancy, with the bill being paid by the State, provided that she had passed her 18th birthday, was not more than 90 days pregnant and could claim one of the motives allowed by the law. Minors had to have their parents' consent or take their request to the relevant judicial authority, who could authorise an abortion within five days.

The French Parliament re-approved the 1975 abortion law definitively in 1979. The cost of an abortion was even reimbursed by the social security system starting in 1982. Luxembourg likewise adopted an abortion law in 1979. However, this law was less liberal than those approved by its predecessors down this path. According to the terms of this law, an abortion practised within the first 12 weeks of pregnancy was not punishable:

- if continuing the pregnancy or the living conditions that might surround the birth might endanger the physical or mental health of the pregnant women;

- if the pregnancy was the result of a rape,

- provided that the pregnant woman consulted a gynaecologist, who must inform her of the medical risks of the operation and give his/her written consent to the operation. (WoE, No. 10, May/June/July 1979).

The law made no provision for the social reasons that might cause a woman to refuse a pregnancy and even less an assessment by the woman herself of the "distress" of her situation.

The Netherlands, for its part, decided to put an end to the discrepancy between the law and reality. Abortion was thus legalized by 76 votes to 74. However, the Dutch women's associations were not fully satisfied, as the text of the law did not seem to them to decriminalize the act completely (WoE, No. 18, January-February 1981).

In 1985 it was the turn of Spain, newly-included in the EC, to submit the issue to its Parliament. A clause was adopted, after a series of very heated debates, allowing abortions in three cases: if the pregnancy was the result of rape; if it held a serious danger for the mother's physical or moral health; and if a severe physical or mental malformation of the fetus was presumed. The national doctors' association forbade its members to put the new law into practice, and many days went by before one of them dared to perform a legal abortion. Moreover, the Church, which was strongly opposed to this relative decriminalizing of abortion, excommunicated a young woman who had had her pregnancy terminated due to a German measles infection (WoE, No. 42, 15 Sep/15 Nov 1985). The law's opponents did not lay down their arms, and in 1987, the Spanish Supreme Court suspended, at the request of the Right-to-Life Movement, the decree of 24 November 1986 that permitted private clinics to perform abortions, thereby prompting the Minister of Health to consider appealing the decision.

The latest country to join the liberalization camp is Greece, where the issue has been hotly debated since 1984-85. The Greek Parliament took a favourable stand on the issue in 1986. Abortion, decided by the woman alone, is now allowed up to the 12th week of pregnancy. The operation, which is covered by the statutory health insurance plan, must be performed in a specialised clinic or hospital. Special measures are provided for minors and women who are more than 12 weeks pregnant.

Thus, two Member States have failed to take the route that has led their neighbours to accept, gradually and under different conditions, the idea that pregnancies may be terminated for reasons other than safeguarding the mother's life. The first one is Ireland. This country is the most deeply entrenched in its positions. Small groups of women have demonstrated from time to time in favor of decriminalizing abortion, pointing out in 1980, for example, that, since 1967, some 20,000 Irish women went to Great Britain each year to have abortions. Nevertheless, the legislators, backed by the majority of the public, made no concessions, quite the contrary, for in 1983 the Dail decided, by 87 votes to 67, to initiate the procedure required to include a ban on abortion in the Irish Constitution. In the referendum held on this issue in the autumn of the same year, one out of three voters was in favour of such an amendment to the Constitution concerning the "right to life of the unborn child" (WoE, No. 32, 15 Sep/15 Nov 1983).

The second case is that of Belgium. More than thirty bills to liberalize abortion were introduced in both the Chamber of Deputies and Senate between 1968 and 1982 without producing a parliamentary debate on the issue. The ten-year-period of concern to us was characterized by a relative shift in developments and was rich in events. The period started with a "modus vivendi" resulting from the judicial authorities' failure

to prosecute doctors and their patients who had performed or undergone abortions while waiting for a new law to emerge. However, tired of closing their eyes to the violations, they decided to resume prosecuting for abortion prior to the summer of 1981. All eyes turned towards Parliament, which was expected to pass legislation clarifying the situation. Street demonstrations took place during the trials that were held in autumn 1981. The parliament finally examined and rejected, by 95 votes to 92 and 5 abstentions, a proposal to suspend for two years the texts making abortion a criminal act, provided that the pregnancy was terminated by a doctor with the consent of the properly-informed pregnant woman (WoE, No. 24, January-February 1982). The lawmakers likewise rejected, by 140 to 97 (and 4 abstentions) a proposal put forward by a Flemish gynaecologist that would have authorized abortions for one year on an experimental basis (WoE, No. 26, May/June/July 1982). The head of the gynecology department of Saint Peter's Hospital in Brussels was given a suspended sentence of 18 months in prison for having performed abortions in hospital and "without profit-making motives". However, in 1983 the 8th Chamber of the Brussels Appeal Court handed down a general acquittal for the defendants in its abortion trials³. Still, the respite was very brief. In 1984, a professor on a medical faculty was given a suspended sentence of two months of prison for having performed abortions. Finally, in early 1986 a new bill was put forward in the Senate that would allow abortions in the first 15 weeks of pregnancy, provided that the woman, after receiving information and assistance, manifested a clear desire to go ahead with the operation...

As we have seen, while the movement arising in the 1970s continued into the '80s, it did not lead all of the EC's Member States to adopt a single model. Each one, working at its own pace, has drafted its own laws based on domestic public opinion and the strength of the country's political and religious forces. This does not mean that abortion is unthinkable in some countries and an easy expedient in others. Wherever abortion laws are strictest, illegal abortions and trips to other countries have increased. In countries with the most liberal abortion laws, abortions are always considered a last resort that can no means be a substitute for contraception. An abortion, like the idea to have one performed, reflects the failure of a genuine policy on contraception. Thus, whether or not they have liberalized abortion, the public powers, backed by women's and other groups, are continuing to work to facilitate the use of effective contraceptives as the only way to reduce the frequency, if not lead to the disappearance, of legal or illegal abortions.

In 1982, the French Minister of Women's Rights launched a vast information campaign on contraception using television as well as the more conventional meetings and brochures. A law requiring hospital units in which abortions were performed to be certified as "Family Planning Centres" also went into effect in 1982. The effect of this measure was to require such units to provide information, consultations, testing and all of the prescriptions related to birth control, including free prescriptions for chemical contraceptives or contraceptive devices to people on public assistance. The aim of this reorganization is to provide women who have just had abortions with complete information on contraceptive methods that are adapted to their needs. This satisfies the twofold aim of lowering contraceptive failure rates and practising prevention.

³ The ruling upheld one of the defence's arguments to the effect that the equality of the citizens before the law had not been respected because the 1867 law prohibiting abortions was no longer used except by the courts in the Brussels judicial district. In fact, the King's prosecutors have given up prosecuting doctors and women for abortion everywhere else in Belgium.

The accent in Luxembourg has been placed on making contraceptives accessible to teenagers. To this end, the municipal government of the Grand Duchy's second largest city authorised the Family Planning Centre's installation in the *Maison des Jeunes* (youth centre) to allow young people to go for consultations without drawing attention to themselves (WoE, No. 28, Nov/Dec 1982). However, the situation is not deemed satisfactory by either the national Women's Liberation Movement (WLM) or Amazone, both of which want the costs of contraceptives to be reimbursed by the social security system, free contraceptives for young people and sex education courses in the schools (WoE, No. 45, 15 March/15 May 1986). In Greece, too, an awareness campaign has been conducted by the Ministry of Public Health. Family Planning Centres, which give out contraceptive pills supplied by the United Nations Organization, have sprung up like mushrooms since the beginning of 1985.

Ireland has started to take measures allowing relative access to birth control. As early as 1970, unrecognised medical centres were already serving as Family Planning Centres. It was also possible to obtain contraceptives in certain clinics or from mail-order houses. A bill put forward by the Ministry of Health in 1979 changed the situation. It allowed contraceptives to be sold in pharmacies only upon presentation of a prescription made out to the bearer and only to persons acknowledged to need birth control methods - i.e., married individuals - by a member of the medical profession. This law upset some doctors, who felt that they were being asked to sit as judges of public morals, and was decried by a large number of Irishwomen. Upon its entry into force on 1 November 1980 it immediately became apparent that contraceptives had definitely become more difficult to obtain. However, in early 1985 the Chamber of Deputies adopted a law, by 83 to 80, authorising the sale of contraceptives "to persons over age" (WoE, No. 39, 15 Jan/15 March).

The situation in the area of prevention is not any more uniform. In a nutshell, women in the twelve Member States are not equally armed to exercise their right to decide when they want to have children. This problem has been tackled at various times by the European Parliament, but has never failed to trigger violent clashes, given the diversity of the moral, religious and political convictions of its members. In 1980 the French Socialist Yvette FUILLET had asked at a session if the European Commission intended to harmonize legislation on contraception and abortion. She was informed that the Commission was most interested in hearing the points of view that might be expressed in the European Parliament, after which it would study the pros and cons of taking such measures. Some female Italian Christian Democrats had opposed such a move, stating that the Parliament's large female representation would not strengthen the traditional male dodge of solving women's problems by allowing abortions, but must mobilize the Community's entire planning ability to promote research projects in the areas of contraception, social organization, the situation of children and demographic forecasting, thereby recognising that the problem was one not of the female "body" alone, but of the entire collectivity (WoE, No. 14, March/April 1980). The French Socialist renewed her attack at the 19 February 1981 session, justifying her request to narrow the differences in the laws in force in the Member States by her conviction that the following three principles must be respected: the women in the Community must be able to decide for themselves; criminal prosecution for abortions must be abandoned; and, finally, the State must take over the entire cost incurred by the performance of abortions (WoE, No. 19, 1981).

Her request obviously could not be met, given the complexity of the issue. Nevertheless, a "European effect" can be seen to have been felt in several countries in the Community over the last ten years. The spread of information on what was possible beyond a given national border - which spread was to a large extent the work of women's organizations as

well as the press - led to a change in attitudes among both the public and decision-makers that has resulted in a relative harmonization of practices and a greater exercise of reproductive rights in the Community, despite various ups and downs, delays and occasional backsliding.

The fight against violence

The fight against the forms of violence likely to be inflicted on women has actually been one of the major, longstanding battles waged in the past ten years, although it may have been unnoticed by the public at large. If the press has failed to inform its readers of the countless initiatives taken in this area, Women of Europe has been scrupulous in pointing them out and thereby enabling us to realise to what extent this problem has remained taboo and how hard women's associations have had to fight to get the public authorities to take it into account and to move public opinion. There was a feeling that the rapes, blows and injuries inflicted on women within their very families have long been perceived as being part of a certain natural order and that women were often considered to hold major responsibility for the aggressions to which they were subjected. Consequently, a centuries-old view of the situation had to be overturned and another view of women proposed.

The new importance given to rape, first of all, testified to a certain change in attitudes in Europe in this area and growing attachment to the notion of free will, the basis of all true democracies. In 1978, the Irish Council on Women's Status set up a subcommittee to draft a reform of the existing rape law. The draft, which emerged quickly, stressed the importance of having more women on rape trial juries as well as among the doctors, police officers and scientists who are involved in investigating charges of rape. It was learnt at the same time that a group that had assembled some 4,000 women for a torchlight march was planning to open a rape crisis centre in Dublin (WoE, No. 6, November-December 1978). Three years later a new law went into effect that gave the plaintiffs in rape cases more guarantees than before. However, many women's organizations, in addition to experts on family law, took the Government to task for failing to include the notion of "intramarital rape" in the text. Indeed, the law could not cover all of the problems, while time was needed, if only to convince women to use the legal means placed at their disposal. Thus, according to the figures provided by the Rape Crisis Centre, only a third of the cases brought to its attention were reported to the police and less than one-fifth resulted in a trial (WoE, No. 21, May/June/July 1981).

Italy also gave thought to the question of sexual violence. The Italian Women's Union created a "March 8 Tribunal" in 1979 to consider all of the forms of violence to which women were subjected. It very quickly overstepped these bounds and, side-by-side with the Women's Liberation Movement, suggested introducing a "bill generated by popular initiative" calling for public rather than in camera rape trials in order to ensure the presence of women in the audience and guarantee that the victim would not be transformed into the accused and which included provisions that the rape victim should not have to prove her lack of consent. To be introduced in Parliament, such a draft required the signatures of 50,000 citizens; it obtained 160,000 signatures (WoE, No. 11, Sept-Oct 1979). A few months later, the Liberal Party introduced a bill on sexual violence that suggested, among other things, abolishing the "marriage of reparation", which removed all charges against a rapist who married his victim. These and other ideas continued to advance and in 1981 the Chamber of Deputies' Justice Committee studied the possibility of strengthening the sentences (a maximum of 6 years and a minimum of two weeks in prison). However, pressure in the country has not relaxed. The social services of the

Province of Rome organized a round table on violence in 1982 that was attended by judges, representatives of women's organizations and the public authorities, psychologists, and others. One of the participants' conclusions was to urge the Parliament to adopt as quickly as possible a law satisfying the various groups' demands.

The demands arising from this meeting are extremely important and can be used to measure the distance covered in actually very little time. The participants wanted sexual violence to be considered an attack on the person, rather than an attack on morals, as stated in the Italian Code at the time; that the crime existed in the case of the victim's refusal or simply lack of agreement; that acts of sexual violence, like all serious violations of the law, be prosecuted automatically by the judicial system, instead of only if a complaint is lodged by the victim, who, it is known, is vulnerable to pressure; and, finally, that organizations and associations could act as plaintiffs (WoE, No. 26, May/June/July 1982). Shortly thereafter, the Chamber of Deputies' Justice Committee approved a draft that contained several of the foregoing demands. It was clear that the victims of an act of sexual violence were the persons themselves and their freedom, not public morals. It was also stipulated that during the preliminary investigations and trial the judges and police officers should not question the victim as to her sex life, but confine themselves to the case at hand.

While the bill's drafting did not raise any full-blown controversies, the parliamentary debates themselves were extremely heated. Thus, at a public session, the Christian Democrat Carlo Cassini put up for a vote an amendment specifying that sexual violence was an affront to a person's sexual freedom and human dignity, whereas the rapporteur of the draft and the associations involved had favoured qualifying it as a "crime against the person". The amendment was adopted, 237 to 220. Madame Bottari (Communist Party) then resigned as rapporteur as the amendment made it possible to keep sexual violence under Title IX of the Italian Penal Code as well as the definition of "crime against public morals". It should be pointed out that, upon hearing this news and in answer to calls by feminist organizations, 50,000 people marched through the streets of Rome with the cry of "Sexual violence is a crime against the person" (WoE, No. 29, Jan/Feb 1983).

In France, the vote to change the Penal Code's provisions on rape took place in 1980. Thereafter, rape was defined as "any act of sexual penetration, of whatever kind, committed or attempted on another person by violence, constraint or surprise" and punishable by ten to 20 years in prison or life imprisonment in cases of gang rapes or under various aggravating circumstances. In addition, the criminal court of first instance (Cour d'Assises) could not bar the public from the proceedings if the victim was opposed. Finally, the press could not cite the victim's name unless she had given her written consent (WoE, No. 14, Mar-Apr 1980).

Here, too, the existence of a law making it possible to punish the perpetrators of sexual violence more severely did not work magic, nor did it prompt all of the victims to rush to the police stations at once. The associations still have all they can do to convince the victims of sexual violence to press charges. However, since then they have received enough requests for information to warrant setting up, in March 1986, a telephone hotline in Paris - "*Viol femmes informations*" ("rape women information") - manned by *Jeunes femmes* (a young women's movement), the *Maison des femmes de Paris* (Paris Women's Centre), *Halte-aide aux femmes battues* (Halt - Help for Battered Women) and the Family Planning programme.

Other countries have also changed their laws on sexual violence. In Belgium, where *SOS-Viol* (SOS-Rape) has been operating for years and where a Christian Socialist MP put forward in 1981 a bill defining rape as an act "committed against an unconsenting person" (thereby including married people), a law was adopted in 1982 that stressed the "absence of the victim's consent" as the determining element. Thereafter, the victims of sexual violence would no longer have to prove that they had been threatened with death, for example, or show proof of the merciless struggle that they should have put up against their aggressors. Moreover, if he or she so desired, the plaintiff had the right to remain anonymous and be accompanied by the doctor of his/her choice during the court-ordered examinations (WoE, No. 26, May/June/July 1982).

Turning to Germany, women's associations were likewise the driving forces behind a campaign waged in 1981 calling for a new definition of rape based exclusively on the refusal of the person attacked and applicable even within a married couple. Concrete steps have even been taken to reduce the risks of attack in certain cases. For example, in 1986, following the example of Berlin, the town of Bielefeld began offering women a special, reduced-rate taxi service between 8 p.m. and 5 a.m. to help women who were afraid to go home alone, and Cologne and Gissen were preparing to follow suit (WoE, No. 45, 15 March/15 May 1986).

In the Netherlands, the Secretary of State (Junior Minister) for Emancipation addressed a letter to the Chamber of Deputies in 1982 in which she insisted that the fight against sexual violence was an important chapter in the Government's programme, for she felt that the relationships of force and violence in private life were responsible for the inferior social positions in which women had been kept.

In Denmark, the Justice Minister decided in 1983 - at the request of numerous women's associations - to set up a committee to study how the police and courts handled rape charges.

Finally, in Greece, the Democratic Women's Movement set up a committee in 1983 to study rape (and violence) and propose specific actions to take in this area.

Over the last ten years, an unprecedented fight has also been waged in Europe against the violence inflicted on women in the family. For most of the Member States, this is a big first. While the United Kingdom can boast of having outfitted 150 homes for battered women (which have sheltered 11,400 women and 20,850 children) between 1977 and 1978, and Germany and the Netherlands opened shelters very quickly, due to the strength of their feminist movements, similar initiatives have been taken very sporadically everywhere else. Still, this trend has grown stronger with passing time.

Thus, in the winter of 1977-78, a Belgian women's group, having observed that Saint Peter's Hospital in Brussels treated some 20 battered women - some of whom required medical care - each weekend and that only 4% of charges of beatings ever got to court, created the *Collectif pour les femmes battues* (Collective for Battered Women) and opened a shelter that was filled almost immediately (WoE, No. 1, Jan/Feb 1978). In France, where some measures had already been taken in the '70s, an additional shelter was opened on the outskirts of Paris in 1978 by the *Ligue des droits des femmes* (Women's Rights League). In Luxembourg, the Minister for Family Affairs signed with the association *Femmes en détresse* (Women in Distress), also in 1979, an agreement whereby the State made a suitable shelter available for women and agreed to pay for its payroll and operating costs (WoE, No. 12, Nov/Dec 1979).

Reading Women of Europe is a good way to grasp the magnitude of the phenomenon, for hardly a quarter went by without reports of the opening of a new shelter or telephone hotline and requests for funds to cope with emergencies. Serious efforts were also made during this ten-year period to obtain and spread information in many countries anxious to know what

might be hiding behind the few cases already brought to light. These include the survey carried out by the *Movimento di liberazione della Donna* (Italian Women's Liberation Movement) for the second International Feminist Congress that was held in Rome in 1978. Of the thousand women surveyed, 51% admitted to having been subjected to violence by their husbands, 17% by their fathers and 14% by companions (WoE, No. 3, May-June 1978).

Besides taking them in, what could be done for these women and, more important, what was proposed to check this phenomenon? Even today, the answers are far from commensurate with the magnitude of the evil. However, information is constantly being circulated by magazines such as Women of Europe and women's associations, which strive to make women realise that "it does not happen only to others" and that each woman should be vigilant in her neighbourhood, building and workplace. The attention given to this problem by various international bodies has also made it more visible. For example, the international conference on sexual violence that was held in Brussels in 1981 under the aegis of the Association for the United Nations and attended by 200 women from 17 different countries contributed greatly to raising public awareness.

Some countries have also considered awarding financial compensation to the victims of violence. In the United Kingdom, for example, where the victims of violence within the family cannot sue for damages, a draft schedule of compensation - 225 pounds for a broken nose, 400 pounds for two front teeth, 6,000 pounds for the loss of an eye, etc. - was even drawn up (WoE, No. 12, Nov/Dec 1979).

The publicity given on numerous occasions to this problem, which was far too often considered by the victims themselves as a shameful experience, long preventing them from reporting the violent acts to which they had been subjected to institutions or even third parties, helped to curb the actions of certain violent individuals, who were no longer sure of being able to act in all impunity.

Over the past ten years, associations, followed by the public powers, finally began stigmatising sexual harassment in the workplace. While this shackle on physical self-determination was denounced later than rape and family violence, it is not likely to disappear from view. In the United Kingdom, the Trade Union Congress (TUC) went so far as to publish a brochure in 1983 for trade union leaders as the Congress believed that sexual harassment undermined all of the attempts made to achieve sexual equality at work (WoE, No. 32, 15 Sep/15 Nov 1983). In 1984 a female apprentice mechanic won the first case of sexual harassment tried in Northern Ireland and was awarded 1,000 pounds in damages.

In Belgium, things moved fairly quickly after the Ministry of Employment and Labour, acting on a proposal of the Women's Labour Committee, asked two university professors in 1984 to investigate the situation. In 1986, the Secretary of State for Emancipation, Miet Smet, launched a vast campaign against sexual harassment head by the slogan "Sex colleague? Ex-colleague!" and published a booklet of advice that also contained the addresses of the female trade union representatives and youth organizations that could be contacted (WoE, No. 15 Nov 1986/15 Jan 1987). In the Netherlands, the office for complaints of sexual harassment, called "Hands Off!", published its first report on sexual harassment in 1987, in which it noted that the victims were usually new hires or temporary personnel.

Finally, 11% of the respondents participating in a 1984 survey of 5,447 female salaried employees 15 years old and over in the ten Member States that was carried out at the European Commission's request stated that they had been the objects of sexual blackmail (Supplement 20 to Women of Europe).

This burst of initiatives and debates did not go unheeded by the European authorities, which tackled the problem of violence in all of its forms on numerous occasions. On 28-29 January 1986, the European Parliament's Committee on Women's Rights examined a report by Mrs d'Ancona (Dutch Socialist) that showed the spread of this violence as well as considering all of its forms, e.g., sexual violence, beatings, sexual harassment, child abuse within the family, the case of women in minority groups, political violence (women refugees), "trade" in women and sex trips, prostitution, pornography, etc. Given the difficulty of finding the means to check this scourge, the European Commission's representative suggested action well upstream by trying, for example, to erase as much as possible existing stereotypes that are inculcated into the individual during childhood and adolescence, stressing the dignity of being a working woman, and encouraging an overall shift in mentalities (WoE, No. 43, 15 Nov 1985/15 Jan 1986). Mrs d'Ancona's report was adopted by the European Parliament in April 1986.

Finally, the chapter on the fight against violence would not be complete without mentioning the efforts made, especially in France, to eradicate the clitoral excisions and other forms of sexual mutilation practised by some immigrant families.

To sum up, the last ten years were marked by true concern for the woman's right to physical and sexual self-determination, as well as, one might add, the importance of keeping her body in good health and in good shape through sport. Much work remains to be done to achieve the goals expressed by women's associations. Daily reality is also a by-product of the law. In particular, once laws have been adopted, they must be enforced.

2. Women and their families

If there is one concept that has evolved considerably since the sixties, it is that of the family. Long symbolized by a married couple accompanied by their two or three children, the family now takes on various shapes, including unmarried couples with children and single parents (usually women, more seldom men) with their children. There are more and more children born out of wedlock, i.e., "illegitimate" children (even if they are recognised by both parents). The number of single-parent families is also increasing. These changes, combined with the demands of women seeking legal guarantees of equality with their spouses or companions on the one hand and government concern over falling birth rates on the other, led to the adoption in many countries of new measures adapted to these new families.

Without claiming to give even a rough analysis of the policies on families conducted by the Community's twelve Member States, the following section gives a condensation of the very rich information provided by Women of Europe on the chief innovations that have emerged affecting first the creation, then the breakup, of a family, for, while the number of marriages is decreasing, the number of divorces is on the rise.

Parenting

Families, whether single-parent or two-parent, generally include one or more children. Few couples (and increasingly, single women) live out their lives without having children, especially at a time of sustained efforts to vanquish sterility. Improved monitoring of pregnancies and longer maternity leaves have increased the chances of taking pregnancies to term. Moreover, the development of new techniques for reproduction (*in vitro* fertilization and embryo transfers and artificial insemination, without considering the use of surrogate mothers) has greatly reduced the number of women unable to have children.

The problem faced by mothers, regardless of their "family situation", is that of child care. Those who can choose between continuing a career and staying at home weigh the pros and cons of each alternative. Those who cannot choose and must continue working are often forced to adopt a lifestyle of constant "acrobatics"; if they are forced to give up working - through the lack of child-care facilities or enough money to pay for them - , they must support a larger number of people on a smaller salary. The rights of mothers and fathers thus start with the implementation of the means allowing them to found a family under the "least detrimental conditions".

The achievements in increasing the availability of child care facilities have fallen far short of the needs in all countries, whatever the efforts made. In France, the credits released by Mrs Dufoix, the Secretary of State responsible for Family Welfare, in 1981 to be used to create an additional capacity of 10,000 in community and family daycare centres were far too little to meet the demand. Ireland, especially Dublin, addressed the problem of mothers who fall ill and whose spouses cannot take a time off from work to take care of their young children. The health authorities had the idea of placing these children during the day with "foster mothers" in the same neighbourhood who could take them to school and let them play with their neighbourhood pals. The children, who went home in the evening, thus were not cut off from their environments and the foster families each received a small payment in exchange (WoE, No. 22, Sep/Oct 1981). This idea will undoubtedly go far, and may even be adopted by other towns and in other countries.

At its March 1986 session, the European Parliament adopted a report by Mrs Peus on child-care facilities that urged the Member States to redouble their efforts to make daycare available to all. The report was adopted by a slim majority and many of the MEPs abstained. Some MEPs felt that women were being pushed into leaving their homes and neglecting their children. For his part, Peter Sutherland, speaking on behalf of the European Commission, felt that sharing family duties was a prerequisite for true occupational equality (WoE, No. 15 March/15 May 1986).

This is an issue that is felt keenly in two-parent families, which have been evolving - not without difficulty - towards equal rights and responsibilities for mothers and fathers. Women and women's associations have struggled for years and are continuing to fight for the acceptance of a new concept of the couple and parents' roles. Men, too, are starting to clamour for access to territories occupied until now mainly by women. Governments have had to endorse a number of practices and ideas that have broken with the past. This has given the latter more legitimacy in the eyes of the public overall and consequently helped their spread.

Considerable progress has been made here and there in Europe in establishing this equality, even the interchangeability of the mother and father's roles. More and more salaried employees are eligible for parental leave, granted, in addition to the traditional "maternity leave" in the narrow sense, to one or the other of the parents wishing to devote him/herself to the care of a very small child. This possibility, which, for the time being, is open only to salaried employees, is one of the new rights acquired by the implementation of policies of professional equality that we will examine later. It has too many repercussions on the very idea of family and the equality of men and women within the family to be glossed over. Indeed, it is a prime example of the new developments that have marked the last ten years and has been (and continues to be) strongly encouraged by the EC. In a 1976 directive on the treatment of men and women in the working world, the EC stipulated that workers of both sexes could take leaves to take care of their young children. The Commission had even followed this up by initiating infringement procedures against Germany because only the mother was eligible for the leave that was

allowed after the maternity leave could be taken by the mother only and against Italy because men were not eligible for adoption leaves.

In its 1982-85 Action Programme the European Commission observed that one of the ways to achieve the gradual harmonization of each person's responsibilities was to extend parental leaves and leaves for family reasons and added that a Community directive along these lines would be adopted⁴. At the time of this programme's launching, parental leaves existed in only three Member States - Belgium (law of 4 August 1978), France (law of 2 July 1977, completed by a 1986 law) and Italy (law of 1977), the only one of the three in which this leave was paid. Four other countries joined these pioneers in 1985, namely, Germany, Luxembourg (where it was decided to pay a "child-rearing salary" to the spouse rearing one or more children), Greece and Denmark. The Danes had even begun debating this subject in the mid-70s. One proposal that had raised a lot of interest consisted in granting a parental leave to follow up the maternity leave that could be taken alternately by the two parents, as well as giving both parents the possibility of being absent from work during the first 7 to 8 years of the child's life in the event of illness or during such critical periods as the transition from daycare centre to kindergarten and then elementary school (WoE, No. 4, July-Aug 1978). However, the arrangements approved in the different countries were not identical and did not always satisfy the women's associations, which felt them to be too restrictive (e.g., in Germany). Moreover, neither the Netherlands nor the United Kingdom nor Ireland included such a clause in their "equal rights arsenals". Still, some ground-breaking initiatives, such as the 2-week "paternity leave" that the Times has granted to its journalists since 1980, were taken in the United Kingdom (WoE, No. 14, March/April 1980).

After ascertaining that women were generally the ones who stayed at home, Ireland set up a system making it possible to grant homemakers a kind of salary, under certain conditions. This system applies only to the spouses of wage-earners whose taxes are deducted at the source and consists of weekly payments of 9.60 Irish pounds to the spouse, offset by the automatic deduction of a slightly higher sum from the husband's income. 37,000 of the 350,000 women affected by this plan were in favour of it (WoE, No. 24 Jan/Feb 1982).

Given the disparateness of the situations, a draft directive was drawn up and submitted for discussion by the relevant European bodies. It stipulated that parental leave would be granted to the mother and father, adoptive mother and father, stepmother and stepfather and any person acting in such individuals' stead if the latter were seriously ill or deceased. The length of the leave was set at 3 months and a minimum income, in the form of benefits to be paid out of public monies, was foreseen (Supplement No. 19 to WoE). The Community's second Action Programme on Equal Opportunities (1986-1990) stressed again the importance of parental leaves⁵.

⁴ "Parental leave" is defined as "leave granted to a male or female worker with family responsibilities in respect of a dependent child, of a duration to be determined and within a given period following the end of maternity", whereas "leave for family reasons is leave which a male or female worker with family responsibilities may obtain in the case of sickness of a child or another member of the family of which the worker is a part, or in such other circumstances as are deemed appropriate." In "Community Law and Women", Supplement No. 12 to Women of Europe, study by Françoise Remuet-Alexandrou.

⁵ This directive has not yet been adopted by the Council of Ministers of the European Communities.

The demands for equality between spouses are not limited to the period during which the spouses are the mothers and fathers of young children. Equality is being demanded, and is on the way to being recognised, for all of the acts accomplished during the spouses' lives together.

Equality within the couple

Over the last decade, many of the countries in which spouses were not treated as equals by the law in accomplishing acts concerning the family abolished all or part of such inequality. Even where the laws have not yet been changed, women's associations have kept the public debate alive.

In the Netherlands, for example, the Emancipation Commission recommended in 1978 that the Dutch Government make some changes in the Civil Code to correct contradictions with the egalitarian spirit that it felt characterized Dutch citizens of both sexes. More specifically, it proposed correcting the difference in the minimum ages for marriage for boys and girls (18 years and 16 years, respectively, at the time); that the clause requiring the husband to give his wife a sum sufficient for running the household also be abolished, because this practice could only feed the idea that the woman alone was responsible for managing the household whereas most married couples shared household chores; and, finally, that families should be given the possibility of seeking the magistrate's decision in disputes over parental authority. The Commission contended that while, in theory, parental authority was exercised by both parents, in practice the father held sway; this was not a sign of equality. Two years later the Justice Minister and Secretary of State for Emancipation submitted proposed various changes along these lines to the Parliament. The father and mother now have equal say in choosing their domicile and educating their children. The father's decision is no longer predominant and, in the event of disagreement, the spouses can take the matter to their local justice of the peace.

In France, a bill on the equality of spouses in matrimonial regimes and managing the possessions of their children who were still minors was introduced in Parliament by Monique Pelletier, Minister for Women's Status, in 1979. In 1983, during the adoption of the new law on finances, an amendment introduced the joint management by the spouses of the family's income and removed the notion of "head of household" from the General Tax Code (WoE, No. 29, Jan/Feb 1983).

Greece, where such practices as dowries were still current and the husband's prerogatives were very great, undertook a major reform in the early '80s. A text aimed at eliminating all discrimination on the basis of sex within the family was adopted unanimously by the Greek Parliament on 26 January 1983. Thereafter, all family matters were to be handled and settled by both spouses mutual agreement and each spouse was required to take on his or her share of family obligations, expenditures and financial liabilities proportionate to his or her resources, possession and earned income. The dowry was abolished. What is more, the notion of paternal authority was replaced by that of parental authority.

Another frequently-encountered demand is that of women wishing to keep their maiden names and sometimes transmit them to their children. In France, marriage has no effect on the spouses' names - it is even forbidden for civil servants to address married people by another name. Substituting or adding the spouse's surname for or to one's own is allowed on sufferance (WoE, No. 13, Jan/Feb 1980). Moreover, since recently, giving children both parents' surnames is also allowed. However, the rule varies in the other countries.

In Belgium, a bill introduced in the Chamber of Deputies in 1983 by a Liberal deputy and countersigned by MPs from six different parties allowed married women to no longer have to renounce their maiden names, giving the woman the possibility of either keeping her maiden name alone or coupling it with her husband's surname in an order to be agreed upon. In the latter case, only the first of the two names could be given to the children. In Luxembourg, in 1985, Deputy Lydie Err, President of the Socialist Women, launched a petition against Article 9 of the 1924 voting law requiring married women to vote under their husbands' names. The signatories asked that, at the time of marriage, the spouses be allowed to adopt one of the two last names, to adopt a compound name composed of the two surnames (in an order to be agreed upon), or to keep their respective last names, with the child's surname being determined by the choice made by the parents at their marriage (WoE, No. 42, 15 Sep/15 Nov 1985). This being so, one should be aware of the fact that in the Netherlands, only 1-2% of married women actually use their right to keep their maiden names. This minority consists of young women with a high school or higher education and living in the large cities (WoE, No. 25, March/April 1982).

One last idea is starting to make headway in Europe. It is that of taxing spouses separately so that the second salary - usually the woman's - is less heavily penalized. Here, however, progress has been much slower than for the adoption of measures that cost the State little or nothing. In the United Kingdom, married women won the right to be considered "taxpayers in their own right" in 1978. In Ireland, the Supreme Court ruled in 1980 that it was anticonstitutional to combine the two spouses' incomes when calculating their income tax rate (WoE, No. 14, March/April 1980). In France, after the Socialists' return to power in 1981, Women's Rights Minister Yvette Roudy prompted a study of the issue of separate taxation, which continues to be a hot issue among the French Socialist women. However, one of the Socialist Party's spokesmen, Laurent Fabius, warned them in the summer of 1987 against pushing for a change that would cost the State billions.

Couples face other problems that cannot be settled by laws. These include the distribution of household chores. While men are participating in household chores more than they used to, women still carry more than half of the burden, even when they work. In a study of Belgium in 1977, for example, a sociologist showed that the average man devoted 36 minutes a day to household chores, compared with 2 hours and 42 minutes for the "working" woman and 5 hours and 36 minutes for housewives (WoE, No. 00, November 1977). At about the same time in Germany it appeared that while a majority of men and women made family and child-rearing decisions together, 90% of the couples surveyed were satisfied with a division of labour giving men the "outside" tasks and women the "inside" tasks (WoE, No. 1, Jan/Feb 1978). In France, a report drawn up at the request of the Minister for Women's Rights noted that household duties took up an average of 4 hours of a working woman's time and 1 hr 40 min of a working man's time daily (WoE, No. 25, March/April 1982).

The acceptance of equal roles varies with the age of the individual (being greater the younger the person) as well as from one country to the next. In a vast survey of the European Community conducted in 1983 at the request of the Commission's Directorate-General for Information, from 25 to 51% of the respondents in each country felt that the following statement corresponded with their idea of a family:

"A family where the two partners each have an equally absorbing job and where housework and the care of the children are shared equally between them."

The country-by-country breakdown of favourable responses was as follows: Belgium: 31%; Denmark: 46%; Germany: 26%, France: 40%; Ireland: 30%; Italy: 41%; Luxembourg: 25%; Netherlands: 38%; United Kingdom: 37%; Greece: 51%; EEC: 36% (Supplement No. 16 to Women of Europe).

Still, polls conducted more recently in several of these countries show that the aspirations towards greater equality have risen and that the coming of age of the boys and girls who have grown up in a society of increased role equality, enjoying the rights won, often against great odds, by their mothers but that they take for granted, can only strengthen the trend that emerged in the 1970s. In fact, more and more signs of this are given by phenomena that, while still in the minority, would have greatly surprised observers 20 years ago.

Thus, in the Netherlands in 1980, the male members of the country's leading trade union, the FNV, were offered a training course called "Men, too, have a right to the sink" to learn about household chores (WoE, No. 14, March/April 1980). In Belgium in 1986, Infor-femmes, published a brochure called *Le conjoint abandonné* (loosely translated as "half a couple") for men and women, married or not, who suddenly find themselves on their own. Moreover, "househusbands", while not legion, are known to exist, and the idea that men are not incapable of taking care of a child has made gains in public opinion. The aforementioned 1983 survey of the EEC stressed that 67% of the respondents agreed with the following aim: "Arrange things so that when a child is unwell it could be either the father or the mother who stay (sic) home to care for it." (Supplement No. 16 to Women of Europe)

Changing family structures

The general trend seems to be one of redefining roles within the family unit. It is also marked by acceptance of living together without the sacrament of marriage, which situation has made great gains among younger city-dwellers with high school or college educations. Some countries have acted accordingly. In the late seventies, Denmark's Matrimonial Affairs Committee was already examining the possibility of reducing inheritance taxes for unmarried couples. In contrast, Luxembourg refused, in 1984, to grant young couples (as well as single parents) access to a new loan. This refusal concluded a stormy parliamentary debate during which the Minister for the Family spoke out against "those who place themselves outside of society by refusing to marry but wait for the State to sanction this attitude" (WoE, No. 34, 15 Jan/15 March 1984).

While living together is accepted more easily *de facto* than *de jure*, most of the Member States have made considerable efforts to wipe out the differences between illegitimate and legitimate children.

In Belgium in 1979 - at the time of the new Government's formation - the Committee on Women's Status qualified as particularly urgent the reform of the legislation concerning the right of kinship, which did not exist for illegitimate children, who literally had to be adopted by their own mothers (WoE, No. 8, March/April 1979). In 1978, an unwed mother forced to adopt her own child had taken the matter to the European Court of Human Rights, which ruled in 1979 that the Belgian law violated the European Convention on Human Rights, which proclaimed all children equal.

In 1982, Italy's Council of Ministers introduced a bill in the Chamber of Deputies that put legitimate and illegitimate children on equal footing in the eyes of the law.

In 1983, the revision of the Greek Civil Code, which, as we have seen, was adopted unanimously, gave children born out of wedlock the same rights as legitimate children.

In Ireland, where, in the early '80s, children born out of wedlock had no rights to inherit from their fathers and limited inheritance rights from their mothers, a reform tending towards non-discrimination was adopted in 1986 (WoE, No. 44, 15 January/15 March 1986).

This concern for children also led public opinion and many institutions to "recognise" single-parent families. Thus, in 1979, a Socialist member of the Luxembourg Parliament informed a goodly number of her fellow MPs that the *Fonds national de solidarité* (National Solidarity Fund), which granted special benefits to widows with handicapped dependent children, gave no such support to unwed mothers in the same situation. She then extracted a promise from the Justice Minister that this injustice would be rectified (WoE, No. 12, Nov/Dec 1979). In 1981, a Liberal MP stressed in her turn that, in a recent census, the question concerning the number of children was asked of married, widowed, and divorced women but not single women. She succeeded in getting directives to be given to change the item's wording.

The problem of single-parent families was also discussed by the European Parliament at its July 1986 session on the basis of a report by Marisa Cinciari Rodano. The Parliament asked, by a very large majority (197 for, 21 against, 7 abstentions), that the single-parent family be considered a family unit like any other and that efforts be made to solve the financial difficulties of single women with dependent children as part of a policy to achieve true equal opportunity for all women.

The diversification of family structures is thus accepted with increasing ease and is being increasingly codified, even if the movement is not being followed uniformly. The breakup of the family has also gained greater social acceptance. Here, too, the laws in the EC's Member States have also taken note of this development.

Divorce and separation

Today it is common knowledge that roughly one-fourth to one-third of all marriages in many European countries are likely to end in divorce and that in the countries where dissuasive measures were still in effect in the seventies, the number of separations and ensuing ambiguous legal situations rose at the same rate as legal separations. The last decade has thus been marked, with one exception, by the Governments' attempts to simplify divorce proceedings, re-examine the issue of alimony and, in some cases, pay more attention to the father's rights.

In Luxembourg, the law of 5 December 1978 included for the first time an "objective ground" for divorce, i.e., the couple's irremediable disunion, expressed by at least three years' *de facto* separation (WoE, No. 10, May/June/July 1979). In Belgium, more importance was also given to physical separation as of 1983, when it became possible to obtain an automatic divorce after five years of effective separation (instead of the ten years' separation required until then). In Greece, under a new law that went into effect in 1983, at least four years' separation gave an automatic right to divorce without the need for any specific ground for divorce. Moreover, divorce by mutual consent was also one of the options in the new law (WoE, No. 29, Jan/Feb 1983).

There was also a tendency to dissociate the notion of "fault" from that of the alimony required for the penniless spouse, if such a distinction had not already been made, and to provide better guarantees for the spouse without resources. The Italian Senate proposed in 1977 that the spouse without his or her own insurance plan should continue to be covered by the ex-spouse's plan and that a divorcé(e) have a right to collect the ex-spouse's pension if the latter died without remarrying (or if the second spouse also died). In Germany, new laws that went into effect in 1981 gave both ex-spouses rights to half of the other spouse's annuities

and pensions at the time of the divorce. This should improve the situations of women who stayed home to raise the children. The law also specified that the spouses might waive this right at the time of their marriage, but Minister Antje Huber advised German women not to deprive themselves of this hard-won right (WoE, No. 23, Nov/Dec 1981).

In some countries, the public authorities have also tried to step in for the missing spouse to prevent the spouse and dependent children without resources sinking into abject misery. In France, for example, Monique Pelletier, having ascertained that three out of ten pensions were never paid and three were paid erratically, asked a commission to study the possibility for the State to copy some of its neighbours' laws. In Denmark, for example, a minimum amount that is tied to the cost-of-living index is guaranteed for all children of divorced parents up to the age of legal majority. If it is not paid, the commune's social aid office advances the money, then takes action against the debtor to recover its outlay. The French project was completed in 1982. On International Women's Day (8 March), the President of the Republic, François Mitterrand, announced that divorced women not receiving alimony would benefit under a new arrangement whereby an orphan's benefit of FFr426 per child per month would be paid to all single parents who had not received their alimony payments for two months and a supplement to those who received less than this amount, with the *Caisse d'allocations familiales* (Family Allowance Fund) then required to recover the funds from the parties at fault (WoE, No. 26, May/June/July 1982).

In Luxembourg, a law was adopted in July 1980 stipulating that a national solidarity fund could advance (and subsequently recover) alimony payments (WoE, No. 16, Sep/Oct 1980).

This being so, the movement to achieve equality of rights and responsibilities for men and women has included measures that benefitted not just women, but their ex-spouses as well. Thus, in 1983 a woman was sentenced, for the first time in Luxembourg's judicial history, to three months in prison (suspended sentence) for refusing to pay alimony to her ex-husband, who had custody of their children (WoE, No. 30, March/April 1983).

Similarly, opinion in the United Kingdom has started to question the automaticity and definitive nature of alimony for women. A law adopted in 1983 with a view to establishing the equality of husbands and wives, stated that the husband must see to the children's needs but that the alimony paid to the first wife could be stopped, at the court's discretion, after a certain lapse of time. These provisions drew violent reactions from women at the time (WoE, No. 33, 15 Nov 1983/15 Jan 1984).

In Germany in 1984, legislation was enacted that likewise stated that the measures taken at the time of divorce - both the amount and duration of the alimony payments - could be temporary (WoE, No. 36, Aug 1984).

We might add to this a 1984 decision of the Folketing (Denmark) to grant the sharing of parental authority to all parents, whether or not they were married, in order to restore some power to unwed fathers, who, as in many other countries, had much fewer rights vis-à-vis their illegitimate children in the event of a separation than the mothers did (WoE, No. 37, 15 Sep/15 Nov 1984).

Ireland, whose citizens still do not have the right to divorce, stands alone in the EC. Many groups and politicians have tried to introduce bills allowing divorce, but in vain. In 1983 the Irish even rejected, by a 63% majority, a proposal to include the right to divorce in the Constitution, despite the efforts of Prime Minister Fitzgerald, who was personally engaged in the battle and had taken care to point out how moderate the reform was. Indeed, the proposal would have allowed couples whose marriages had failed to seek divorce from the court if, after five years, their reconciliation efforts had failed (WoE, No. 32, 15 Sep/15 Nov 1983). The situation was so complicated (because separations occurred without

hope of being regularized and the children born out of wedlock were long kept in a position of absolute illegitimacy) that the Irish Council on Women's Affairs proposed changing the law on marriage to raise the minimum age to 18 years, include a three-month waiting period before granting the marriage licence, requiring blood tests for the engaged couple, and advising the latter to draw up their wills at the time of their marriage and check, by means of a certificate, that their future partners in life were not already married (WoE, No. 28, Nov/Dec 1982).

Another issue related to life as a couple, adultery, has shaken Ireland in the past decade. Under Irish law, a man can prosecute his adulterous wife's "accomplice" but a woman does not have the same right vis-à-vis her unfaithful husband. Some parties have suggesting abolishing this inequity by giving the wife the same rights as her husband. The Fine Gael Deputy Michael Keating preferred abolishing the law altogether and introduced a bill along these lines in the Dail, arguing that the current law was based on a feudal concept of "property" that women as well as men owed it to themselves to impugn (WoE, No. 14, March/April 1980). The Dail did not agree to follow him down this path, but the Government promised to draw up a broader law, feeling that the "abstentionists" had been wrong not to provide any measure protecting the injured party. According to Women of Europe, feminist movements were incensed upon hearing of the outcome of the debate and stressed that it was unacceptable to continue to consider women goods for their husbands' exclusive use.

All in all, women are better protected now in the event of the breakup of their families than they were in the early seventies. So are husbands, to the extent that their relationships with their children are better safeguarded. While families may be split by divorce, they can also be sundered by the death of one of the spouses - usually the husband, given women's longer life expectancies. Here, too, efforts have been made in the Community as a whole to help widows. Indeed, widows' associations, which have been very active, are working so that such women can try to "live like they did before", despite an extremely difficult situation.

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Women's private lives have changed significantly in the last ten years. Having gained (with a few exceptions) the possibility to control their reproductive performance, more childcare assistance and a status that tends more and more to place them on an equal footing with men (who, by law, may no longer run the family), having succeeded in changing laws and mentalities so that men can no longer inflict on women with impunity the violence that they have too long suffered in silence, European women have achieved a degree of autonomy that makes them partners to be contended with, especially in the working world.

II. WOMEN AND WORK

More and more women have entered the job market since the seventies. Their share in the working population of the Euro-10 rose from 36.5% in 1979 to 37.3% in 1982 (Supplement No. 14 to Women of Europe). While the figures vary from country to country, the trend occurred almost everywhere, reaching a high of 43% in France, for example, in 1985.

The figures also reveal a fundamental change in the types of work involved. More and more women are working as salaried employees outside their homes. This raises more complex problems than those encountered in the past. Women did not walk into the world of salaried employees through the front door, however. In the early seventies, the vast majority of working women were at the bottom of the socio-economic job pyramid, were not as well paid as men and had much less promising prospects of advancement. A little later, as some forms of inequality were tending to disappear, unemployment surged, striking female workers much harder than men. This confirmed the greater vulnerability of the female working population and triggered the implementation of policies to try to reduce the most flagrant differences between the sexes.

This section will start with a review of this trend, based on the wealth of information to be found in Women of Europe. We will then go on to analyse various approaches to solving the problem at one of its main roots, i.e., that of educating and training girls and, going one step further, re-educating society as a whole.

To try to push through this change, which, it must be said, is far from completed, women and women's associations fought, as they did to win more freedom and equality in their private lives. However, they were much more strongly supported in this struggle by a formidable ally, the European Community, which, according to law, must intervene to correct disparities in employment. Not only has the EC been extremely active in this area, but it has also proved to be extremely imaginative, trying to extend the boundaries of its area of jurisdiction in order to help the advance of women's rights, although the latter are not included as such in the Treaty of Rome.

The famous Article 119 of the Treaty of Rome states, "Each Member State shall during the first stage ensure and subsequently maintain the application of the principle that men and women should receive equal pay for equal work." The aim at the time was not to enshrine the principle of equality between men and women, but to prevent excessive differences in wages from distorting the free play of competition between industries in different Member States⁶.

Under the combined action of the European authorities, national Governments and women themselves, occupational equality has undisputably progressed, all the more so as a two-track logic was used, that of aligning women's rights with those already held by men on the one hand and "broadening parity", i.e., the equal balance of men and women within the labour structure, which tended to consider the question of employment as part of the entire series of problems of role equality that confronts societies, on the other.

⁶ "Women at work in the European Community: 50 questions/50 answers", Supplement No. 15 to Women of Europe, by Christine Jonckheere and Florence Gérard.

1. The logic of alignment: successes and limits

The working world in the late '70s was characterized, as was pointed out from the start, by great discrepancies in the positions and salaries of men versus women.

Changes in the law

The European institutions lost little time in tackling this situation. Already in the sixties the Commission of the European Communities had pointed out the difficulties that would be encountered in enforcing Article 119. Then, after ordering studies of the situations in the Member States, it submitted a Social Action Programme to the EC's Council of Ministers. On 21 January 1974 the Council made public a resolution expressing its desire to conduct an egalitarian policy. It then adopted a number of directives along these lines: on 10 February 1975, Directive 75/117/EEC "on the approximation of the laws of the Member States relating to the application of the principle of equal pay for men and women"; on 9 February 1976, Directive 76/207/EEC "on the implementation of the principle of equal treatment for men and women in respect of access to employment, training and job promotions and working conditions"; and on 19 December 1978 Directive 79/7/EEC "on the progressive implementation of the principle of equal treatment for men and women in matters of social security". After launching this first string of directives, the EC did not slacken its efforts, but presented an Action Programme on Equal Opportunities (1982-1985) that went even further towards achieving a true occupational balance.

The Member States had to remove from their laws and regulations all forms of discrimination within two years concerning pay, 2½ years concerning treatment, and 4 years in social security legislation. They were also required to inform the workers of both sexes of the new measures.

The Community's injunctions did not produce effects automatically, as either the Member States failed to amend their laws within the prescribed time limits or, in practice, the employers did not rush to comply. However, changes came about, little by little, starting with the laws, due to these European initiatives.

Equal pay

Directive 75/117 asserted that any discrimination based on sex for the same work or work of equal value was illegal, job classification systems had to be drawn up using criteria shared by male and female workers and all measures contrary to this principle had to disappear from collective bargaining agreements and individual employment contracts (Supplement 12 to Women of Europe). Provisions along these lines already existed in some of the Member States, e.g., France (law of 22 November 1972), Ireland (law of 1 July 1974), the United Kingdom (Equal Pay Act of 29 May 1970), Luxembourg (law of 10 July 1974), Italy (Article 37 of the Constitution) and Germany (statute of 23 June 1949).

Other countries quickly complied with the EC's demands. Thus, the Netherlands adopted the law of 20 March 1975 that gave a fairly broad definition of equal pay: The wages are compared with those usually paid by the company involved to a worker of the other sex carrying out work of the same or noticeably same value. Failing this, another company is taken as a reference. Belgium established the principle of equal pay in Article 1 of Collective Labour Agreement No. 25 dated 15 October 1975. Denmark followed suit on 4 February 1976.

However, with the exceptions of Ireland and Italy, none of the countries that already had the specific legislation or adopted it to comply with Directive 77/117 gave the Community immediate satisfaction. The latter thus initiated infringement procedures and generally obtained changes giving more guarantees to women.

Four of the countries - Germany, France, the United Kingdom and Luxembourg - that had, in a way, jumped the gun, were called to order. On 10 May 1979 Germany was served formal notice to take specific measures, which it did in the form of the law of 21 August 1980 on equal treatment that established the principle of equal pay, whereby work was considered to be equivalent when two people performed work that was not identical but, from a general point of view, there were no pertinent differences between the two jobs if the level of training, degree of responsibility, working conditions and efforts were taken into account (Supplement 12 to Women of Europe). The text also provided for the case of people who performed work that was different only in appearance in order to allow their classification, after examination, under the same category if possible. France, which received a demand to correct its situation in April 1979, abrogated one month later a discriminatory clause affecting mining operations that granted housing as part of the salary to heads of households only. Luxembourg was the target of an infringement procedure in March 1980 that led it to replace the "head-of-household allowance" with a "family allowance" (WoE, No. 15, May/June/July 1980). In the United Kingdom, an Equal Pay Amendment Regulation was enacted in December 1983 to regularize a situation that had also been deemed unsatisfactory.

The Netherlands, Belgium and Denmark did not comply fully with the Community prescriptions in their new legislation, either. The Netherlands, which had excluded civil servants from the scope of its law, was forced in 1980 to extend the benefits of Directive 75/117 (and, at the same time, Directive 76/207) to public service positions. Belgium was reproached in 1981 for the fact that household allowances were granted to all married male civil servants but to married female civil servants only if the latter had a dependent child (Supplement 12 to WoE); a royal order of September 1981 corrected the situation in line with the EC's demands. Denmark, for its part, was ordered to change the text of its law, which applied to "the same work" only, whereas the directive included the notion of "work of the same value". This was duly carried out.

Equal treatment

The second directive was designed to guarantee equal treatment in access to jobs and vocational training as well as working conditions. It was intended to eradicate all forms of discrimination, including those called "indirect". Exceptions were accepted when sex was a "determining condition" as, for example, for actors and models, to protect pregnancies and in the event of affirmative action to correct *de facto* inequality.

The late seventies were thus placed under the sign of this new demand, which embraced a much larger area than the previous one. It should be pointed out that two countries already had the legal instruments enabling them to embark on this path towards equal treatment.

France had modified its Labour Code in 1975 to eliminate all discrimination related to the "family situation", but it authorised derogations in public sector recruiting. The Community thus initiated an infringement procedure against it that led to the adoption of a new law (5 July 1982) enshrining the principle of equal access to public employment. A new, broader bill concerning occupational equality in its entirety was made law in 1983. This law comprised the following three parts:

* Thereafter, it was illegal to discriminate on the basis of sex. A trade union representative might go to court on behalf of and in the stead of a salaried employee whose rights were violated. If the person was dismissed for the very reason for his or her legal action, he/she had to be reinstated. The 1972 law on equal payment was strengthened for, in the event of litigation, the burden of proof lay with the employer, not with the employee. In addition, a definition of the equal value of work was proposed. Finally, it became possible to compare the wages in effect in different establishments of the same company.

* The law created the conditions of equal opportunity by authorising temporary "catch-up" measures for women. Under this scheme, a firm was required to submit an annual report comparing male and female employment data. This report might give rise to a "job equality plan" including specific measures directed at female work and employment, pursuant to negotiations with labour and management. Financial aid was available for the most exemplary plans.

* The law also created a "Higher Council on Job Equality" to participate in drawing up job equality policies. The members of this council included representatives of both labour and management (WoE, No. 31, 15 July/15 Sep 1983).

Next came the United Kingdom which, through the Sex Discrimination Act of 12 November 1975 and the Sex Discrimination Order of 2 July 1976, had a fairly complete legal arsenal (prohibiting both indirect discrimination and provisions linked to marital status). However, infringement procedures were nevertheless initiated against this country by the European Commission because, for example, the law did not state that the contrary causes were void, or certain activities (such as those of undertakings with less than 5 employees) were excluded from the scope of the Directive. In 1981, the Equal Opportunity Commission proposed improving the existing system by drawing up a "Code of good employment practices" for submission to Parliament. This code consisted of three chapters. The first one gave detailed information on changing equal opportunity policies in employment; the second one gave practical explanations on how to avoid discrimination in recruiting, promoting and providing vocational training; and the third covered government employment services (WoE, No. 21, May/June/July 1981).

Italy, Ireland, Denmark and Belgium made up a second subset of countries that were very quick to comply with Directive 76/207 by adopting the requisite laws or completing those that were already on the books. Italy rectified its situation in 1977 already (WoE, No. 00, Nov 1977), but not enough, in the European Commission's eyes, for the latter initiated infringement procedures against Italy a few years later because female workers were not given sufficient possibilities for legal recourse and the adoption leave mentioned in some texts was not available for men. It should be added that Italy eliminated the difference in the age requirements for men and women taking civil service exams in 1978 (WoE, No. 5, Sep/Oct 1978).

In 1977, Ireland adopted a law prohibiting both direct and indirect discrimination that did not, however, cover (besides positions in the army and air force) establishments such as psychiatric hospitals in which the patients were all of the same sex, and restricted men's access to the profession of midwife. This double restriction prompted the European Commission to service formal notice to rectify the situation that was suspended after Ireland amended the initial law by the addition of regulations in October 1982. Another formal notice served in March 1983 called for the inclusion of the army, police force, wardens and "work for close relatives" in the scope of the law. In practice, Ireland did indeed intend to improve the law. It asked the Equal Employment Agency in 1978 to study a suit that had reached the Industrial Court (especially the employers' arguments) to enable it to amend the law so that it could no longer be got around (WoE, No. 5, Sep/Oct 1978).

Denmark completed its own arsenal with a law in 1978 prohibiting all discrimination related to pregnancy. However, employers were not bound to comply with the equal treatment clauses unless the men and women worked at the same establishment, prompting the European Commission to serve several formal notices on the country. Denmark eventually complied by extending the scope of the directive to include company regulations that concerned more than one employer or more than one enterprise but did not give the directive any general authority (Supplement 12). A practical measure went into effect in May 1981, when fourteen regional equal rights counselors started working in the various regional employment offices (WoE, No. 21, May/June/July 1981). Denmark later (1987) had the Folketing examine a broader "Action Plan" for equal treatment.

Last but not least, Belgium adopted by a unanimous vote the law of 4 August 1978 that stressed, for example, the fact that job offers could not mention the sex of the candidates being sought. Here, too, infringement procedures were initiated, firstly because the equal training clauses applied only to apprenticeships in the narrow sense and did not cover academic training, secondly because of the refusal to let women enter the "machines" sector in maritime navigation. The first demand for rectification was followed by a royal order "on equal treatment as concerns access to the training given in academic establishments" (Supplement 19 to Women of Europe).

Finally, the third group consisted of countries - the Netherlands, Germany and Luxembourg - that had not complied with the EC Directives within the specified time limits and had to draw up draft legislation - after receiving formal notices from the European Commission - complying with Directive 76/207. The Netherlands adopted two laws in 1980 (one in March, the other in July), then prepared in 1981 the preliminary draft of a law "against sexual discrimination" that prohibited all discrimination based on marital status or sexual behaviour (thereby protecting homosexuals) (WoE, No. 20, March/April 1981). Germany adopted a law in 1980 that covered only private-sector wage-earners (and consequently excluded civil servants and the self-employed). This motivated an infringement procedure in 1982, after which the matter was taken to the EC Court of Justice in 1983. Luxembourg fell in line with a law adopted in December 1981 that enabled the Commission to suspend its infringement procedure.

Equality in social security matters

The third directive adopted in the late seventies was aimed at gradually achieving equal treatment of men and women in social security matters. The first thrust was aimed at statutory schemes (although exceptions were provided for), with the occupational or supplementary schemes taken up later. Thus, the directive applied to the statutory schemes of protection in the event of illness, disability, old age, occupational accidents, occupational illness and unemployment. All discrimination in these schemes that was directly or indirectly based on sex, especially the marital status or family situation of the person involved, had to be abolished. The following elements were not affected: widow(er)'s benefits, family benefits, the retirement age, the benefits granted to people who raised children, and the granting of various benefits to dependent wives.

Several States - Denmark, France, Ireland and Italy - felt that their legislation already complied with the Directive. Italy went even further than the Community required, for a 1977 law allowed a woman to work as long as men (and thus to collect the same pension) and a man to stop working for six months before his child reached its first birthday (provided that his wife gave up this right). A "Community effect" was quickly seen in the Netherlands, Belgium (where, for example, a ministerial order in January 1980 included in the definition of workers with dependents women claiming dependent husbands) and the United Kingdom. It even led to examination of the problem in Luxembourg and Germany⁷.

The EC's three newest Member States have more recently adopted measures or drafted legislation to meet Community demands.

Portugal has had since 20 September 1979 a law prohibiting all discrimination based on sex, guaranteeing legal recourse in the event of violations and condemning reprisals against people attempting to defend their rights (WoE, No. 49, 15 Jan/15 March 1987). It adopted another law in 1987 aimed at gradually achieving equal treatment for men and women in social security matters (WoE, *Ibid.*). A law on equality at work was approved by the Greek Parliament on 12 January 1984. The law provides legal confirmation of equal opportunity, equal pay, equal chances of promotion, and equal access to vocational training for men and women (WoE, No. 34, 15 Jan/15 March 1984). The Spanish Government recently presented a "Medium-Term Plan (1987-1990) for Equal Opportunity" that includes measures to diversify the scholastic and vocational options available to girls and reduce female unemployment and segregation at work (WoE, No. 50, 15 March/15 July 1987).

Thus, all in all, there has been a strong Community "bandwagon" effect that has resulted in challenges of not just the rules, but images and common practices as well, and incontestable progress.

Changes in practice

The law has not remained a dead letter. Important changes in the male/female ratio in the labour market, action against injustice, the so-called "protective" measures (considered increasingly to be discriminatory) and affirmative action (known as "positive action" in the Community) have come about in daily life. 1977-87 has definitely been the decade of some of the great firsts in the field of employment, in which the barriers put up against women wishing to practise traditional "men's" trades have crumbled more and more.

⁷For more information on the difficult, complex implementation of this directive, see Supplements 12, 19 and 25 to Women of Europe.

Thus, the first women captains appeared on the bridges of German boats in 1979 while, in the same year, "for the first time", twenty young women, 17 to 20 years old, were allowed to enter the Herrenberg Military Training Camp at Diekirch, Luxembourg, after being selected from a total of 200 female candidates (WoE, No. 10, May/June/July 1979) and a young woman in France passed, also "for the first time", the test giving access to courses for aspiring high-altitude mountain guides. In 1980, a Dutch carpentry firm agreed, in response to a proposal from the regional employment office, to hire women. In 1981, in France, a woman became a three-star general officer. On 1 April 1982 some 20 or so women went on active duty in the Luxembourg police force, performing the same work as their male colleagues. In Greece, women had to wait until 1984 to be allowed to be hired to distribute the post, door to door, five days a week (as temporary staff, it is true). In 1986, a woman became the first woman head of a police station in Germany, while Amsterdam boasted three women in its Highways Department (WoE, No. 45, 15 March/15 April 1986) and 225 female motorcycle police officers completed their training at the Cesena Highway Police Centre in Italy.

Not only did women enter what had until then been bastions of male activity, but in addition, when they found themselves in difficulty, some of them no longer hesitated, backed by their associations, to fight back, either in their national courts or even by alerting the European authorities. Just a few examples, given in chronological order, will suffice to give an idea of the gradual broadening of women's demands.

Thus, in Belgium in 1978, eight airline stewardesses who were victims of a regulation that put an end to their careers at the age of 45, won a five-year extension and the right to return to their jobs after a stiff fight supported by their trade union and the Ministry of Employment and Labour. Building their case on the Community directive on equal treatment for men and women, they demanded to be allowed to work until the age of 55, as were their male colleagues. One of them even requested the EC Court of Justice's arbitration.

That same year, the Italian Women's Union lashed out against a nationalised cellulose- and paper-making firm, *Ente Nazionale Cellulosa e Carta*, for a text announcing a competition for study grants that was open only to male students who had successfully completed the third year of study at the Industrial Technical Institute. The Union based its position on the aforementioned law of December 1977. The company conceded defeat, withdrew the text and modified it so as to open the competition to women.

In 1979, a young German woman obtained the right, through a court ruling, to work on a construction site.

In 1980, a female British subject won what Women of Europe qualified as a "historic case". The woman, who had a part-time job in an audio-visual equipment company, applied for full-time work when her job was changed to a full-time position, but was passed over in favour of a man. She lost her case at the Industrial Court, which felt that she had not brought proof that she had been supplanted because she was a woman (although the court admitted that she was better qualified and more experienced than her rival). The Appeal Court, for its part, felt that she did not have to provide such proof. As the Chairwoman of the Equal Opportunity Commission so aptly commented:

"People do not seem to understand what discrimination is. Contrary to what people might think, there is no need to prove that there has been bad faith or malice. Discrimination is an act, and there is not necessarily any intention to do harm." (WoE, No. 14, March/April 1980)

At the same time, the German company Miele was ordered by an Industrial Court, acting on a complaint brought by the worker's committee, to reverse its decision to hire a man who had been preferred over a woman with the same qualifications under the pretext that the woman "would get married and have children" (WoE, No. 16, Sep/Oct 1980). In the United Kingdom, 530 requests for the application of the principle of equal pay were recorded in 1985, prompting the Federation of British Industries to urge employers to review their wage structures so as to avoid further waves of demands for such corrective action. Finally, in 1987, the chief of the Royal Ulster Constabulary, in Northern Ireland, was ordered to pay 240,000 pounds in indemnities to 40 policewomen whose contracts had not been renewed in 1980, when the police force was first allowed to carry arms (WoE, No. 50, 15 March/15 July 1987).

Few and exceptional though they were, these successful attempts to win recognition of women's rights, especially when brought to the attention of women, or women's associations, in the EC, were much more important than they seemed, for they showed that, by using texts all too often overlooked by employers and seeking the support of women's organizations or trade unions, women stood a chance of seeing justice done and that they realised that they owed it to themselves and others to take legal action. From this point of view, Women of Europe's role in catalysing such behaviour cannot be overemphasised. By informing its readers about the actions under way, the bulletin showed each working woman that it was possible to win reparations and that it was her duty no longer to accept such injustice.

Aligning women's rights with those of men meant that women first had to be offered the possibilities that had long been reserved for men. However, it was also necessary to challenge the specific forms of treatment to which women were subjected and that would penalize them in the long run. Thus, various attacks were made between 1977 and 1987 on so-called "protective" laws that, under cover of their protective action, tended to boomerang against women, barring access to numerous jobs. Indeed, Directive 76/207 allowed for such laws' abrogation when the concern for protecting the group that had motivated their adoption was no longer founded (Supplement 19 to WoE). However, interpreting such cases was not cut and dry. The controversy over working at night, for example, raged strong.

In the Netherlands, for example, two ministers were planning as early as 1978 to remove bans on night work for women, but the national Emancipation Commission opposed this. In 1981, draft legislation included the possibility of asking the Labour Inspection Department for a permit to allow night work by women so as to avoid forcing an unacceptable schedule on women. The situation was thus rather complicated. While, on the one hand, the Government was trying to achieve total equality between men and women, women's organizations, backed by the Commission for Emancipation, on the other hand, felt that such equality should not lead to worse working conditions for women and thus upheld the ban on night work for women. In 1987, the Government went even farther: the Ministry of Social Affairs decided to end the prohibition on night work for women (as well as working on Sundays) in order to remove an obstacle to women's access to certain traditionally male occupations (WoE, No. 50, 15 March/15 July 1987).

In the United Kingdom, the Equal Opportunity Commission recommended in 1979 that the Government abolish the regulations on night work. However, this position was criticized by the Equal Pay and Opportunities Campaign, which felt that, on the contrary, the prohibitions should be applied to men as well, because night work by either parent weighed heavily on family life. The Advisory Committee of the Belgian CSC (Confederation of Christian Trade Unions) reached the same conclusion (WoE, No. 23, Nov/Dec 1979).

In 1982, the Irish Government denounced ILO Convention 89, which banned night work for women. The Agency for Equal Employment, which had recommended fighting the ban, argued that women had lost chances to be hired and promoted because they could not be included in night shifts. In Luxembourg, the Women's Labour Committee came out in favour of ending the ban, based on the following arguments:

"The social consequences of working at night are felt by both men and women and are of equal weight, given that it restricts family and social contact and hampers or prevents involvement in cultural life and further education. Since, according to research by specialists in industrial medicine, there is no general physiological or medical contra-indication to night work for women, any protection afforded to women alone introduces discrimination into working life and should be abolished." (WoE, No. 25, March/April 1982).

Finally, in France, the debate was revived in 1985. Having ascertained that more and more enterprises were using night shifts, the Minister for Women's Rights feared that the hiring of women would fall off if the ban were not lifted. In contrast, the CGT trade union continued to oppose all night work, except in a few very specific cases (industries involving continuous combustion, public utilities) and called for a ban on night work wherever such a schedule was imposed for purely financial reasons (e.g., to have the machinery pay for itself more quickly) (WoE, No. 40, 15 March/15 May 1985).

While a consensus is far from being reached, more and more, women themselves and their associations are refusing to be taken for a bunch of fools.

The same applies to other clauses of labour laws. In Belgium in 1981, it was decided, on the basis of a proposal by the Minister of Employment and Labour, that the ban on working underground would no longer apply to female mining engineers (WoE, No. 22, Sep/Oct 1981).

Like night work, part-time work, which, on the contrary, was done almost exclusively by women⁸ triggered sometimes quite violent debate. In the Netherlands, where part-time work was not challenged, some parties (such as the Emancipation Commission) wanted part-time work to be made more accessible to men (WoE, No. 1, Jan/Feb 1978). In France, the Women's Labour Committee was far from enthusiastic about the attention being given to the demand for part-time work, which it considered marginal, whereas such a basic, evident, priority claim as women's right to work had not been met (WoE, No. 10, May/June/July 1979). In 1980, the issue was included in the agenda of the EC's Standing Committee on Employment. It

⁸The following percentages of working women had part-time jobs in 1981: 28.9% in Germany, 17.4% in France, 10.1% in Italy, 49% in the Netherlands, 16.3% in Belgium, 40% in the United Kingdom, 46.5% in Denmark and 6.6% in Greece. (In "Women in Statistics", Supplement No. 14 to Women of Europe.)

was raised regularly in Denmark. In 1981, the National Danish Women's Council devoted an entire conference to part-time work and at which one economist contended that part-time work would actually slow the movement to reduce working hours. He argued that if the 500,000 women working part-time had had full-time positions, much more pressure would have been exerted to reduce working hours and more progress in this area would have been achieved.

The alignment policy could not be limited to giving women new rights and trying to relieve them of "illusory advantages", even if this was the essential goal. It also meant that an additional boost had to be given to women to enable them, whenever possible, to make up for lost time. The starting handicap was thought to be so great that affirmative action (originally called "positive discrimination") would be necessary most of the time. Affirmative action consisted in speeding up the movement to which women were irreversibly committed. It is not possible here to catalogue all of the affirmative action schemes that were implemented in the past decade, given their scope and diversity (related to the particular conditions in each of the countries that implemented them). We must be content with simply point out that the Community institutions unceasingly urged the Member States to practice such policies to deal with local problems and that many Member States put forward some very specific suggestions.

The European Community's Action Programme on the Promotion of Equal Opportunities for Women (1982-1985) strongly recommended using affirmative action to help women break into non-traditional jobs (for example, in new technologies) and increase their participation in decision-making bodies, especially those that had a say in the job market (WoE, No. 23, Nov/Dec 1981).

Essentially, 1977-87 marked the high point of the battle to improve the working woman's lot. One is safe in saying that enormous progress was made in this direction. However, not all women were taken into account. One must recognise that salaried workers were the first to reap the benefits of these new policies. Until the mid-80s, efforts focused on improving the situation for the women who were entering all kinds of companies and undertakings in growing numbers. Still, paying the closest attention to the progress being made in aligning women's situations with those of men, the Community was no less attentive to the needs of another group of working women belonging to what had become a very small segment of Europe's working population, i.e., the self-employed.

The self-employed, too

For quite some time, women in the agricultural sector, women merchants and craftswomen, backed by their associations and, sometimes, trade unions, expressed definite dissatisfaction. Changes had been made in almost archaic laws in many of the Member States, but the pace of this change was slow, precisely because the agricultural sector had developed structures way before the others and was marked, until recently, by strongly discriminatory tendencies against women. Women in agriculture (and, to a lesser extent, craftswomen) had to wait until the '70s, even the '80s, until the idea that they might have the right to have a definite status, that they existed in the same right as their husbands, given the work they accomplished on the family farms, was accepted.

Of course, Directive 76/207 was theoretically applicable to the self-employed and should have marked the start of profound changes in the laws concerning the self-employed, especially farmers. However, on the one hand, various aspects of their work was not sufficiently taken into consideration while, on the other hand, many countries (such as Germany and later Greece) had excluded self-employment from the scope of their own laws, although the latter were supposed to comply with the Community Directive. France, for its part, enacted a law in 1980 instituting the status of "co-responsibility". Italy, whose system was simple and egalitarian, let women choose from a selection of "positions": company head, co-owner, member of a family operation, associate or salaried employee. Still, as problems and delays got the best of the will to forge ahead, the Community quickly showed its intention to take specific action to get the ball rolling and get the agricultural world to adopt occupational relations between men and women that were closer to those seen in other sectors.

Various stages can be picked out in this process, which was faithfully recorded by Women of Europe. The Community's 1982-85 Action Programme ranked the application of the principle of equal treatment for self-employed women and women farmers high among its priorities. In July 1982, the European Parliament set up a committee of enquiry into the situation of women in Europe that produced, amongst other things, a report on self-employed women (that was subsequently adopted in 1983). In November 1982, the Women's Committee of COPA (Committee of Agricultural Professional Organizations of the EC) sponsored an important seminar on the legal and social situation of women in the farm sector was held at Grado (Italy), at which great insistence was made on the need for a Community directive in this area. The next year, Women of Europe published a thick supplement (No. 13) on women in agriculture that drew much information from the Grado proceedings, which had been remarkably well summarized by Blanche Sousi and Isabella von Prondzynki. This supplement, which became a reference for most of the later volumes on this subject, highlighted the great differences in the situations found in the different Member States and the magnitude of the inequalities affecting women in agriculture. In March 1984 the European Commission presented the Council of Ministers with a draft directive on the application of the principle of equal treatment for men and women in self-employed occupations that was finally adopted in mid-December 1986.

It is thus still a little too soon to take stock of the changes that have occurred in this sector. Nevertheless, the last decade was marked by some very important changes that have created a divide between today's vision of women and the age-old vision of women rooted in the worlds of farms and shops. The problems raised by such changes, the terms of the Directive and the reactions that the Directive has triggered are a measure of the importance of progress that must be made.

Six issues, qualified as hurdles to be overcome along the road to a more egalitarian society, were brought to the fore in the early '80s and the 1982-85 Community Action Programme. It is worthwhile to present them in full, as they give an excellent description of description of the difficulties reigning at that time, and complete this analysis with a few examples.

"(a) At present, the work of a spouse who helps to run a family business not established as a company is not given full recognition; the husband is often the sole head of the undertaking.⁹ The spouse does not generally benefit from the growth in assets which is the result of her work. In the event of the death of the owner, and failing a system of preferential rights for the surviving spouse or any other system whereby she would receive a share of the firm's assets representing her own work, she can be excluded from the undertaking to the benefit of other heirs.¹⁰

- In the case of family businesses, national legislation sometimes imposes restrictions on the formation of a company by the spouses operating the business, which might otherwise be a way of ensuring that the work of either spouse is recognized for the purpose of inheritance.

(b) Taxation: Generally speaking, salary paid to the spouse can only be deducted from the taxable income of the owner of the business up to a certain limit. As a result, the spouse's salary tends to be lower than that which would be paid to another wage-earner. The separate taxation of spouses, or full deductibility from the owner's taxable income of the salary that he pays his wife, are the sort of measures which could in varying degrees eliminate existing discrimination.¹¹

(c) In most countries, spouses working in the family business cannot build up entitlement to retirement or invalidity pensions, or maternity benefit(s) in their own right.¹²

(d) The spouse of a self-employed person does not always have access to the same training facilities as the self-employed person himself; another form of discrimination occurs when the cost of the spouse's training cannot be deducted as business expenses.

(e) Women who wish to be self-employed encounter particular difficulties; first of all there are traditional attitudes which discourage young girls from training for certain types of work, or which prevent women from setting up their own business. In some countries, moreover, legislation does not favour the granting of loans to women, as a result of the way matrimonial law operates.

⁹ In Greece, for example, at that time, women could be the heads of farming operations if they were single, widowed or divorced or even if their husbands were not farmers. However, if the husband was a farmer, too - even if the woman was owner or co-owner of the farm -, he was considered the head of the undertaking.

¹⁰ This can occur in the United Kingdom if no labour contract or contract of association has been drawn up between the spouses.

¹¹ In Ireland, women farmers do not even have the right to be on their husbands' payrolls.

¹² For example, in Belgium (as in many other countries), the woman farmer is not even entitled to disability benefits in the event of illness, childbirth or accident. In Luxembourg she receives a set allowance (like the housewife) that is less than the allowance (calculated on the basis of the real wages) that is paid to salaried workers.

(f) The spouse of a self-employed person who takes part in the running of the family business should always have the same rights within trade organizations as the self-employed person himself.¹³
("Community Law and Women", Supplement No. 12 to Women of Europe.)

Another problem, that of hiring replacements, was raised shortly thereafter, both in seminars and the report adopted in 1983 by the European Parliament. The possibilities open to hire temporary farm workers, especially in cases of illness or maternity or to enable the farmer to attend training courses or go on holiday, vary greatly from one country to the next, as do the prices of these services. For example, in France, maternity was the only case in which replacement services, combined with an allowance covering 90% of the cost for up to 28 days (in 1982), were allowed. Greece, Italy and the United Kingdom did not provide any replacement services at the time. The Netherlands, on the other hand, set up a national organization and offered replacement staff at cut rates if the latter were required due to illness, an accident, a training course or even holidays. One cannot overemphasize the importance of such services in a sector in which it is usually impossible to put off work until later, especially for women who, due to their dual role as farmers and homemakers, have even fewer possibilities of taking leave. One may conclude that, in any event, as long as women farmers and craftswomen do not have the right to be ill, pregnant, young mothers or students in refresher courses, as other working women do, it will be difficult to speak seriously of equality in these sectors.

The directive adopted in December 1986 covers all of these points, while giving the Member States, in view of the complex natures of the situations involved, room for manoeuvre. Its aim is to eliminate all laws and regulations that are contrary to the principle of equal treatment with regard to the start-up, setting-up or expansion of a company or the expansion of all other forms of activities of the self-employed, including credit arrangements. It also specifies that the conditions governing the creation of a company between spouses may not be more restrictive than those governing companies involving partners who are not married to each other, without affecting the specific conditions of access to certain activities that apply to both sexes equally.

The directive also includes the possibility for the spouses of self-employed individuals of subscribing, voluntarily and on a paying basis, to a social security scheme. Concerning recognition of the work of a self-employed worker's spouse who is neither an employee nor an associate, the directive simply states that the Member States agree to examine under what conditions the recognition of such work might be facilitated. It contains a similar commitment to study the conditions that might improve access to replacement services or existing social services and the granting of cash benefits (under a social security or any other government social protection scheme) for self-employed women and self-employed men's wives who must stop working because of pregnancy or maternity (WoE, No. 48, 15 Nov 1986/15 Jan 1987).

It should be added that, as not all of these provisions are binding, the Council of Ministers has asked the European Commission to draw up new proposals for 1993.

¹³ Thus, in Luxembourg - still in 1982 -, only the head of household may be a member of professional organizations and cooperatives. Family members working on the farm or in the business may attend the meetings, but do not have the voting rights (Supplement 13 to WoE).

This directive marks clear progress towards the confirmation of the self-employed woman's status as a worker in her own right, having the same rights and eligible for the same social protection as her salaried sisters. This being so, it is still judged too timid by some self-employed women's spokeswomen. Thus, at a seminar on "Equal Opportunities in Agriculture and Unpaid Employment" that was held in Ireland in 1984 with the collaboration of the European Commission, many speakers regretted that what was, at the time, only a draft directive, considered wives only, whereas daughters, mothers and sisters also worked on farms under conditions that were sometimes worse than those experienced by the farmers' wives themselves (WoE, No. 37, 15 Sep/15 Nov 1984).

The efforts to correct the inequalities between men and women in the working world followed the logic of "alignment", i.e., of giving women in as many places as possible the rights that men had but that women still lacked. This approach was adopted at the end of the '70s and guided efforts throughout the decade, but failed to achieve the balance that was sought. Women continued to be under-represented at the top of the job pyramid¹⁴. They were also harder hit by unemployment. In Europe in 1986, for example, 10% of the male work force and 11.8% of the female work force were registered jobseekers (WoE, No. 45, 15 March/15 May 1986). The problem was particularly acute for young people, as young women jobseekers tended and continue to remain unemployed longer than young men.

While equal rights was a major objective and one obviously had to start by revising laws so as to enable women to obtain the same legal status as men, equal rights alone could not produce equal opportunity. While required to point changes in the right direction, measures aimed at giving working women the same rights as working men could not see this movement through to its final goal. While continuing to strive to align women's rights with those of men, the interested parties had to consider the approach built on parity, involving other initiatives than those that consisted in giving women the same possibilities as were open to men, as well as the need to widen considerably the perspective taken until then. Attention was thus paid to what has happened prior to the woman's entry into or return to the working world, i.e., education and training, and, more broadly, the distribution of roles in society, as a way to give life to the laws that henceforward governed occupational activities.

2. The logic of broader parity

As the legal arsenal was complete or on the verge of being completed, depending on the country, the parties concerned had to be able to use these arms. Society as a whole also had to legitimise the enormous changes created not only by the massive entry of women into the work force, but their progressive climb towards the top. Two types of efforts were made by both women's associations and the national and European authorities in order eventually to achieve these goals.

¹⁴ For example, the reader is referred to a statement by Mr. le Pors to the effect that France did not have a single woman among the 193 prefects (regional administrators) or France's 352 ambassadors while women accounted for only three of the country's 28 vice-chancellors (deans), six of the 164 directors of government administrations, four of the 102 inspectors in the local education authorities, 13 of the 129 inspectors-general in the Ministry of Education and three of the 90 treasury inspectors (WoE, No. 29, Jan/Feb 1983).

Education and training

Education and training undoubtedly provided the keys to occupational equality. Indeed, differences in training between young men and women entering the job market, as well as within the work force, are the rule.

These differences in training place both young and older women at a competitive disadvantage with men. Older women have a long history of less schooling than men. Today's girls, who are almost as numerous, if not more so, than boys at schools of higher education¹⁵, continue to prefer the humanities, or more "literary" branches, and give a wide birth to the sciences, which are the only fields in which they are almost certain to find jobs that will, moreover, help raise them to the higher echelons of the socio-occupational hierarchy. Consequently, it was realised that girls must be encouraged very early, when they were making their first choices among the various branches offered at school, to break away from the traditional female options and venture out into fields towards which they had not been pushed until very recently. Almost everywhere in Europe, efforts increased to establish a better balance long before the time came to actually go out and look for a job.

Thus, in 1977, the Italian Ministry of Education took a series of measures to put girls and boys on equal footing. For example, to give girls better preparation for technical studies, shop courses and technology courses became mandatory in the middle schools (WoE, No. 00, Nov 1977). After ascertaining that girls generally chose some thirty of the 400 occupations open to them, Germany's Federal Ministry of Education and Science decided to release sizeable credits for training more girls in branches that until then had been dominated by boys (WoE, No. 3, May-June 1978). One year later, the ministry launched a vast information campaign on this issue. In Denmark, it was decided in 1979 to recruit staff specialised in women's employment to deal with the problem in the schools, at its root, and urge female pupils as early as possible to enter new sectors. The Danish Minister of Education's 1985 Action Programme included the following items: informing girls about the consequences of sticking to traditional choices; modernising physics courses; giving girls and children computer courses in the form of "Interest Groups"; subsidising apprenticeships and traineeships in metalworking, building and construction for girls more heavily than for boys (on an experimental basis); possibilities of correcting errors in orientation through retraining courses and specific "starter" courses; new curricula combining science and the humanities; and conducting research into the way to improve the school environment for girls (WoE, No. 43, 15 Nov 1985/15 Jan 1986). In Belgium, a "Committee to promote equal opportunities in education for boys and girls" was attached to the National Education Ministry (WoE, No. 11, Sep/Oct 1979). One of the Committee's first recommendations was to replace the term "*enseignement maternel*" for preschool education, as it seemed to imply that only women were capable of taking care of young children, with "*enseignement préscolaire*" (preschool education).

The French Government also showed concern over diversifying girls' training. The Minister of Women's Rights even created a "Scientific and Technical Careers Scholarship for Women" that was awarded to the top fifty candidates through an annual nationwide competition for female high school

¹⁵ In 1980-81, the number of girls in schools dropped below that of boys in schools only after the age of 19, to 76 girls per 100 boys in the entire EEC (WoE, No. 28, Nov/Dec 1982). In France, the opposite situation was seen: In 1982, 72% of 18-year-old girls, 50% of 19-year-old girls and 29% of 20-year-old girls were in school compared with 60%, 40% and 17% of the boys of the same age groups. (WoE, No. 15 Sep/15 Nov 1984).

students. Each winner received 40,000 French francs (paid over four years) to be used for study in the areas of science or technology (WoE, No. 42, 15 Sept/15 Nov 1985).

The Community was very active in this area. In 1976 a resolution from the EC Council of Education Ministers stated that achieving equal opportunity as a prerequisite to full access to all forms of education was an essential goal of all of the Member States' education policies (Supplement No. 15 to WoE). A Community seminar on preparing girls for working life was held in Luxembourg in 1979. The seminar's conclusions were retained in a programme of pilot projects for 1983-1986 drawn up by the EC Council of Education Ministers. On September 19 1983 a Council Resolution showed how much attention was paid to exchanging information about everything that was likely to lead to greater participation by girls in school and learning activities affected by the new information technologies (*Ibid.*). Studies were undertaken, including one of sexist stereotypes in school books¹⁶ and another of the Irish school system (which did not allow co-education). The European Commission, which also wanted to get the opinions of the children themselves, suggested that, for the 1984-85 European School Day contest, all pupils between the ages of 10 and 20 write essays on the future of girls and boys in Europe. In the autumn of 1985, after the holding of the Third Colloquium of Women's Associations, which stressed the need to raise girls' awareness to new educational demands right from primary school, the EC's Education Ministers adopted a resolution on equal opportunities for boys and girls. In addition, the second Action Programme for the Promotion of Equal Opportunities (1986-1990) proposed by the European Commission gave a pivotal role to education, inviting the Member States to take action at the national level that "should be systematic, comprehensive and consistent(,) covering all areas and agents in the education process,..."; it also listed some ten different specific types of action that should be taken (Supplement No. 23 to Women of Europe).

The European Commission launched a new "Research Action Project" to promote equal opportunity at the end of 1986.

Treating the disease at its source is probably the only way to correct a situation that is still denounced today. This does not mean that no more attempts were made to change women who, not having been pushed to make the right choice when they were in school, found themselves without the right skills and competing with men who had had a head start in the branches of science and technology likely to provide "good" jobs. Many countries (and associations) tried to do something in this direction. For example, the Danish Council for Equal Rights presented the Government with proposals intended to reduce female unemployment. One of these called for a wage bonus for companies that made a commitment to train women in areas usually set aside for men. Another one concerned training for placement office staff to get the latter to encourage women to go into traditionally male areas of activity (WoE, No. 2, March/April 1978).

The Community acted as a strong catalyst in this area, too. Already in 1977, the European Commission suggested to the Council of Ministers that the Social Fund be allowed to play a more dynamic role in retraining women over 25. In 1983, the Community adopted two resolutions, one on 11 July urging the Member States to promote measures to encourage women to participate more in training opportunities that would facilitate their access to highly-skilled jobs, especially in areas in which they were under-represented, and which was directed partly at women on unemployment, the other on 2 June on measures concerning training in new information

¹⁶ Jeanine Terneu-Evrard and Brigitte Evrard, "*L'image de la femme dans le contexte de l'enseignement*", (depictions of women in the schools), October 1983. Report published by the Commission of the European Communities.

technologies and in which the Member States were urged to integrate such training in their national programmes in order to protect women whose jobs were threatened or to restore chances for employment to women who had already left the ring (Supplement No. 15 to Women of Europe).

The Second Action Programme on Equal Opportunities (1986-1990) provided for the organization of campaigns, assessment of new experiences, adapting curricula to meet women's specific problems, creating the material and social conditions required to allow women to obtain training (e.g., daycare facilities, different work schedules), searching for inexpensive, more flexible training solutions (decentralized, staggered schedules, etc.), and the development of appraisal structures. Some new arrangements had already been tried out. For example, in 1981, a women's workshop in Leeds had included the salary for a child-care specialist to take care of the trainees' children in a request for European Social Fund credits for a women's training programme and the request was actually accepted (WoE, No. 23, Nov/Dec 1981).

Thus, efforts were not confined to treating the area of women's occupational activities in the narrowest sense. Priority was given to eradicating as soon as possible the sources of inequality by trying to change the educational system itself. In this sense, there was indeed a widening of perspectives and an effort to tackle the preparation for work almost as much as the work itself. However, this was not the end of the line, for it was gradually realised that the obstacles to women's careers would not be overcome for quite some time if no attempts were made to change the direction of society as a whole.

For a "mixed" society

It is impossible to spur the rapid progress of a large part of society without affecting society as a whole. The problem of female employment quickly spilled over its original boundaries, especially in Northern Europe. In 1977, the Dutch Government's Advisory Committee for Female Emancipation criticized an official document, arguing that policies in this area should concern both sexes. For example, while the woman's right to work obviously had to be defended, steps should also be taken to facilitate men's access to part-time employment. The Danish Committee on questions about men's and women's roles and training published on 1 August 1978 a report in which it was said that schools must prepare children to perform the same tasks in the labour market and at home, regardless of their sex, and that the parent's role was as important for boys and for girls. In 1979, a German group calling itself "A 6-hour day for everyone" campaigned for much shorter working hours to enable men, like women, to achieve a better balance between their family and professional lives (WoE, No. 11, Sep/Oct 1979). This was another example of attempts to achieve a real mixing of men's and women's roles.

The idea caught on in the Netherlands, where, according to the Emancipation Commission, the goal should be to reach an equal sharing between men and women of all work, i.e., paid work, household chores, child-care, volunteer work, etc., in 25 years. The Committee gave three ways to achieve this: imposing firm, absolute limits on the length of the working day, with flexible schedules made possible by having companies remain open longer; giving each worker individual access to social security and taxing each person separately, combined with increasing the State's contributions to child-rearing costs; and expanding housecleaning and child-care services (WoE, No. 17, Nov/Dec 1980).

In 1981, the National Danish Women's Council noted at a conference on part-time work that few men were engaged in part-time work and revived the idea of reducing the working day to 6 hours for both sexes. In Germany in 1985, the women's wing of the Social Democrats also endorsed

the proposed equal sharing of work - of all kinds - as being necessary for society to function correctly (WoE, No. 40, 15 March/15 May 1985).

The European Community took a similar tack. Thus, at the Conference on equality for women organized in 1980 by the European Commission and the Equal Opportunity Commission of Great Britain, Mr. Vredeling, European Commission Vice-President and Commissioner for Social Affairs, stated that men would have to learn not only to accept women in traditionally masculine professions, but also not to look down on traditionally feminine duties (WoE, No. 15, May/June/July 1980).

During a debate in the European Parliament in 1981 on the position of women in the Community, the rapporteur, Johanna Maij-Weggen, vigorously defended this thesis, arguing that it was absolutely necessary to make fundamental changes in the distribution of paid work and unpaid housework between the men and women of Europe if women's situations were to improve. The European Parliament followed this up by insisting that the European Commission call for a general reduction in the length of the working day so as to enable both members of the couple to cope better with their occupational and family responsibilities (WoE, No. 19, 1981).

The Community's 1982-85 Action Programme, in fact, contained the following "action" (No. 15): "To encourage the sharing of occupational, family and social responsibilities by men and women so that women can play a more active role in the working world and in political and social life." (Supplement No. 15 to Women of Europe).

A whole campaign was mapped out to make the desired reversibility of roles and parity actual fact. The goal of the recommendation adopted by the EC Ministers of Employment and Social Affairs in December 1984 was clearly stated - in a nutshell, to eliminate or make up for the detrimental effects of attitudes, behaviour and structures based on the traditional distribution of roles between men and women on women who work or seek employment. The women's associations meeting for their Third European Colloquium at The Hague in March 1985 developed this idea further, while the Second Action Programme for Equal Opportunities (1986-1990) likewise stressed the goal of a more equitable sharing of family, occupational and social responsibilities within the couple and in society in general.

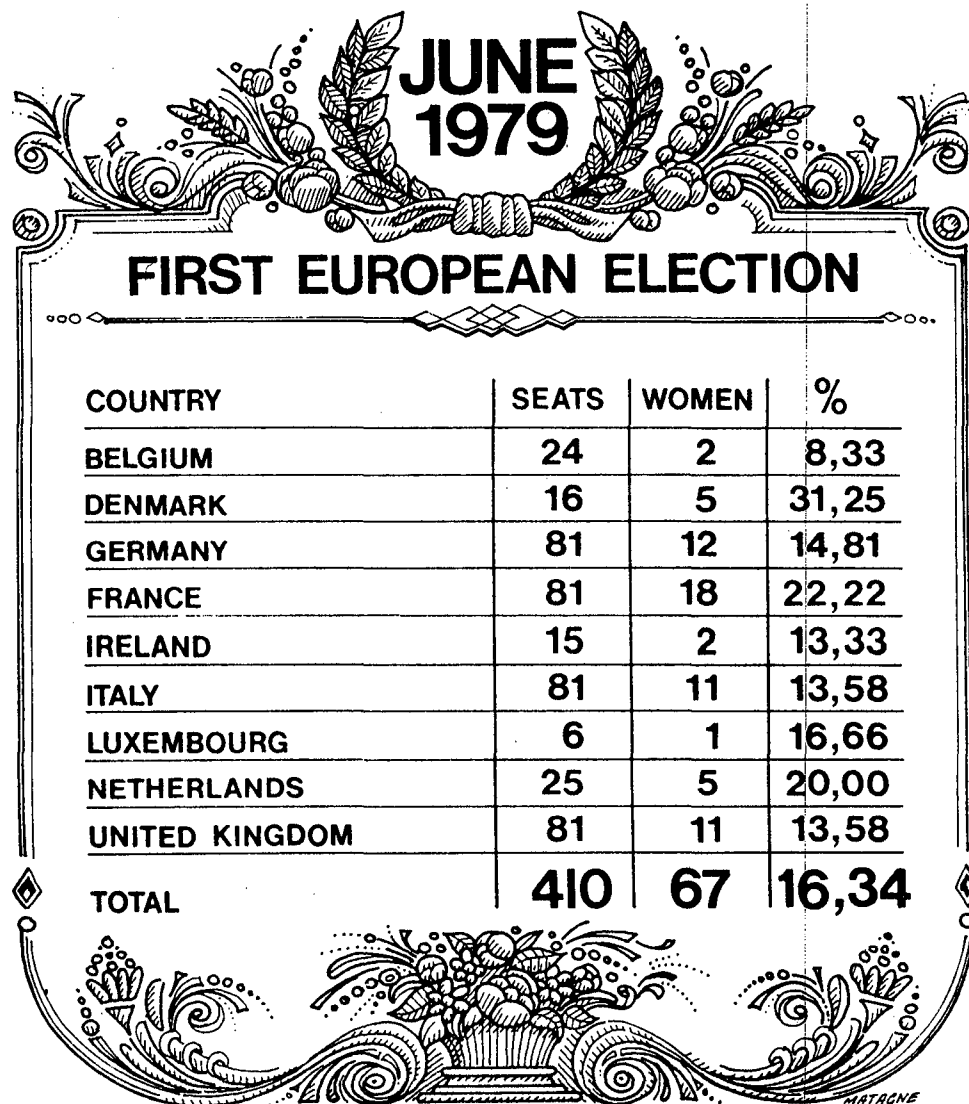
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A process culminating in equal employment opportunities has thus been set in motion, and a significant number of women have already reached decision-making positions. Are women anywhere near obtaining in the political arena what they have won and are winning in the working world? As we shall see, progress on this front has been much slower.

Women of Europe

Brussels, May/June/July 1979 - N° 10/79



JUNE 1979

FIRST EUROPEAN ELECTION

COUNTRY	SEATS	WOMEN	%
BELGIUM	24	2	8,33
DENMARK	16	5	31,25
GERMANY	81	12	14,81
FRANCE	81	18	22,22
IRELAND	15	2	13,33
ITALY	81	11	13,58
LUXEMBOURG	6	1	16,66
NETHERLANDS	25	5	20,00
UNITED KINGDOM	81	11	13,58
TOTAL	410	67	16,34

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III. WOMEN AND MILITANCY

As we have just seen, various authorities proposed a general sharing of social and political roles as a way to solve the problems encountered by women at and in search of work. The situation in women's activism is incontestably even more difficult, complex and, above all, paradoxical than anywhere else. A crossroads of opposing movements, where changes likely to upset, in the long run, certain aspects of political life are taking shape, feminist militancy has developed along two fronts that are being fought in two very different ways. Depending on whether one examines women's organizations or women in politics, the conclusions are extremely different.

1. Working within associations: the busy beehive

Outside observers sometimes wonder what has happened to European feminism, as if, after the spectacular demonstrations of the '70s, which were amply covered in the general press, it had disappeared. Flipping through the collection of Women of Europe should reassure them completely. Not that specifically "feminist" groups or activities expressly qualified as such provide the meat of Women of Europe's information, but the activities of women's associations, each of which has launched its own fight to defend women's rights, appear, from a reading of the bulletin's pages, to be more intense, more sustained, perhaps, than those of previous decades. Not a year has gone by that has not witnessed the birth of another group and the adoption of measures testifying to the ever-widening field of action of feminist militancy.

New faces

One is struck, first of all, by the number of women's associations in the European Community, by their audiences and their combativeness. To give an approximate idea of the number of women involved, we can refer to the figures advanced in Bonn on 16-18 May 1982, at the first European Colloquium of Women's Associations, hosted by the *Deutscher Frauenrat* (German Women's Council) with the help of the European Commission. Forty organizations, representing more than 30 million members, attended (WoE, No. 26, May/June/July 1982). The second Colloquium, held in Torino on 9-10 March 1984, was attended by no fewer than 50 women's organizations and the third one (in The Hague on 15-16 March 1985) by about 60. These large "federations" should not, however, make one lose sight of the smaller groups that may or may not belong to them and that continue to work in the areas where they first emerged.

More significant, however, is the proliferation of narrower-based associations created by women sharing a given social or professional context and anxious to band together to solve common problems. The emergence of these new groups in sectors which either had not been known for their militancy or had been predominantly male domains is proof of a fundamental change in the mentalities of the women in these occupations. The *Fédération belge des femmes diplômées des universités* (Belgian Federation of Women University Graduates), the *Association des femmes juristes* (Association of Women Jurists), which celebrated its 20th birthday in 1978, the French *Union des femmes architectes* (Union of Women Architects) and the Association of British Women Pilots (created in 1955) were forerunners of this movement. Starting in 1977-78 and throughout the decade, other associations emerged, especially, but not exclusively, in agricultural circles, where women, who did not always enjoy the status to which

they aspired, organized more and more to think and act together. Klartext, an association of women working in radio and television, was founded in Germany in 1978. The AMMI, an association of doctors' wives, sprang up in 1979 for the purpose of seeking legal recognition of such women's work. The *Association française des secrétaires et assistantes de direction* (French Association of Executive Secretaries and Assistants) was created in 1980, following the model of existing associations in Germany; the *Association des femmes journalistes* (Association of Women Journalists) was born in 1981. Italy at this time witnessed the birth of the Italian Federation of women entertainers, self-employed women and businesswomen. 1982 was the year of the founding of the *Hexenring* (Witches' Circle), an association of female motorcycle riders in Germany, and the Women's Media Action Group in the UK. A sign of the times, the European Federation of Homemakers was created in Brussels in 1983 with the aim of informing housewives of their rights and representing them in dealings with the European Community. We might also mention the Association of Women against the Mafia, headed by the widow of a judge who had been assassinated on the mafia's orders (WoE, No. 37, 15 Sep/15 Nov 1984), and ARC (the Association of Women Restaurant Owners and Chefs) in France. This movement was paralleled by the appearance almost everywhere of women's bookshops, women's newspapers, documentation and study centres, social centres for women, even independent radio stations. The link between militancy and research strengthened every day and women's studies became increasingly popular over the decade in universities in various countries, as Supplement No. 18 to Women of Europe, "Women's Studies", shows. In the autumn of 1982 a colloquium on women, feminism and research, held in Toulouse, assembled 750 participants who presented or discussed some 150 communications (WoE, No. 29, Jan/Feb 1983).

After this rapid overview one has the feeling that hardly a sector existed in which women had no structure to turn to for relaxation or advice, where they could discuss their problems or make their own suggestions. However, the associations did not content themselves with serving as shelters in the storm. They met with each other to think together in European or international fora. A great many associations attended the NGOs' Forum '85 that was held on the fringes of the UN Nairobi Conference in 1985. In this way, they give their national sections the benefits of the knowledge that they acquire abroad and often give new impetus to local action.

New struggles: universal peace and solidarity

Women's associations strive to ensure that certain major celebrations are successful and are used to publicize the changes that have come about in women's means of action. March 8 - International Women's Day - is celebrated with great conviction (and imagination) throughout the Community. The associations do not hesitate, in some countries, to award the prize of Woman of the Year to their compatriots whose actions have contributed most to improving women's lot.

In just ten years, not only have more speeches been made, but the topics, too, have changed. Since the very beginning, women's associations helped women to defend their interests wherever the latter were threatened by informing them of their rights and possibilities, by fighting at their sides. However, they have tended more and more to try to get women "out of the ghetto" by informing them of the major issues of the times and giving them a better basis for making various political and economic decisions. Thus, myriad debates and "study weekends" on Europe were held as the European elections of 1979 and 1984 drew near. Here it should be pointed out that, since its creation, Women of Europe has provided women's

associations with all the information they have needed through its run-downs on the European Parliament's debates, various EC activities and all of the issues handled by the relevant institutions.

Even more recently, two issues have emerged that have won strong followings among women in many of the Member States. The first one is the struggle for peace.

The idea was popularized at the start of the '70s by the Irish, who, through their association "Women Together", tried to oppose the civil war. However, the idea caught on, spilling over its initial context. On 15 February 1980 a vast movement called "Women for Peace" was launched in Scandinavia to protest against the global arms buildup. Denmark was an active participant in this movement, as was the Netherlands. The group *Friedenshexen* (Witches for Peace) was created in Germany a few months later. Its members set about collecting signatures against war, brandishing the slogan "Women break the silence!" (WoE, No. 16, Sep/Oct 1980). One year later, the women of Germany, who were participating in the peace movement in increasing numbers, suggested going on a tax strike, i.e., deducting from their income tax payments the sums likely to be used in the defence budget. Finally, in France in 1984, three organizations joined forces to promote peace. They were *Résistance internationale des femmes à la guerre* (Women's International Resistance to War), *Ligue internationale des Femmes pour la paix et la liberté* (The International Women's League for Peace and Freedom) and *Femmes pour la paix* (Women for Peace). Together they organized an international colloquium on feminism and pacifism (WoE, No. 36, Aug 1984).

A second theme has received more and more attention in recent years, namely, that of solidarity with Third World women, whether the latter are victims of famine or the cruelty and privations of war, dictatorships or racism. At a colloquium in 1978 the *Deutscher Frauenrat* focused on women's roles in development. KULU (Women and Development), an association created in Denmark in 1976 with 19 member associations, volunteered to contact various Third World women's organizations in order to support their efforts. In 1980 KULU organized a seminar on Third World women's responsibilities concerning the family and work (WoE, 16, Sep/Oct 1980). In France, a new publication, *Le Mercure des femmes*, was created to strengthen the work being carried out between women's associations in Africa and Europe. GIFED (*Groupe d'initiative femmes et développement* - Women and Development Initiatives Group) was created in 1984.

All these undertakings received solid supranational backing. Indeed, when the Executive Committee of the International Women's Council succeeded in gathering 120 delegates from 40 countries in Brussels in 1981, its main purpose was to demand that all projects designed for the Third World take into account the new policies' effects on women. It should be added that the women's associations attending the Second European Colloquium of Women's Associations in Torino on 9-10 March 1984 approved more than a dozen recommendations for Community institutions concerning the conclusions to be prepared for the Nairobi Conference and next Lomé Convention. Isolated projects were also set up. Thus, the Women's Committee of the French chapter of the European Movement issued an appeal to the women of Europe to help the women of Kabala, a village in Mali, to overcome the lack of water (WoE, No. 30, March/April 1983)¹⁷.

Here, too, the "European effect" was instrumental, for the Community began taking initiatives in this area very early on. As the Community's

¹⁷Faced with the rural exodus of their men and young people, the women of Kabala created in 1980 a multipurpose cooperative to take charge of the village's development. While they quickly obtained tangible results, the lack of water partly defeated their undertaking.

efforts are covered very thoroughly in Supplement No. 17 to Women of Europe, "Women and Development"¹⁸, only the main phases of this long-term action will be mentioned here.

From its very creation, the European Economic Community maintained close relations with a number of Third World countries. This led it to sign - after other agreements, the first Lomé Convention with 46 African, Caribbean and Pacific States, followed by various agreements with the countries of North Africa and the Near East. The thought being given to the type of aid to be given to them soon revealed the need to take the alarming situations in which their populations subsisted into account. Education, training, health and production projects aimed specifically at women were also financed by the European Commission. On 8 November 1982 the EC "Cooperation Council" adopted a resolution on women and development that showed the Council to be worried about the particularly difficult situation of women in the Third World, aware of the important roles that women played in their countries and mindful to have the Community deal with the problem diligently and efficaciously. In particular, the Council advised the European Commission to maintain contact with the women's organizations in the regions involved. A "Women and Development" cell was set up immediately within the Human Resources Division, which held a seminar on peasant women and development in Lomé in February 1984.

The European Parliament also adopted, on 11 February 1981, a similar resolution, while its Committee of Inquiry into the Position of Women in Europe included European aid that might be provided to Third World women among its 18 topics for investigation. On 17 February 1984 the Parliament adopted another resolution that regretted not only the fact that development projects still did not truly benefit women, but also the fact that the important role played by women in the farm economy had not been taken into account. The Parliament made a number of suggestions, asking, for example, that no development cooperation projects be designed, drawn up, carried out or completed unless the impact of each of these stages on the female population was taken into account, and feeling, moreover, that female solidarity should include support for women's struggles against religions that refuse to grant them the status of human beings in their own right (Supplement 17 to WoE).

Starting in 1975, the United Nations Organization also contributed greatly to disseminating information on these problems, especially at the World Conference of the International Women's Year (1975), in Mexico City, which opened the United Nations Decade for Women. In Nairobi, this key idea was supported and presented as one of the major lines of future action. What is more, the meeting of the main parties concerned was a success, making the participants from the industrialised countries even more sensitive to the hardships borne by the participants from poor countries. Finally, a number of countries granted aid within the framework of bilateral cooperation and consulted (as Belgium and Denmark did) their women's associations in drawing up their plans to help these forsaken regions of the planet.

All in all, stimulated by the various international, community and national bodies, led by people who were curious enough to wonder what was happening beyond their own horizons, backed by growing awareness (among Western youth, for example) of the dramatic situations in the Third World, women's associations took countless initiatives to ensure that the major development aid projects took into account the fundamental groups that were constituted by these countries' women.

¹⁸This study was carried out by Lucia Adinolfi, Bianca Maria Pomeranzi, Paola Terzoli and Daniela Colombo.

Other forms of solidarity have also been observed in more recent years. Solidarity with the victims of apartheid is one example. Solidarity with the missing women and women political prisoners in Argentina is another example. This solidarity has been expressed on various occasions: on 8 March 1981 in Perugia (Italy), in the Netherlands, where peaceful demonstrations are held systematically to support the "Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo", and the actions taken to support women refugees at the instigation of, for example, the German association Women's Earth, France's *SOS-Femmes Alternative*, the Swiss association *Sentinelles* and the UK's Minorities Rights Group. A report was submitted to the women Members of the European Parliament to urge the Parliament to help women whose lives and liberty are threatened by their families or communities. According to the report, the primary victims were Moslem women, who are either assassinated or driven to suicide for engaging (voluntarily or involuntarily) in extramarital sex, becoming pregnant out of wedlock, trying to escape from an arranged marriage or having been abandoned by their husbands (WoE, No. 29, Jan/Feb 1983). One can also add the *Bateau pour Alger* (Ship for Algiers), an operation mounted by the *Ligue du droit international des femmes* (Women's International Law League) and the *Association nationale de défense des enfants enlevés* (National Defence Association for Kidnapped Children) to help the mothers whose children are being kept in Algeria by their Algerian ex-husbands.

This panoply of initiatives shows how active, committed and mobilized women are in the European Community and the extent of their participation in a powerful movement of advancement for women and solidarity with all those women beyond Europe's borders whose situations are far worse than anything seen from Denmark to Greece. Yet these militants, who manifest such concern for collective action, prove to be extraordinarily effective when they organize colloquia or demonstrations or take matters up with international and local authorities, and should consequently be found in large numbers in positions of responsibility, make up only a very small minority when one leaves the realm of associations for the political arena.

2. Political activism: the sleeping giant¹⁹

If there is one area where women's progress has been slow and painful, it is definitely that of political action in the restricted sense of the term, i.e., the action orchestrated by political parties with an aim to gaining power in the elected or appointed bodies empowered to make decisions concerning the citizenry at large. It is true that women were not given the right to vote in many Member States until relatively recently. While women acquired the rights to vote and stand for elections in the first third of the century in Denmark (1915), Germany (1918), the Netherlands (1919), Luxembourg (1919), Ireland (1922) and the United Kingdom (1928), they did not obtain these rights until the immediate post-World War II period in France (1944) and Italy (1945) and even later in Belgium (1948), Greece (1952) and Portugal (1976). While Spanish women were granted these rights in 1930, it is no secret that they rarely had the occasion to use them prior to 1977.

¹⁹At a *Deutscher Frauenrat* meeting an FDP representative had compared women to a "sleeping giant". In his opinion, women's limited participation in politics was due to not lack of time, but lack of motivation (WoE, No. 13, Jan/Feb 1980).

The lay of the land

Putting these rights into practice was not trouble-free. Even today, one is struck by the small number of women in Parliament in two-thirds of the Member States. To take just one example, women account for less than (or much less than) 10% of the lower houses (or unicameral parliaments) of Greece (4%), France (5.9%), Spain (6%), Portugal (6%), the United Kingdom (6.3%), Italy (7%), Belgium (7.5%) and Ireland, whereas they have gone well beyond this threshold in Denmark (25.6%), the Netherlands (17.3%), Germany (15.4%) and Luxembourg (14%).

However, they have been getting such good scores only recently. 1977-87 has indeed been a decade in which female political representation in the Member States that now lead the field truly "took off". Still, a less spectacular rising trend has also occurred in the other Member States, where the numbers of women MPs in 1977 were still infinitesimally small. In this regard, Women of Europe provides an accurate record of this long march, punctuated by pauses (sometimes retreats), conflicts and clashes, but giving the feeling that a serious movement was under way and that, despite the barriers, accelerating factors would support it and see that it reached its goal.

In 1977-78, all of the current Member States, with the exception of Portugal and Belgium, had fewer (or slightly fewer) women MPs than they do today. Women accounted for 16.7% of Denmark's Folketing in December 1977; this figure rose to 23% in 1979 and the aforementioned 25.6% in 1984. Women made up 14% of the Dutch Parliament in 1977 versus 25.6% today. The number of women in the German Bundestag has more than doubled since 1977, from 7.3% to 9.8% in 1983 and 15.4% after the January 1987 elections. The proportion of women MPs in Luxembourg's Chamber - a mere 6.7% in 1979 - has also doubled. Women made clear progress in France, where they made up 3.4% of the deputies after the 1978 general election (up from 1.4% after the 1973 elections), 5.3% in 1981 and 5.9% in 1986. Ireland progressed from 3.3% in 1977 to 8.4% in 1987; Spain from 5.4% in 1979 to 6% in 1986; Greece from 3.3% in 1977 to 4% in 1985; and the United Kingdom from 2.9% in 1980 to 3.5% in 1983 and 6.3% in 1987 (WoE, No. 50, 15 March/15 July 1987). Belgium, with women making up 7.5% of its Representatives in 1978, was at the time ahead of eight of the twelve countries being considered. However, its female representation slipped back a few years later, to return to this same figure of 7.5% in 1985. The number of women MPs in Portugal has fallen slightly.

Even though these percentages are rising, they might seem ridiculous compared with the changes that have affected women and the places that they occupy in the different societies. The weakness of many of these figures is an incontestable sign of the long, rough road that lies ahead. However, this, albeit parsimonious, entry of women into the parliamentary arena can be considered a sign of, if not inevitable change, at least change that has a good chance of continuing in the right direction. Many facts point to this, foremost among them the successes of women in the Nordic countries. In the middle of the decade, women already accounted for 30% of Sweden's MPs.

The proportion of women in local government bodies, especially the town councils, which are regular fish ponds for recruiting new political faces, and are often starting gates or training grounds for political novices, is usually higher than in the national legislatures. Thus, in 1977, whereas women accounted for only 7.3% of the Bundestag, they made up 10.8% of the countries' town councillors. Women accounted for 14% of the town councillors after the 1983 municipal elections in France and 19% of the Netherlands' town councillors in 1986. This rule holds true for most of the Member States. What is more, it occurs on a level where innovation, when it occurs, is quickly felt in daily life, and can thus produce in-depth changes, perhaps even without major opposition, in mentalities. In Ireland, where women occupied more than 20% of town council seats in 1979, the Lord Mayor of Dublin itself "had to give up his seat to Mary Fhaherty, a 22-year-old school teacher" (WoE, No. 11, Sep/Oct 1979). Similarly, in Rovigo province, Italy, the Liberal Party presented an all-woman list in the 1980 election (WoE, No. 15, May/June/July 1980).

In France, another experiment received a certain amount of publicity. During the municipal elections of 1983, 15 women in the small commune of Morbihan (population 571) decided to present a list opposing the outgoing party. They explained that they were not feminists and certainly not politicians. The list had been drawn up in alphabetical order, without elitist ordering. They had simply suddenly realised that local problems concerned the daily lives of all of them (WoE, No. 29, Jan/Feb 1983). Finally, in 1986, a small village in central Greece found itself facing the prospect of a village council composed entirely of women, something that would have been inconceivable only ten years earlier (WoE, No. 48, 15 Nov 1986/15 Jan 1987).

These initiatives have not yet led to a massive influx of women at the next level of local government; even today, there are very few women mayors in Europe. Even in the Netherlands, they accounted for only 3.4% of the country's burgomasters in 1986. In Greece, this percentage falls to 1.4% (4 women among the heads of the country's 276 "Demos"). In Germany, on the other hand, where talk is of new victories rather than the lack of women in government, women already make up 21.4% of the mayors. As Women of Europe wrote in early 1987, "Four more women have been elected to Hamburg's town council" (WoE, No. 49, 15 Jan/15 March 1987). Finally, let us not forget the election of a woman mayor in Palermo (Sicily) in 1983.

These developments, while scattered, should not be overlooked. If they are brought to the attention of a larger public through Women of Europe, which is read and spread by the Member States' various women's associations, they may still encourage women who are striving for change in their regions or communes but lack other sources of information about initiatives being taken beyond their national borders.

The movements that have sprung up, over the years, in places other than the national parliaments are also important, especially those that are followed in the European Parliament. Strangely enough, the proportion of women in the European Parliament has consistently been higher than the proportions in the national assemblies and senates, and more than one woman has become a deputy or even minister in her own country after a spell in the European Parliament. This "fast track" has contributed significantly to the creation of a "stock" of women politicians able to compete with men who are already well-known local political figures. Table 1, which was drawn up from the detailed information provided by Women of Europe, gives proof of this. While the number of women elected to the European Parliament in 1979 was already large, the 1984 elections marked further gains in 5 of the 10 countries that had participated in both elections.

Finally, the last decade was marked by additional advances, including the appearance of women at the heads of parliaments or various government bodies or in governments that had previously had few or no women members. Thus, in 1978, a woman became Vice-President of the Italian Chamber of Deputies and another woman Vice-President of the Italian Senate. In 1979, Nilde Iotti (Ital. Comm. Party) was elected President of the Chamber of Deputies and Eletta Martini (Christian Democrat), already Vice-President, remained at this post. A woman (member of the SPD) became Vice-President of the Bundestag in 1982. Also in 1982, a woman became President of the *Seanad* (Senate) for the first time in Ireland's history. In 1980, Italy appointed its first woman Ambassador, who represented her country in Central America. In 1981, Belgium chose a woman as its permanent representative at the UN. In 1979, Simone Veil was elected President of the European Parliament.

Table 1: Women in the European Parliament

	elected		candidates	
	1979	1984	1979	1984
Denmark	31.2% (5/16)	37.5% (6/16)	21.5%	24.2%
Netherlands	20% (5/25)	28% (7/25)	15.8%	16.2%
Luxembourg	16.6% (1/6)	16.6% (1/6)	13%	21.4%
Germany	14.8% (12/81)	19.7% (16/81)	19.6%	21.3%
Italy	13.6% (11/81)	9.8% (8/81)	7.6%	9.5%
Belgium	8.3% (2/24)	16.6% (4/24)	25.2%	24.6%
France	22.2% (18/81)	20.9% (17/81)	25%	25.2%
Ireland	13.3% (2/15)	13.3% (2/15)	10.8%	11.7%
Greece	-	8.3% (2/24)	-	11.1%
United Kingdom	13.6% (11/81)	14.8% (12/81)	9.3%	17.1%
TOTAL	16.3% (67/410)	17.3% (75/434)		

Source: WoE, No. 10, May/June/July 1979 and No. 36, Aug 1984.

Turning to the national governments, it can be seen from a few figures (to be taken as guidelines only, given the numerous changes caused by ministerial reshuffling) that women accounted for 19% of the ministers and junior ministers (secretaries of State) in Denmark, 18.7% (which later fell to 14.3%) in the Netherlands, 8.3% in Luxembourg, between 12 and 8.7% in Belgium, 12% in France, 5% in Spain, 7.5% in Greece and up to 8.7% in the United Kingdom over the last ten years. Germany, which had only a single woman minister in 1982, had no fewer than 6 in 1987; in France, this figure rose from 3 in 1977 to 6 in 1981, then back to 4 in 1986; Ireland, which had none before 1982, has had a woman Minister of Women's Affairs since this date. It might also be mentioned that Margaret Thatcher remains firmly attached to her post as the UK's Prime Minister and a woman was Head of State in Portugal for part of 1979. Obvious, the EC is still far behind Norway, which since 1986 has had a woman Prime Minister, Gro Harlem Brundtlandt, with seven women in her minority Socialist Government, something that was described as a "world first" by Women of Europe (No. 46, 15 May/15 July 1986).

Still, there has been an incontestable shift in a number of countries towards giving women senior government posts that were often formerly considered "men's". These include the posts of Minister of the Brussels Region and Minister of the Flemish Community in Belgium and the combined post of Minister of the Economy/Foreign Minister/Minister for the Merchants and Self-Employed/Justice Minister (filled by Colette Flesch) in 1980; Agriculture Minister in France, Minister of the Interior and Territorial Planning (including housing) in the Netherlands and Minister of Science and Culture (Merlina Mercouri) in Greece in 1981; and Transport and Waterways in Italy and Education in Ireland and Germany in 1982. It might be added that during the 1983 ministerial reshuffling in France, Farm Minister Edith Cresson was made Minister of Foreign Trade and Tourism while Edwige Avice became Junior Defence Minister in 1984 and a woman was appointed Junior Foreign Minister in Italy in 1983.

"Token women", one might say, if one focuses on the small number of such individuals rather than the trend's momentum and extension. Still, one cannot deny that the current situation is characterized by increased access for women to places where they were seldom seen even fifteen years ago; even the countries that today boast strong female participation in political decision-making, do not necessarily have a long-standing tradition of female representation in government. For instance, in Sweden, so often cited by feminists in Europe and elsewhere, women accounted for only 14% of the MPs in 1971 (versus almost 33% today). What is more, today's women in government tend to be in the news, while media coverage increases the public's familiarity with them every day, forcing decision-makers to take them into account in certain respects, to consider their careers "normal" and to spread the idea that women politicians are not any stranger than male politicians.

This does not mean that one can deny the existence of the obstacles faced by women likely to take on such responsibilities (and that will undoubtedly continue to hamper women for years to come). However, one should realise that more and more factors have come into play over the years to facilitate women's entry into government. What, specifically, are the elements that eased women's access to the previously closed world of politics between 1977 and 1987?

It is known that this process hinges on the political parties, which select the candidates and present the electorate with the definitive lists of men and women candidates for election. Besides the parties' spontaneous decisions, guided by the deep conviction that a true democracy requires the participation of the largest percentage of the population and thus of women, who make up between 52 and 53% of the electorate in almost all of the Member States, the more favourable attitude towards women in politics that has been noticed in various places in the Community can very likely be related to four distinct phenomena that are readily visible in the last ten years of Women of Europe.

Women's actions

First is the pressure exerted by women themselves through their diverse associations and groups, whether within or separate from political parties, at the local, national or European level, etc. This pressure has been and continues to be exerted in various ways, especially through public demands, issued during each election campaign or prior to a given deadline for action, for the political parties and decision-making bodies to include more women on the electoral lists or in appointed bodies.

Thus, already in 1977 the National Council of Danish Women called for an equal balance of men and women in the European Parliament and invited all of the parties to work towards this goal (WoE, No. 00, November 1977). In France, the *Centre féminin d'études et d'information* (Women's Study and Information Centre, created in 1965 by women close to the Gaullist majority), asked Raymond Barre, then Prime Minister, to have women make up one-third of the candidates on the list being drawn up for the European elections and to respect this proportion as well among the first twenty names.

The demands have varied with the country and political party, ranging from calls to order to very precise demands, crowned by the demand for absolute parity. For example, in the United Kingdom, Lesley Abdela, a former Liberal Party candidate, created the "Group for the 300" and organized a seminar to discuss the question "Why not 300 women in Parliament?", since there were 635 seats in the House of Commons (WoE, No. 17, Nov/Dec 1980). In 1980, in the run-up to the 1981 general elections in France, Socialist Véronique Neiertz got her party's Steering Committee to adopt a resolution stipulating that in each department in which at least four seats had to be filled, at least one of the seats must be earmarked for a woman candidate. In Germany, some women members of the various political parties and women's organizations and women journalists created a group called "*Initiative 6. Oktober*" ("October 6th Initiative") in the wake of the 5 October 1980 general elections, which they felt had failed to seat enough women in the Bundestag (8.6%), in order to boost women's participation in political decision-making. At the seminar organized by the Women's Political Association in Dublin in 1981 with the help of the Information Office of the European Communities, Simone Veil also brought up the problem of the lack of women in the Community and suggested a quota system. In 1983, the *Conseil national des femmes belges* (National Belgian Women's Council) decided to send letters to the political parties, urging them to increase the number of women on their lists of candidates for the European elections, then announced in 1985 that it would meet with the parties personally (WoE, No. 40, 15 March/15 May 1985). On the eve of the 1986 general elections in France, *Dialogue*, an association founded by Monique Pelletier, launched a campaign to pressure the political parties of the centre and right to step up female representation under the slogan "Give a seat to a lady". In Germany in 1986, the women members of the "Greens" organized wide-scale discussion of a proposal calling for the adoption of a 50% quota for women in employment, education and training and politics.

We do not have the room to give an exhaustive list of these initiatives. Let it suffice to say that they show not only that very strong demands were and are being made across Europe, but that this demand was often expressed in terms of figures, giving rise to the problem of quotas and considerable controversy about them. A wide range of wishes were expressed, from demands for the maximalist 50% quota aimed at achieving representation proportionate to the number of women in the population to the demand for representation proportionate to the number of "active" women, i.e., the political parties' female membership, which was usually around 25%. These demands were greeted with varying degrees of enthusiasm, depending on the place and political context.

Thus, in Germany, where the political parties had been studying the idea of instituting a minimum quota of 25% women both among their leadership and on the election lists, since 1978-79, women did not particularly welcome the idea. Many of them thought it would result in a new form of discrimination, creating a kind of "sexual" rather than true "political" legitimization (WoE, No. 8, March/April 1979). For their part, the SPD's women members rejected the principle at the Erlangen Congress, despite a speech in its favour by SPD Chairman Willy Brandt. Yet, a few years later (1986), the Chairwoman of the Social Democratic Women called for the introduction of the quota principle and the SPD itself spoke of an "advancement plan" that would raise the number of women elected to 25% in 1987 and higher in 1990. One can even read in the SPD's project for the year 2000 that women must make up half of the representation in Europe's parliaments if Europe wants to go beyond the stage of a "male society" (WoE, No. 46, 15 May/15 June 1986).

In the United Kingdom, the small Social Democratic Party, that proposed at its February 1982 constitutional convention "positive discrimination" for women and "positive representation" on the Social Democracy Council, also met with resistance on this last point, as some of the women present felt that it was closer to paternalism than equality (WoE, No. 25, March/April 1982).

The problem was also discussed at the 27th General Meeting of the National Council of Italian Women, in 1980, which felt that while quota systems could be used only temporarily, they were indispensable if one wanted to succeed in increasing the number of women in politics (WoE, No. 17, Nov/Dec 1980).

The French women Socialists (whose party had included the quota rule in its charter since 1973) were rather in favour of the measure, stating, in essence, that it was not ideal but its absence would be even worse. It is true that France as a whole looked rather kindly on the measure. Indeed, in 1980 the French Government had prepared a draft bill requiring the political parties to set aside 20% of the places on the local election lists for women. Amended and adopted by the Parliament in 1982, the final text stipulated that "not more than 75% of the candidates of any one list may be of the same sex". However, the Constitutional Council declared this text incompatible with the Constitution, arguing that citizenship itself guaranteed identical rights for all on whom it was conferred, with the result that any new provision would have prevented the exercise of this very right to equality (WoE, No. 28, Nov/Dec 1982). The abrogation of this text was not without effect, for a few months later almost all of the political parties included more women than usual on their election lists for the March 1983 municipal elections. As a result, the number of town councilwomen rose to 14% (from 8.7% prior to the elections).

Women's groups did not restrict their action to pressuring the political parties. They also tried to educate women themselves, with the emphasis being placed on convincing women to commit themselves more to the struggle. In the Netherlands, as the 1982 municipal elections drew near, the Liberal Party's women militants published a brochure summarizing the problem of having women take on responsibility at all levels of government and society. In France, the *Association des femmes démocrates* (Democratic Women's Association) also strongly urged women to run for office in the 1983 municipal elections.

Action was also taken to awaken women's political consciousness in other countries. Meetings and sessions followed thick and fast, sponsored by women Christian Democrats in Italy in 1978, *Dialogue* in France, and the Women's Union (close to the Socialist Party) in Greece, which organized a series of 4-day regional seminars in 1985, to name just a few. Public awareness campaigns were not forgotten, either. In Belgium, the *Conseil national des femmes belges* campaigned before the October 1982 local elections on the theme "Have confidence in women in your commune, too".

The burst of national and local initiatives in this area was seconded by the efforts of European groups, especially by the political families, to give women with the same ideological commitments but coming from very different backgrounds a chance to obtain information, discuss their experiences, learn from the experiences of others and develop concerted action. It is impossible to mention all of the meetings, conferences and sessions that took place from 1977 to 1987. We will have to settle for picking out just a few of them, with apologies for seeming to be unjust towards the militants whose commitment to cross-border action deserves much more attention.

Thus, the first General Assembly of Christian Democratic Union, comprising the women's sections of the Christian Democratic Parties of close to fifteen European countries, was held in Strasbourg in January 1978. This Assembly decided to create the Women's Union of the European People's Party (EPP), the alliance of Christian Democratic Parties of the EEC. The 34th Congress of the Liberal International, which was held in Rome in 1981, was marked by a very strong female contingent for the first time in the congress's history. Women delegates from some 40 countries seized the occasion to bring up the problem of the place given to women in the Liberal Parties. A European section of Liberal women was created in 1984. Similarly, the 75th anniversary of the founding of the Socialist International Women (founded in 1907 by Clara Zetkin and Rosa Luxembourg) provided an opportunity for holding a seminar in Brussels on women and power, at the end of which one of the spokeswomen concluded, "We are fighting in our parties - and sometimes against our parties - to abolish the patriarchy once and for all" (WoE, No. 29, Jan/Feb 1983).

Numerous pan-European meetings of women's associations organized by the Commission of the European Communities have also worked towards these goals. Some 50 women's organizations (representing a total membership of more than 30 million) attended the Second European Colloquium of Women's Associations held in Torino on 9-10 March 1984 at the invitation of the *Consulta femminile regionale del Piemonte* (the women's advisory body for the Piedmont) with the European Commission's support. A text approved at the end of the colloquium called on the parties engaged in the European Parliamentary campaign "to abide by the principle of equal opportunities and to distribute fairly between persons of both sexes not only the candidacies but also the promotional resources available for the election campaign" (WoE, No. 35, 15 March/15 May 1984).

Since then, the feeling is that all corners of Europe have been reached and it will be difficult for the political parties to continue treating lightly for much longer the demands of women determined to exercise their political rights, especially their rights to stand for election.

The creation of specialised government bodies

Women's associations have played another very important role in acting as what might be called watchdog groups, nipping at the heels of the various representatives of authority in a wide range of areas. However, they have not yet reached the population as a whole, even when they are powerful and dynamic. They tend to influence primarily individuals who are already active, or at least sensitized to the situation and thus likely to attend meetings. This aspect of their activity is beneficial and indispensable.

However, another development, which can be quite fruitful, can be used to measure the progress made so far. This is the creation of specialised national government bodies that, in the form of the Ministry for Women's Rights or Committee for Equality, are more visible to the public eye - and thus more likely to induce changes in attitudes towards women - and have powers to intervene in the work of various government bodies that associations rarely have.

Over the last ten years, a number of countries have created - often in response to the European Commission's prodding and the pressure exerted by women - bodies for the purpose not only of improving women's socio-economic status, but also the degree of their participation in decision-making structures, especially with regard to policy. There are now junior ministers, committees or councils for emancipation and delegations throughout Europe endeavouring, when election time rolls around, to draw attention to the place reserved for women.

European incentives

In various respects, these incentives derive from what each country sees happening in neighbouring States. Some countries may be shamed into making an effort to increase women's participation in government by being consistently held up as Europe's failures; others are guided by the desire to remain the leaders of the pack by working to widen even more the field of action to which their women have access, especially if the women's associations in these countries do not hesitate to provide information on the situations elsewhere.

The women in the political groups in the European Parliament are in privileged strategic positions to compare the situations and work for change. However, the European institutions themselves exert the strongest pressure on the Member States' governments and political forces to take more favourable attitudes towards women and facilitate their participation at all levels of government and politics.

In February 1981, the European Parliament engaged in a vast debate on the position of women in the Community. Johanna Maij-Weggen underscored women's minority situation in politics. She stated, to much applause, that if the problems facing Europe (the threat to peace, the energy shortage, economic crises and unemployment, environmental pollution and growing disparities between the rich industrial countries and poorer developing countries) are to be solved, "...the creative involvement of every available talent, the talents of men and women, will be required. If these problems are to be solved, the broad and loyal support of all citizens, both men and women, will be required. To this end, the disadvantages suffered by women should be eliminated, and balanced and just relations between European citizens must be created." Yvette Roudy, in turn, stressed, "It is obvious that while there are few or no women in the bodies where the decisions are taken, the problems and questions that they may raise will continue to be overlooked and it will

regularly be said, 'Oh yes, we shall have to draw up a special report on these questions we keep forgetting'...Until women are equally represented everywhere, at all levels, there will continue to be a need for special places where these problems are settled...the general situation of women is not a neutral one. It forms part of a hierarchical order, a power structure, and to change it would be to change all the rules of mankind, which is why so much passion is aroused when it is announced that some of these rules may be changed." (WoE, No. 19, 1981 - Special European Parliament issue.) Despite this, when the Parliament elected in 1979 re-appointed its committees halfway through its term, while the Committee of Enquiry on Women's Rights was chaired by a woman (with an all-woman slate of officers), only 2 of the other 17 parliamentary committees had Chairwomen and 6 Vice-Chairwomen. After the 1984 election, six of the 12 committees were chaired by women and there were 3 women among the 12 Vice-Chairpersons.

The European Commission did not confine itself to internal reports and debates. It also organized meetings in various countries to spread ideas about the political advancement of women. Thus, in November 1983 it co-sponsored with the *Instituto de la mujer* (Women's Institute) an information seminar on the European Commission and Spanish women in Madrid that drew close to 300 participants. The aim of was to have Spanish women and the officials responsible for the Community policies affecting them meet each other. The three round tables that followed the European officials' speeches included one on the very question of women's participation in politics, showing the importance that was attached to this issue.

A meeting of women local or regional government officials and civil servants to discuss "the renaissance of European Society" was held in Pisa one month later by the Council of European Municipalities, the European Movement, the Pisa Provincial Administration and the European Commission. The problem of the small number of women in places of power was brought up at this time, too. Finally, another colloquium (dealing with women's issues) was held by the European Commission at Santiago de Compostela in January 1986.

The changing electorate

Leaving the area of government institutions and political parties to examine developments at the level of the citizens of each Member State, one sees two trends that, in the long run, can only strengthen and accelerate women's inclusion in decision-making bodies.

The first trend is a very positive shift in the public's image of women. Male party officials often oppose the nomination of female candidates by arguing that the voters have more confidence in men than in women to represent them in government. However, all of the surveys conducted recently (and published in *Women of Europe*) show that this assertion lost its validity quite some time ago. People accept having women fill roles - especially political ones - formerly considered to be "masculine" without any reservations.

The vast opinion poll conducted in 1983 in the (at the time) ten Member States at the European Commission's Directorate General for Information's request can be used as a yardstick of change in this regard, for its results are compared systematically with those of a similar investigation carried out in 1975. Thus, in 1983, 67% of the respondents made no distinction between being represented by a man or a woman in the European Parliament, versus 56% in 1975. Similarly, 72% of the respondents in 1983 disagreed with the statement that politics should be handled by men rather than women, versus only 41% of the 1975 respondents. This trend was clear in all of the Member States except Ireland among both men and women.

The surveys conducted by various pollsters in the Member States corroborate these findings. Thus, in France in 1977, 73% of the population were in favour of having women mayors of medium-sized towns and 83% considered women totally capable of performing the duties of a town councillor (WoE, No. 00, Nov 1977).

A survey conducted in Spain in 1986 for the Ministry of Culture revealed that three out of four people thought that more women should be involved in politics, three out of four opposed the idea that politics was not for women and 63% felt that political activism was compatible with women's family responsibilities (WoE, 15 May/15 July 1986).

This favourable attitude to women who go into politics is also noticeable in countries such as Ireland and Denmark, where it is possible to express a "vote of preference" or "preferential vote", meaning that the voter can select the candidates of his or her choice on the ballot. In Ireland in 1977 there was a clear increase in the votes for women candidates compared with the preceding election, from 8,811 to 37,547 for Fianna Fail alone. In the March 1978 elections in Denmark²⁰ a large number of preferential votes went to women, so that the order of the candidates on the lists drawn up by the parties was often upset to the advantage of the women candidates (WoE, No. 3, May/June 1978). The same phenomenon was observed during the 1979 general elections: wherever the lists were "competitive" (i.e., not drawn up with a fixed order), women candidates received more preferential votes than men (an average of 1,723 per female candidate versus 1,272 per male candidate)²¹. It is probably after examining these results (and those recorded in Bavaria and Baden-Württemberg, where preferential votes are also allowed) that the Vice-President of the Bundestag expressed the desire to reform the electoral code so as to allow the voters to split their tickets and thereby not have to accept the decisions of parties that tend to place women out of reach of a seat (WoE, No. 24, Jan/Feb 1982).

The second trend underlies and supports the progress made by women in entering politics. Although neglected until now, it is on its way to becoming an increasingly important factor in determining how political parties distribute positions to their members. Noticeable changes have occurred among women voters in many Member States. For a longtime, more women either abstained from voting or voted for conservative parties than men. In the last decade, this trend has been reversed, with the rate of participation reaching that of men and, in some cases, as many women voting for the Left as men. According to a Eurobarometer poll conducted

²⁰A new voting law was adopted in Denmark on 2 December 1977 that allows the parties to present their candidates on either a list with a fixed order or a list without a fixed order of preference, in which case the winners are determined according to the number of votes of preference they receive. The second formula is favoured by women.

²¹In the January 1984 general elections, the votes of preference averaged 1,519 per female candidate versus 1,337 per male candidate.

during the 1984 European elections, 65% and 64% of the male and female respondents, respectively, all participating Member States combined, said that they had voted (Supplement No. 21 to Women of Europe, "Elections to the European Parliament: Women and Voting"). This trend has been observed in France and Germany, like the other large democracies, since the mid-70s.

These similarities in voting patterns have also been seen in Greece, where, when the number of voters requires it, men and women vote separately. Thus, the breakdown of voting in the densely-populated voting districts in 1981 was as follows: New Democracy received 33.7% and 36.3%, the PASOK received 48.8% and 47.1% and the Communist Party 12.1% and 11.3% of the male and female votes, respectively (WoE, No. 23, Nov/Dec 1981). In the by-elections held in Hamburg, Germany, in December 1982, the SPD received 58% of the men's votes and 42% of the women's votes. In the period leading up to the January 1984 national elections in Denmark, the daily newspaper Information published the findings of a survey from which it concluded that women were, as a general rule, more radical in politics, swinging farther to the left than men. Moreover, while housewives and the large majority of women working part-time tended to vote like their husbands, most married women with full-time jobs chose parties farther to the left than their husbands did (WoE, No. 34, 15 Jan/15 March 1984). The effect of work had already been revealed in France by a scientific investigation carried out in the aftermath of the 1978 elections²² and has been confirmed for each round of elections since. For example, in the 1985 canton elections, 34% of women "without occupations" versus 45% of women with jobs voted for the Left (WoE, No. 41, 15 March/15 May 1985). In the 1986 national elections, 44% of the men and 44.5% of the women respondents said they had voted for a party on the left, while among the voters under 50, a markedly greater percentage of women than men supported the Left. As for the 18- to 20-year-olds, 53% of the girls and only 40% of the boys voted for the Left (WoE, No. 49, 15 Jan/15 March 1987).

Because women are seen more and more as a force to be contended with, they may be less overlooked by the party strategists in the years to come.

We are thus at a moment in history when many conditions seem right to widen the path that may be taken by women willing to take on political responsibilities. Yet, formidable obstacles still exist, due to the fact that access to politics is determined almost completely by the political parties. Women are still in less of a hurry than men to join political parties. In some cases, of course, they may make up 38% of the membership (as in Italy's Christian Democratic Party ten years ago) but, as a rule, they rarely exceed 25%, at best 33%, of the membership in the major parties. In Germany in 1979, women made up 25% of the SPD, 19% of the CDU, 21% of the FDP and 12% of the CSU (WoE, No. 10, May/June/July 1979). They tend to be more numerous in the smaller parties with far-left and environmentalist ideologies. The latter have only recently broken into the

²²Janine Mossuz-Lavau and Mariette Sineau, Enquête sur les femmes et la politique en France, Paris, PUF, 1983, 200 pp.

political arena and tend to recruit their members from the younger generations, which are less tied down by certain obligations than their elders. These material obstacles stem from the fact that European society has not yet achieved true reversibility of roles. When the bulk of the child-rearing and household responsibilities are borne by women, many of whom have jobs as well, it is difficult for such women to be active in associations as well.

However, this under-representation among the parties' rank and file falls far short of explaining the lack of women at the top. The climb is still more difficult for women than for men, who are not always pleased to see them reach a level from which they can compete for posts. Examples of paths lined with pitfalls are legion.

Thus, the thirty councilmen elected to the Ellwangen town council, in Baden-Württemberg, included two women elected on a feminist ticket. Their colleagues refused to let the women take part in the work of the council's preliminary committees, and one of them was even forbidden to put forward amendments (WoE, No. 18, Jan/Feb 1981). In fact, 130 German women local government officials met in 1985 to share their experiences, whence it came out that the seriousness of their commitment was often greeted with scepticism and they were also "unwelcome to their male colleagues" (WoE, 41, 15 May/15 July 1985). Similarly, many French MPs complained bitterly about the obstacle courses that were their daily lot²³.

Strong reluctance must still be overcome within the party apparatus itself, where it appears obvious that each place won by a woman is a place lost by a man. However, not all of the parties are equally guilty. The parties claiming to be on the left have almost always had more women elected than the conservative parties. In Italy in 1979, women accounted for 18.3% of the Communist MPs versus 3.4% of the Christian Democratic MPs. After the 1983 elections, the percentages were 14.5% of the Communist MPs, 3.5% of the Christian Democratic MPs and 25% of the Radical Party MPs (WoE, 31, 15 July/15 Sep 1983). In France in 1981, 9% of the Communist group's MPs, 7% of the Socialists and Radical Left's MPs, 1.6% of the UDF's MPs and 3.6% of the RPR's MPs in the National Assembly were women. In 1986, at which time the UDF and RPR had won the majority, women accounted for only 4% of their MPs, versus 10% for the Socialist group. After the March 1983 elections in Germany, 10.4% of the SPD's MPs, 6.7% of the CDU/CSU's MPs, 8.6% of the FDP's MPs and 37% of the Greens' MPs were women (WoE, No. 30, March/April 1983). In fact, the Greens presented an all-woman list in the December 1986 local election in Hamburg, while in 1987, 57% of their representatives in the Bundestag were women (versus 16% for the SPD, 7.6% for the CDU/CSU and 14% for the Liberals).

While political affiliation is important in speeding up or slowing down women's access to elected assemblies, geography also plays a role. Women are usually better accepted by the elite in medium-sized or big towns and cities than in rural areas. Even in Denmark, where they are strongly represented, this town/country or centre/periphery divide can be detected. In the March 1978 local elections, the proportion of women elected ranged from 14.3% in Jutland to 50.9% in Copenhagen proper (WoE, No. 3, May/June 1978). In Italy, the 1980 regional elections showed that women were systematically better represented in the economically sound regions than in the poor areas. Finally, after the 1983 local elections in France, 12.9% of the town councilmen in the communes with less than 3,500 inhabitants and 21.6% of the councilmen in communes with more than 3,500 inhabitants were women (WoE, No. 30, March/April 1983).

²³See Sineau, Mariette, *Des femmes en politique*, Paris, Economica, 1988, 240 pp.

Having made this point, we can only affirm, together with all of the organizations and authorities whose analyses and advice are passed on unflinchingly by Women of Europe, that there are still far too few women in political decision-making bodies and that politics makes the sharpest contrast with what has been seen in the other areas of human activity. Can the political field - the last male bastion - remain so inaccessible for long to women, who make up more than half of the electorate and, in some countries, close to half of the working population?

CONCLUSIONS

The cultural changes occurring in Europe from the 1970s through the 1980s have led to much wider acceptance of the ideas of liberty, equality and fraternity. The spread of these ideas is manifested by changes in political regimes (three Member States shook off oppressive dictatorships), laws and policies (facilitating the access of the largest number of people to schooling, health services and social protection), and individual and group practices (e.g., for helping famine-stricken Third World populations or fighting human rights violations well beyond Europe's borders).

The changes that have come about in the position of women such as we have been able to follow, blow by blow, with the help of Women of Europe, are part of this vast movement and, in certain respects, some of its symptoms. Indeed, these changes testify to the acceptance - at different rates in different countries - of more freedom of action for women. More and more, women are obtaining the means to control their own bodies and put an end to the millennia of violence to which they have been subjected. They have a better chance of pursuing studies and entering the professions of their choice than they did in the past and are starting to be a presence to be contended with in decision-making bodies, especially political ones. These changes also point to an effort to reduce the differences - of varying magnitudes, depending on the field and State involved - between women, who had long been deprived of their rights and retributions, and men. Finally, they reveal the desire to increase communication and solidarity between European women and European men, on the one hand, with whom women want to share all of the joys and problems of daily life, and with the even more underprivileged women of Africa, Asia and Latin America, in their situations of hunger, poverty, war and lack of basic rights.

The factors leading to these transformations, that contributed to the spread of principles and actions judged favourably by growing numbers of Europeans and often envied by women on the other continents, fall into two groups, one of deep internal changes affecting each one of the countries discussed here, the other "outside pressure" from the Community's institutions. The first group is connected to the socio-economic and cultural development of Europe. Despite the crisis hanging over the continent since the early seventies, the number of Europeans benefitting from education has increased steadily. Public opinion polls have shown that, the more educated the public, the more readily it embraces the values of liberation and autonomy and approves of the genuine emancipation of the "weaker sex" and participation of the latter's members in the various areas of human activity. This emphasis on schooling has

been particularly beneficial to women, who, expected until recently to fulfil a family role first and foremost, with "outside" tasks coming second, swarmed to secondary schools, then establishments of higher education, to the point where, in much of the northern and central parts of the Community, there are almost as many women at university as men. As a result, more and more women are filling positions in which their professional, social and political responsibilities are commensurate with the qualifications that they have acquired.

As women's situations have changed, so have their demands. Women are much bolder about claiming their right to self-determination and calling for equal rights within the family, in employment and in the society as a whole. Some of them work actively towards these goals, are militants in associations that prod the government, politicians and trade unions, arouse public awareness and provide information and defend groups or individuals who are the victims of much too obvious injustice.

The second group of factors is related to membership in the European Community. One can never go too far in emphasizing the importance for each of the Member States of its inclusion in a Community that, in addition to its historical and geographical determinants, is also a political, economic and cultural entity, despite the great diversity of its components, with its own institutions.

As we have seen, the Community exerts its influence in two ways. Firstly, information on changes occurring in a given place is transmitted quickly (with the help of the media and women's associations) to neighbouring areas, which cannot always ignore developments occurring at their doorsteps or a few hours (by plane) away. Still, secondly and more important, the Community's institutions have taken on the issue of women's rights and, beyond this, the discrimination that may be experienced by all minorities or social groups. Their policies of promoting, intervening, informing and pondering, their extreme watchfulness in this area serve as important models and catalysts for those Member States in which much remains to be done. In calling attention to shortcomings, pointing out, through directives and recommendations, the right paths for corrective action, proposing models of positive actions, subjecting the major sticking points to analysis by experts, disseminating on a large scale the results of surveys conducted at regular intervals and helping associations with their local or international undertakings, the Community's institutions have brought constant weight to bear on national policies as well as the thoughts and attitudes of the people. While the changes in morals are, in many places, ahead of changes in the law, European intervention can prod foot-dragging groups and countries to offer their nationals more liberty, equality and solidarity.

An entrainment effect can be seen, in which the Community collects requests from all over and translates them into demands or suggestions for the Member States, which are persuaded to satisfy their citizens' aspirations, sometimes even "anticipate" such yearnings and force through schemes in effect elsewhere but called for by only a small minority of the citizens of the Member State involved.

The changes that have occurred in all of the areas affected by the huge problem of mentalities are far from unrelated. A "Community effect" can definitely be detected in the cultural developments in each country of Europe. The Member States are moving - each one at its own pace and with emphasis on the areas of its choice - towards a society in which the question of women's rights will eventually no longer have to be asked (at least with regard to legislation), where girls and boys will be raised in a real environment of equal roles so as to prepare them to practice such equality in their daily lives, both public and private, at work, in associations and at play. However, simply writing equity into the law will not be enough to reach this goal. The laws must be made to live, e.g., be known and enforced.

Women of Europe has an irreplaceable function in this process, for it does not confine itself to recording the successive phases of Europe's cultural development or instilling in its readers of both sexes throughout Europe the European spirit that is indispensable for achieving a real, unified entity. WoE is one of the means of action available to a community whose constituents must become democracies in the true sense of the word, i.e., regimes in which women will be on an equal footing with men, just as able to take an active part in making society's political, economic and social decisions.

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