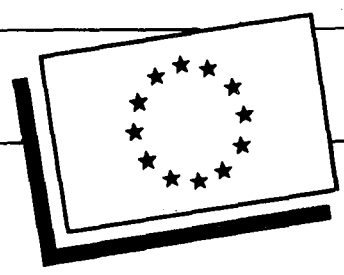


WOMEN OF EUROPE
supplements

COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

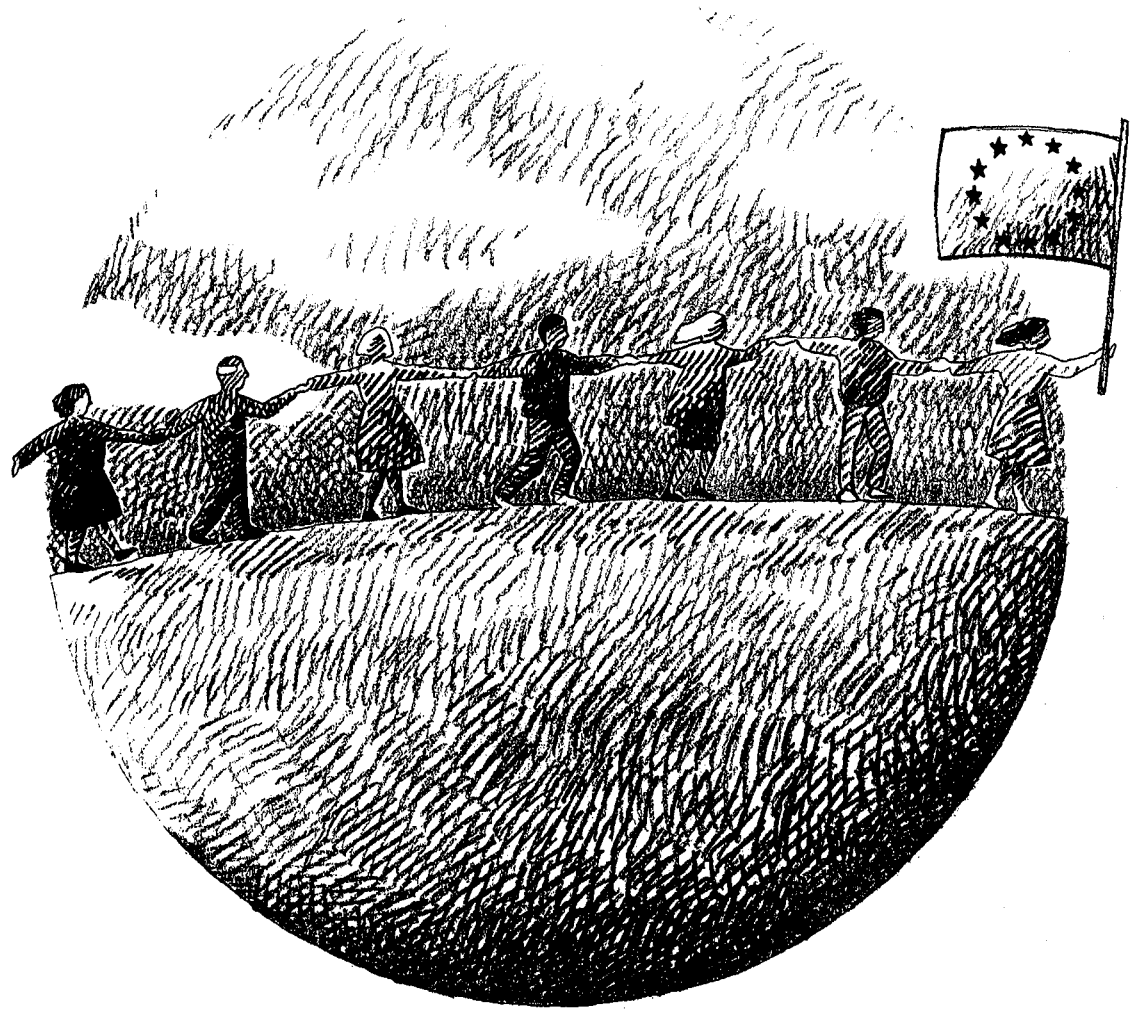
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No. 35

WOMEN AND MEN OF EUROPE TODAY

attitudes towards Europe and politics



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by

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This inquiry was carried out in the twelve Community countries at the request of the European Communities' Commission (General Directorate on Audiovisual, Information, Communication and Culture).

As a supplement to "Eurobaromètre 31A", an identical twelve-item questionnaire was submitted in July 1989 to representative samples of the population of the Community's twelve member countries. A total of 11,815 persons were personally interviewed in their homes by professional polling staff.

The inquiry was carried out by twelve specialized institutions, under the general coordination of INRA (Brussels). This report was drawn up by Janine Mossuz-Lavau, Director of Research at the CNRS and at the National Foundation of Political Sciences. As is customary with this type of report, the wording of the questions, the results presented and the comments do not necessarily represent the political views of the Commission.

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INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the behaviour and political opinions of women in Europe have changed. In several countries, for example, a greater electoral participation or even a new tendency to vote towards the left has become discernible. But, in the past, neither an overall view of their relationship to politics could be formed, nor was it known how they stood in relation to one of the major issues of the second half of the XX century, the construction of Europe. The inquiry carried out in 1989 in the twelve countries of the Community compares the opinions and behaviour of men and women and looks at the developments which have taken place over recent decades. Are women as ready as men to accept political responsibility? What support are they likely to give to the European enterprise? These are the two questions which, on the basis of this inquiry, it is now possible to answer.

I - WOMEN AND POLITICS

Since the Second World War ended, surveys have regularly shown that women are less interested than men in politics. They talk about it less frequently with those around them, they read or listen less frequently to "news" in the press, on the radio or television, fewer of them claim to be close to a political party, they are more likely than their companions to say that politics is something complicated and that one has to be a specialist to understand it, and a significant number of them agree that it is the responsibility of men rather than women.

In the course of time, however, this picture has undergone a few changes. In fact, those women who, in the Fifties and Sixties, deliberately placed themselves on the fringe of the political field, have gradually drawn closer to it. Thus, for example, in 1953 in France, according to an IFOP survey, while 28% of men said they were not interested in politics, 60% of women described themselves in that way; in 1969, again according to the IFOP, the gap had already considerably decreased with 34% of men and 47% of women expressing this opinion. In 1978 (SOFRES survey), no more than 13% of men stated they were completely disinterested in politics, women slightly over 20%.

In the following years, however, a certain stagnation of the situation can be seen, in Europe at least. This emerges from the comparison of inquiries carried out in 1983 and 1987 at the request of the European Communities' Commission. To the question "When you are among friends, do you discuss politics?", in 1983 22% of men and 37% of women answered "never", in 1987 24% of men and 39% of women¹.

As far as public opinion is concerned, both sexes mixed, it accepts more and more that women are involved in a field which, in the past, was strictly reserved for men. Surveys conducted since 1975 at the request of the European Communities' Commission make this very clear. On three occasions, the following question was asked: "It is sometimes said that "politics is men's business, not women's". Do you personally agree fully, agree,

disagree or disagree completely?" In 1975 only 37% of people asked in the whole of the Community, in 1983 48% and in 1987 54% replied "disagree completely"². The same series of inquiries also highlights the fact that the involvement of women in political action is more accepted. To the question, "In general, would you have more confidence in a man or in a woman to represent you in Parliament", the Europeans are increasingly less likely to answer "more confidence in a man": 38% in 1975, 30% in 1983, 22% in 1987³.

Voices are increasingly raised, therefore, to protest against the idea that women should not concern themselves with politics.

Women still distanced from politics.

However, despite this more favourable climate, Europeans do not feel, as Europeans, drawn to politics. The 1989 inquiry shows this more clearly. Three questions were asked in the twelve countries of the European Community.

1. "Would you say that you are interested in politics - very, quite, not very, not at all?;
2. "When you are with friends, would you say that you discuss politics often, occasionally, never?";
3. "Do you consider yourself to be close to a party? If yes, are you very close, quite close, or more a sympathizer of this party?"

Table 1 shows that women have a more distant relationship to politics than men have. While 53% of the latter said they were "very" or "quite" interested in politics, 35% of Europeans are in this category; 73% of men and 59% of women report frequent or occasional political discussions with their friends; 31% and 26% said they were very or quite close to a political party. Although women are always slower than men to confirm, in one way or another, that they are concerned with politics, it can be seen that, according to the questions, the degree of this concern varies considerably. First of all, it is clear that few men or women say they are close to a political party and that, moreover, there is not a great difference between the sexes (5 points). As a general rule, the parties do not have an excellent press, they are seen as privileged actors of "politicking" politics, like machines fighting to obtain power in their own interests more often than in the interests of those they are supposed to defend and as the authors of more or less morally acceptable "manoeuvring". In any case, it can be observed in the Europe of the Twelve, that 34% of men and 40% of women say they are not close to any party. But refusal to place oneself in the narrow sphere of influence of a party does not necessarily imply disinterest in public life. However, a distinction does have to be made between the way one describes oneself and how one behaves. It can be seen, in fact, that although men and women, the latter more than the former, hesitate in describing themselves as people who are interested in politics, they emphasize, on the other hand that, in practice, in particular when they are with friends, they do talk about it.

Table 1. Relationship to politics according to sex in the whole of the European Community.

Question 1. How interested are you in politics?

	M	W
very	16	7
quite	37	28
not very	30	36
not at all	16	29
no reply	1	7
	-----	-----
	100%	100%

Question 2. When you are with friends, would you say that you discuss politics

	M	W
often	18	11
occasionally	55	48
never	27	40
no reply	1	1
	-----	-----
	100%	100%

Question 3. Do you consider yourself to be close to a political party?

	M	W
very close	12	9
quite close	19	17
more a sympathizer	31	30
not close to any party	34	40
no reply	4	4
	-----	-----
	100%	100%

This difference between the two indicators was noted on many occasions. In fact, to declare interest in politics assumes, in certain regards, a self value, a declaration of some sort of qualification to speak about politics and many people are not bold enough to do that, considering themselves not to be at the required level to define themselves in that way. And, at that game, women, who for centuries were deemed to have no place in the field of politics, show themselves to be even more reticent than men. But when we wonder about what happens in reality, in daily practice, we notice that politics is more present than might have been thought. People often talk about it, or at least occasionally, it is talked about even if the tendency is to say that there is no interest in it. In order to grasp what most closely resembles the lives of the people asked, it therefore seems to us relevant to keep as a main indicator the one relating to political conversation. This is what we will do in the rest of this analysis taking particular interest in the reply "never".

Again it should be clarified that the word "politics" is understood here in a relatively restrictive sense. In fact, in 1987, Europeans were asked: "When you are with friends do you often, occasionally or never discuss big social problems (for example, human rights, poverty, the Third World, equality of the sexes, etc.)". Only 20% of men and 22% of women replied "never" while, to the question asked in the same survey on the frequency of conversations described as "political", 24% of men and 39% of women responded with the same "never". It is difficult to deny the status of "political problems" to those presented as "social problems". But it is clear that women do not easily give them this description. Therefore, it should be clear that, even while keeping the question on political conversations as an indicator of interest in politics, the level of real interest in communal affairs is still, doubtless, underestimated.

Why are women less involved in politics than men? Several reasons can be suggested. The first relates to the different roles that women and men have played in society over the centuries. Women had the responsibility of the home and had to devote themselves to domestic and educational tasks - which did not exempt them moreover, far from it, from farm work, craft work or selling managed by the husband -, the men were responsible only for relations with the outside world and the management of public affairs. Although great changes have occurred in the XX century to jostle this ancestral allocation of roles, such ancient traditions cannot be erased so easily. In the imagination of certain women, the idea remains alive that politics is mens' business and that it is out of bounds to them.

A second reason is related to the time which men and women have available respectively. Despite, there too, an evolution in recent times, the sharing of tasks inherent in the home is not established. The main part of this domestic and educational work still falls to women who hardly have the time to even inform themselves or to have political discussions with those close to them, still less to take part in demonstrations or attend meetings.

A third reason can be found in the respective socio-demographic composition of male and female populations. In fact, among women, there are people who have more characteristics which are likely to encourage withdrawal into the home and disinterest in public matters. Among women there are, in fact, more old people (even very old), more people with a low level of qualifications, more "inactive" people and more who practise religion (go to church at least once a month). This explanation tends to deny the existence of a "female" factor and to underline that if the male and female populations were composed in the same way, there would be no more differences between them in their relationship to politics. The 1989 inquiry shows in this regard that things must be understood in a less clear-cut way and that, above all, the weight of traditions should not be neglected.

A last reason, finally, takes into account the relationship which women have with society in general. They are more concerned with what is concrete, realisable, directly effective, able to change things. The world of ideologies, discourse, stereotyped, formal language, some say, the tendency, in politics, to speak for the sake of speaking does not suit their way of understanding the world and of wanting to change it. It is a reason of this kind which emerges when they say they talk about big social problems but not about politics.

Obviously, not all these paths can be explored in this inquiry but it should be clear that clarifying the relationship of women to politics requires consideration of complex factors.

National diversity

Does what can be observed in the whole of Europe apply to each constituent country of the Community, or are national particularities recorded? In fact, not all the countries have the same relationship to politics and not all have aroused in their women an attraction to this field to the same extent. Let us note first of all that, with few exceptions, the countries where politics are not discussed very much are precisely those where the differences between men and women are the most marked. It is said that, in relatively high proportions, politics are never discussed in Belgium, Spain, Ireland, Italy, Portugal; and women are far behind men (at least 15 points gap) in these same countries and in Greece (table 2). By way of example, let us indicate that in Belgium, 39% of men and 55% of women never discuss politics with their friends, that in Spain these figures are respectively 46% and 65%, in Italy 32% and 55%, in Portugal 42% and 63%. In Greece, 10% of men and 28% of women abstain from such conversations. Whereas in a country such as Denmark 14% and 24% of them are counted, in Luxembourg 24% and 23%, in the Netherlands 22% and 31%, in France 29% and 35%. The question about interest in politics gives very close results (table 3).

It cannot, therefore, fail to be noticed that the countries where the political expression of women is still very muzzled compared to that of men (itself still hardly developed) are

Catholic countries, situated for the most part in the South of Europe, and three of them (Spain, Portugal and Greece) having known a more or less long period of fascist dictatorship. In other words, these are countries in which the traditional model according to which the man takes charge of public and the woman of private matters, has reasons for existence which are even more firmly-entrenched than elsewhere and women subject themselves, in part, to the ancestral patterns by not allowing themselves to take an interest in politics, by considering it as not being their responsibility and by not speaking about it.

This impression of traditional roles was visible in another form in the 1987 enquiry. People were asked whether they had more confidence in a man, a woman, or equal confidence in both sexes to carry out different jobs. With regard to driving a bus or a train, while in Denmark and the Netherlands, 86% and 75% of persons asked replied that they had as much confidence in a man as in a woman, 52% of Greeks and Portuguese gave this reply, 54% of Italians, 56% of Spanish and 43% of Irish.

It would seem, therefore, forcing the feature a little, that with regard to the entry of women into the field of politics, there is a two-speed Europe, that of the North and, in certain aspects, of the centre, where the process is quite firmly under way, and a Europe of the South joined by Belgium and Ireland, where they are just beginning to emerge from a long prehistory. In many fields, and in particular that of women's rights, the North has been in some ways the initiator. This has been seen with regard to contraception and abortion for example, and the South has gradually followed even if not everything has been established yet. It doubtless requires time for this originally masculine activity par excellence, politics, to become a matter for women too.

Generally, at any given moment in history, not all countries are exactly contemporary in the sense that, for example, on the economic or cultural level, some are more "advanced" than others. This observation is even more true with regard to the situation of women and their relationship to politics.

Sociological diversity and evolutionary factors

Independently of the national diversity which has just been emphasized, other divisions exist in the population of Europe. Here too, including in one and the same country, not all people live at the same hour. According to whether they are young or old, have studied or not, work or not, they do not have the same relationship to politics. Certain situations are more favourable than others to taking responsibility for public matters and facilitate progress in this direction all the more among women.

It is known, for example, that interest in politics increases with the level of education. By way of example, let us indicate that an inquiry carried out in France in 1988 shows that "the proportion of those who replied who are "very" interested in politics, varies on a ratio of 1 to 10 between those who have no diploma (3%) and those who hold a degree in higher education (32%)"⁴. But it has also been shown that it was among those with

only "diplomas" that women appeared able to concern themselves with politics as much as men.

Work also contributes towards politicizing women. An enquiry carried out in France in 1978 allowed a distinction to be made, from this point of view, between three categories of women: those who work outside (the "actives"), those who have worked at one time or other in their lives then have returned to the home (the "ex-actives") and those who have always remained at home⁵. It can be seen that politicization is stronger among the "actives" than among the other women: 29% of them say they never have political conversations with those around them, as opposed to 35% of the "ex-actives" and 39% of women at home⁶. As a general rule, the "actives", followed by the "ex-actives", are more concerned than women at home with politics from the parliamentary and trade union point of view⁷.

It is also known that, among those who work in professions which place them in the average or higher categories, among non-religious people, the political differences between men and women have a tendency to dwindle and sometimes to disappear. The 1988 French inquiry mentioned above shows, in particular, that, among non-skilled workers, 43% of men and only 24% of women are very or quite close to a political party while, among senior management and intellectual professions, it is 55% of men and 58% of women. The same inquiry also underlines that, among those who attend church at least once a month, 55% of women and only 34% of men say they are interested in politics while, among non-religious people, these figures are respectively 58% and 54%.

Finally, the relationships between age and politics are complex, the younger and older tending to be disinterested in the political game while, with maturity, there is a more solid concern. Nevertheless, with regard to interest in politics, according to the 1988 French inquiry, the differences between men and women are less among the 18-29 year olds than in the rest of the population (6 points gap for the reply "very" or "quite" to the question "are you interested in politics", as opposed to 10 points among the 30-44 year olds, 14 points among the 45-49 year olds, 12 among the 60 plus year olds)⁸.

What does the 1989 inquiry teach us regarding the effect of a certain number of socio-economic factors on the relationship to politics in the twelve Community countries?

Let us note that, in this enquiry, only three factors were considered: age, level of studies and working.

1. Age.

The 1989 inquiry confirms the rule that interest in politics which is not very high among younger people, increases in adults and decreases again in older people. More 25 year olds than 25-54 year olds never have political conversations with their friends, the absence of such discussions occurring most frequently among the 55 plus year-olds (cf. table 4). However, the differences between men and women do not remain constant throughout life. Among 15-24 year olds, 35% of men and 43% of women (or a gap of

8 points), among 25-39 year-olds, 25% of men and 37% of women (12 points), among 40-54 year-olds, 23% of men and 38% of women (15 points) and, among the 55 plus year-olds, 30% of men and 49% of women (19 points), say they never have political conversations.

In other words, the gap increases with age, not because among younger people girls have more political conversation than when they are adults, but because, between 15 and 24 years of age, boys and girls still have little wish to concern themselves with politics in the traditional sense of the term. However, it is among the older people that one encounters women furthest from the political fields and, at the same time, the most distinct from men of the same age. This latter trait applies to many countries and, in particular, to Mediterranean countries where among the 55 plus year-olds, a very high number of women who never talk about politics to their friends can be counted: 60% in Italy, 84% in Spain, 72% in Portugal, to which should be added the 72% in Belgium. In these countries, the gaps between men and women of this age exceeds 25 points. Conversely, in most of the countries of the North and centre, the gaps do not exceed 14 points. For example, in Germany, after 54 years of age, 9% of men and 21% of women have no political conversation, in the Netherlands, this is respectively 24 and 37%, in Denmark 15 and 29%, in Luxembourg, 31 and 40%.

The hypothesis could have been made that, among the younger people growing up in a mixed society in which the status of women is quite different from that of their mothers and grandmothers, girls would show more interest in politics. In fact, this is not the case. Many boys and girls are not concerned, above all, let us be precise, when it is a question of politics which appear to relate to the action of parties and trade unions. The relatively weak gaps recorded between the replies of girls and those of boys demonstrate a reticence which is strong in both sexes to take charge of public matters in their "politicking" dimension.

It cannot yet be said, therefore, that the young female generation behaves in a way which contrasts with that of its seniors. It has more the tendency, like its male counterpart, to place itself outside of the political field understood in the specified sense of the highest levels.

2. Level of studies.

Here we tackle the most important factor in understanding the way in which women can turn to politics and, above all, turn to it, in certain respects, on an equal footing with men.

The 1989 inquiry allows us to distinguish between three levels of studies: low (that of people who have attended school up to the age of 15), average (that of people educated up to 16-19 years of age), high (that of people educated up to 20 years and over) (table 4).

Table 4. Frequency of political discussions according to sex and 1) age, 2) level of studies, 3) integration into the world of work.

1) Age	<u>15-24 years</u>		<u>25-39 years</u>		<u>40-54 years</u>		<u>55 years & +</u>	
	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W
often	18	9	20	11	20	14	21	10
occasionally	45	47	54	51	56	47	48	39
never	35	43	25	37	23	38	30	49
no reply	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	2
	-----		-----		-----		-----	
% :	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

2) Level of studies	<u>low</u>		<u>average</u>		<u>high</u>	
	M	W	M	W	M	W
often	17	8	19	11	23	17
occasionally	46	35	55	52	55	55
never	35	55	25	36	21	27
no reply	2	2	1	1	1	1
	-----		-----		-----	
% :	100	100	100	100	100	100

3) Integration into the world of work	<u>Work</u>		<u>No work</u>	
	M	W	M	W
	often	20	14	19
occasionally	55	51	47	42
never	24	34	33	46
no reply	1	1	1	2
	-----		-----	
% :	100	100	100	100

Whereas, in the group which has a low level of studies, 35% of men and 55% of women say they never have political conversations with their friends (or a difference of 20 points). In the group with an average level, these figures are respectively 25 and 36% (or a difference of 11 points) and, in the high level group, they are 21% and 27% (difference of 6 points). As education increases, the gaps between men and women decrease considerably. In other words, studying for a woman, truly constitutes the golden gate of access to politics. When a woman is educated, and only in this case, she has all the opportunities of taking interest in politics in a way very close to that of a man.

The result is extremely important in so far as, everywhere in Europe, the education of girls is clearly advancing. It has considerably increased in recent years to the point that, in a country like France, there are now more female baccalauréat graduates than male baccalauréat graduates. It is in the process of developing in the southern countries where the movement clearly began later. More and more, girls are studying longer and will therefore be able, in the same way as boys, to handle a certain number of political tools and to become interlocutors to be reckoned with.

The rule applies to almost all the countries of the European Community. The differences between men and women decrease with the raising of the level of education, to the point moreover of disappearing or almost disappearing in Germany, the Netherlands, Denmark and Greece, even to the point of reversing in France and Ireland (cf. table 5). In fact, in France, among women with a low level of education, 38% of men and 48% of women never have political discussions, among those with a higher level, the figures are respectively 23% and 18%. In other words, in the latter case, fewer women than men never have political conversations. In Ireland, where 36% of men and 60% of women never have exchanges of this type when they have left school at 15 years of age, the figures are 43% and 31% in this case when they have been educated up to 20 years of age or beyond. The proportion of women who do not talk about politics decreases by half and distinctly fewer women than the men are willing to be silent in politics.

Two exceptions should be noted. These are Spain and Portugal. In these two cases, political silence decreases greatly with the increase in educational level, but not more among men; indeed, the contrary is observed in Portugal. In the "low" group, 47% of men and 66% of women do not have political conversations (19 points gap), in the "high" group, these are respectively 33% and 57% (22 points gap). These are, therefore, countries where, for the time being, continuing studies do not yet open all the doors for access to politics. Perhaps the weight of traditions which are still solid in the Mediterranean region explain this. These are traditions according to which women are responsible for private and men for public life. But this reason should then apply in the same way in Greece; whereas there, on the contrary, the results are more in the direction of what is observed in the countries of the North and centre. In fact, in Greece, among

Table 5. Frequency of political discussions according to sex and education, in each country. Reply "never have political discussions with their friends".

	low level		average level		high level	
	M	W	M	W	M	W
Belgium	50	78	40	56	27	36
Denmark	20	35	12	26	11	14
FRG	10	26	4	18	12	12
Greece	14	42	4	11	10	12
Spain	52	76	47	42	36	58
France	38	48	26	40	23	18
Ireland	36	60	26	45	43	31
Italy	36	63	26	47	31	43
Luxembourg	29	31	32	23	12	12
Netherlands	42	50	23	32	14	15
Portugal	47	66	39	60	33	57
United Kingdom	31	41	32	36	15	21

people with a low level of education, 14% of men and 42% of women never have political conversation, among the "high levels", these are respectively 10% and 12%. Therefore, it appears necessary to mention the very long time during which countries such as Spain and Portugal were subject to a fascist dictatorship and to underline that the traces of this era are still alive among the women.

3. Work.

Working develops interest in politics and this is most particularly perceptible among women, as has been said. The European inquiry of 1989 distinguishes between two categories of people, those who work outside and those who are in the home (particularly not working and retired). Among the first, 24% of men and 34% of women say they never have political conversations (or a gap of 10 points), among the second, these figures are respectively 33% and 46% (gap of 13 points). The same results are observed if one considers as indicator the question on interest in politics. In the first group (that of "workers"), 15% of men and 24% of women say they are not at all interested in this field, in the second group, these figures are 22% and 35% (thus increasing from a gap of 9 points to a gap of 13 points). It can be seen, therefore, that belonging to the world of work encourages both in men and in women the assumption of responsibility for public matters but, although it reduces the differences between them, it does not make them disappear. In fact, since women still remain confined to the lower strata of the socio-professional hierarchy, while more men are in the "privileged" categories and in positions of power, the idea of work does not have exactly the same significance for both the sexes. In other words, men have more opportunities than women to work which facilitates access to politics.

This effect of work on politicization is discernible in most of the countries, even if the gaps between men and women are not always weaker among the actives than among the "inactives". Thus, in Italy, among the first, 29% of men and 46% of women never have political conversations, among the second, these figures are respectively 38% and 61% (increasing from a gap of 17 to 23 points). In the Netherlands, where, as a general rule, the population is particularly attentive to political life, among those who work, 21% of men and women never talk about politics and among those who do not work, 24% of men and 35% of women never express themselves in this field (increasing here from a gap of zero to one of 11 points). Let us note, finally, that in Belgium among people who work outside the house, 36% of men and 45% of women never have such conversations while these are 48% and 64% among the inactives (the gap increases from 9 to 16 points). Work, therefore, clearly constitutes a factor in moving nearer to the field of politics. As is known, everywhere in Europe, more and more women work and it can be assumed that the evolution will continue in the direction of a greater politicization of the latter, particularly if this work is translated by a greater presence in the average and higher strata of the active population.

Overall, with regard to access to politics, equality between the sexes is achieved through equal opportunities in the field of education and in that of work. The evolution of Europe, with regard to these latter, enables us to envisage in the not too distant future, the existence of real democracies where male and female citizens would all take the floor in the same way.

II - WOMEN AND EUROPE.

Women less European

As a general rule, women are less willing than men to concern themselves in affairs outside their country. This is particularly true for questions of foreign policy. This is also true with regard to Europe. The inquiry carried out in 1983 in the whole of the Community was particularly enlightening with regard to this. To the question: "Do you sometimes think that you are not only a citizen of your country but also a citizen of Europe?", 43% of men and 49% of women answered "never"; 33% of the first and 25% of the second declared themselves very favourable to the unification of Western Europe and 58 and 50% respectively judged that the membership of their country to the European Community is a good thing. Further, with regard to the European Parliament, two questions were asked, one concerning the countries represented, the other the way in which Members of Parliament were designated (nominated by the government or elected by the citizens). To the first questions, 17% and 34% of women were not able to give a reply, to the second 18% and 33% also abstained from giving an answer⁹. And the authors of the inquiry report emphasize: "Currently, the lower level of informing of women in relation to men, with regard to the European Parliament, is distinct at all ages, at all levels of education and in all countries".

It might have been assumed that with time and the increasingly closer prospect of the Single Market of '93, women would become accustomed to the idea of being directly concerned with Europe and would begin to take interest in a construction which is now discussed almost daily in the media. The 1989 inquiry shows that they have not yet reached this stage. In fact, two factors should be distinguished in their attitude.

The first concerns the overall evaluation of the process of European construction, namely a lower tendency than among men to make positive judgements. Thus, 34% of men but only 24% of women show themselves to be very much in favour of the efforts which are being made to unify Western Europe (79 and 72% are "very much" or "quite" in favour); these results do not differ from the results recorded in 1983; 68% of the first and 59% of the second consider that the membership of their country in the European Community is a good thing (which indicates, on the other hand, progress in relation to 1983); 57% and 48% respectively think that their country benefits from belonging to the Community, 47% of men and 37% of women would feel great regret if the Common Market were to disappear. Finally, with regard to the completion of the Single European Market, 55% of men say that this is a good thing, as opposed to only 43% of women.

Table 6. *Attitudes regarding Europe according to sex*

	M	W
Opinion on the efforts to unify Western Europe		
very much in favour	34	24
quite in favour	45	48
quite against	8	8
very much against	4	2
no reply	10	18
Opinion on the realisation of the Single European Market		
a good thing	55	43
neither good nor bad	24	27
a bad thing	8	7
no reply	13	24
Level of interest in the European Community		
very	11	5
quite	34	27
not very	37	37
not at all	18	30
no reply	1	2
Has seen-read-heard something on the subject of the Single European Market of 1992		
yes	80	65
no	18	30
no reply	3	5

This lesser enthusiasm of women may be surprising with regard to the construction of a truly unified Europe and the reasons for this reaction may be wondered at. But this would be a little hasty because, in fact, particular hostility towards European construction is not observed among women in this inquiry. Although fewer women than men express a favourable attitude, the women do not, however, display an unfavourable attitude. In fact, many of them have no opinion on the questions asked, they do not know what to think, they are not interested in the problem.

This position of exteriority in relation to everything concerning Europe emerges directly when they are asked first of all if they are interested in affairs linked to the European Community. While only 18% of men reply "not at all", 30% of women give this reply. And when asked if they have seen - read - or heard - something on the subject of the Single European Market of 1992, 18% of men reply no, as opposed to 30% of women.

Regarding the other questions mentioned above, they receive, in the female population, a high proportion of no replies: 10% among men, 18% among women to the question on the efforts to unify Western Europe, 17% and 28% to that on the benefits drawn by their country from belonging to the European Community, 13% and 24% to that asking their opinion on the realisation of the Single European Market. As a general rule, often fewer women than men reply to the questions of opinion but, more recently, the gap between the two groups had considerably decreased. The 1989 inquiry shows that, with regard to Europe, the differences remain significant since they are close to 10-11 points. Women are less informed than men on this problem but they also feel less able to give their opinion, less legitimately able to express a judgement. Even when asked, some of them do not feel authorised to give their opinion. This reticence to express an opinion demonstrates adherence to the ancestral model according to which women should not meddle in public affairs, the lack of time to keep herself informed and perhaps the feeling that it is all very abstract.

National diversity.

Do these differences exist in all the European Community countries? And, more particularly, is the greatest opposition found between a pole in the North where women and men behave relatively similarly and a pole in the South where the impression of traditional patterns seems to be more marked? The European inquiry underlines the continuity of this duality (cf. tables 7 and 8).

Thus, in Greece, Spain, Italy and Portugal, women are much less inclined than men to show interest in matters relating to the European Community and the gap recorded in their replies is clearly higher than the Community average. For example, in Greece, 13% of men and 34% of women say they are not at all interested in these matters. The gap is 21 points; it is 16 points in Spain, 13 in Italy, 14 in Portugal while it does not

exceed 5 points in Denmark, 7 in France, 4 in the Netherlands and 8 in the United Kingdom. With regard to the no replies, these are more numerous among women in the South than among those in the North and, in the South, distinctly higher among women than among men. By way of example, to the question assessing attitudes with regard to efforts to unify Western Europe, Greece, where 9% of men and 26% of women do not reply, can be compared to the Netherlands, where 4% of men and 12% of women do not reply. Moreover, to be added to these southern countries is Ireland, where 19% of men and 33% of women do not reply to the question. To illustrate this, one can again cite the question concerning whether the membership of the country of residence to the European Community is a good or bad thing and to compare Spain, where 14% of men and 26% of women "do not know", to Luxembourg where these figures are respectively 4 and 9%.

With regard to this, the women of Southern Europe can draw a certain number of benefits from their integration into the Community. Moving closer to other countries in which women have achieved a certain degree of autonomy and more equal status, can help them to play roles which were, in the past, reserved for men and to enter sectors to which access was refused them to in the past.

Is this feeling of lack of knowledge with regard to Europe declining in some categories of the female population and, in particular, among those whose socio-economic or demographic characteristics predispose them towards interest in politics?

Sociological diversity.

1. Age.

First of all, interest in the European Community varies very little with age (table 9). At most, it can be noted that, among women, a total lack of sensitivity to the problem increases slightly after the age of 55. Between 15 and 24 years of age, the proportion of those who say they are not at all interested in the European Community rises to 29%, it decreases to 27% among 25-29 year-olds, rises to 30% among 50-54 year-olds, then to 34% among those of 55 years of age and over. The no replies to the questions also increase among the older women but the gaps between the generations are not very marked. It cannot, therefore, be said that only older women show themselves to be indifferent to the creation of Europe, the young ones do not feel much more concerned. Thus, to the question which aims to assess opinion on the unification of Western Europe, among the 15-24 year-olds, 11% of men and 19% of girls do not reply. The gap is therefore 8 points; it is 7 points among the 25-39 year-olds, 9 points among the 40-54 year-olds and 11 points among the 55 plus year-olds.

Moreover, the favourable or unfavourable attitudes towards Europe do not vary much with age either. Among the 15-24 year-olds, 75% of men and 71% of women, among the 25-34 year-olds, 70% of the first and 76% of the second, among the 40-54 year-olds 81% of the former and 74% of the latter, among the 55 plus year-olds, 78%

of men and 67% of women say they are very much in favour or quite in favour of the unification of Europe. Only among older women can a slight drop in pro-European attitudes be seen. But on the whole, it has to be said today, men and women, from one generation to the other, have positive judgements on Europe, even if women show a little less enthusiasm.

2. The level of education.

Education plays, on the other hand, an important role in familiarizing the population with the idea of Europe and making it judge it positively (cf. table 10).

First of all, interest in the European Community increases considerably with the level of studies. Those who say they are very or quite interested increase, among men, from 36% among the "low level" to 53% among the "high level", among women from 23% to 45%. The gap between men and women which was 13 points among those with a less rich culture is 8 points among those richer in culture and better educated. Let us add that, in the first group, 41% of women say that they are not at all interested in the Community, in the second group, only 18% of them say this.

Interest is also discernible in the variation of no replies which decrease when the level of education rises. Thus, to the question on the unification of Western Europe, among those without much education, 13% of men and 25% of women were not able to reply; among the "average level", these were respectively 8 and 14% and among the "high level", 7 and 11%. The gap between men and women decreases from 12 points to 4 points.

Moreover, the attitude to Europe is all the more favourable if the person has attended an educational establishment for a long time. In fact, if the real supporters are isolated, that is, those who declare themselves very much in favour of European unification (and this is also true if one groups together the replies "very much in favour" and "quite in favour"), it can be seen that their number grows when one moves from the group with a low level of studies to that which has achieved a high level. What is more, the significant differences observed between men and women are fewer. Among those who have a low level, 30% of men and 10% of women say they are very much in favour of European unification, among the "average level", these figures are 31% and 23%, among the "high level", 42% and 34%.

The same pattern can be observed on the basis of the question: "In general, do you think that membership of your country in the European Community is a good thing, a bad thing, neither a good nor a bad thing?" The response increases with the level of studies among both sexes and even more among women, to the point where the gap which is 10 points among the "low level" for the reply "a good thing" (63% of men, 53% of women) falls, among the "high level" to 4 points (76% of men and 72% of women state this membership is a good thing).

There is, therefore, a European issue to add to the price of an effort to support even more the education of the population for

Table 10. Attitudes regarding Europe according to sex and level of education.

	low level		average level		high level	
	M	W	M	W	M	W
Attitudes to the unification of Europe						
very much in favour	30	20	31	23	42	34
quite in favour	45	46	49	50	41	47
quite against	8	7	9	10	7	8
very much against	4	2	3	3	4	1
no reply	13	25	8	14	7	11
% :	100	100	100	100	100	100
Opinion on membership of the country in the Community						
a good thing	63	53	67	59	76	72
neither good nor bad	21	23	21	25	13	18
a bad thing	8	6	9	8	6	4
no reply	9	17	4	8	5	7
% :	100	100	100	100	100	100
Interest in the European Community						
very	8	4	9	6	15	7
quite	28	19	37	30	38	38
not very	38	34	37	40	34	37
not at all	25	41	17	23	11	18
no reply	1	2	1	1	1	1
% :	100	100	100	100	100	100

as long as possible and, most particularly, of women. It is through schools that a European Community will be constructed, cemented by the firm support of the populations of the different member countries. This is a dimension to the action for Europe of which the governments must be made particularly aware and the European institutions have a role to play to encourage them to work in this direction.

3. Work.

Working also encourages interest in European matters and, among the "actives", the differences between men and women are a little less marked than among the "inactives" (cf. table 11). Among the first, 17% of men and 24% of women say they are not at all interested in the European Community, while these figures are 20% and 33% among the second. An increase, therefore, from a gap of 7 to 13 points. The proportion of no replies to the questions concerning Europe is also less among the "actives" than among the "inactives". Thus, on the unification of Western Europe, 8% of men and 15% of women are not, among the "actives", able to give a judgement while, among the "inactives", 12% and 20% are in this situation.

On the other hand, it must be admitted that working does not develop positive assessments of Europe. The number of people who support the construction of Europe hardly varies when one moves from the working group to the non-working group.

Overall, the main factor in the development of favourable attitudes to Europe is the level of education. More than anything it is possession of consistent educational qualifications which helps to form a European spirit, a feeling of belonging to a community which it is important to translate into concrete terms, to consolidate legally, economically and socially. In other words, as has already been emphasized, the European wager will be won when the educational wager is won.

Is this effect of education perceptible from one end of Europe to another? The reply is positive (cf. table 12). In the twelve Community countries, interest in European matters increases with the level of education and almost everywhere, the gaps in evaluation recorded among men and women also decrease with the increase in educational qualifications. Let us take a few examples which are representative of all the results provided by the 1989 inquiry. In Spain, among the "low level of education", 39% of men and 57% of women, among the "average level", 29% of the first and 36% of the second, while, among the "high level", 26% and 31%, state they are not at all interested in the European Community. The gap therefore decreases from 18 points to 7, then to 5 points. The no replies also decrease everywhere. Thus, in Great Britain, to the question on the unification of Western Europe, among the "low level", 15% of men and 27% of women, among the "average level", 10% of men and 20% of women, among the "high level", 8% of men and 15% of women did not reply. The gap is

Table 11. Attitudes regarding Europe according to sex and integration into the world of work.

	Work		Do not work	
	M	W	M	W
Attitudes to the unification of Europe				
very much in favour	34	25	34	24
quite in favour	46	50	43	46
quite against	9	9	7	8
very much against	3	2	4	2
no reply	8	15	12	20
	-----	-----	-----	-----
% :	100	100	100	100
Opinion on membership of the country in the Community				
a good thing	67	60	70	59
neither good nor bad	20	25	16	21
a bad thing	8	7	7	6
no reply	5	9	8	14
	-----	-----	-----	-----
% :	100	100	100	100
Interest in the European Community				
very	11	5	10	5
quite	34	29	33	25
not very	38	41	35	35
not at all	17	24	20	33
no reply	1	1	2	2
	-----	-----	-----	-----
% :	100	100	100	100

Table 12. Interest in the European Community according to sex and level of education, per country.

	low level		average level		high level	
	M	W	M	W	M	W
Belgium	40	52	38	41	16	26
Denmark	16	21	10	12	6	14
F.R.G.	9	21	5	16	5	12
Greece	18	46	8	19	13	18
Spain	39	57	29	36	26	31
France	18	25	13	22	6	9
Ireland	35	49	20	34	21	21
Italy	35	58	21	36	17	31
Luxembourg	12	28	12	11	7	15
Netherlands	29	34	16	16	12	13
Portugal	35	52	24	33	16	28
United Kingdom	18	31	23	26	6	14

therefore reduced from 12 to 7 points, in Germany, it decreases from 10 to 3 points, in the Netherlands, from 12 to 5 points, in Luxembourg from 11 to 1 point, in Ireland from 12 to 6 points, in Spain from 18 to 4 points (the no replies of women decrease from 42% to 17%), in Portugal from 16 to 6 points.

The effects of an evaluation of the level of education on attitudes towards Europe and, in particular, on the attitudes of women, are, therefore, very perceptible from one part of the Community to another and it is one of the most important points of this inquiry to highlight this.

CONCLUSION

Even today, in Europe, fewer women than men are interested in politics even if the gaps between the sexes have considerably decreased in relation to what they were thirty or forty years ago. Nevertheless, women distinguish themselves from men in the sense that they show themselves to be less concerned than men by European questions. These attitudes are related and stem from the situation of women for centuries, namely that of people responsible for the home, the men ensuring only relations with the outside world. Considerable changes have occurred in the XX century as they have acquired the right to vote and to be elected but history leaves traces particularly in the countries most subject to the Catholic Church which strongly supported this division of roles. Thus, in Europe, despite the evolution noted, a difference between the countries of the North and centre and those of the South is observed (to which it is sometimes necessary to add Ireland and Belgium). In the first, women have achieved an autonomy which brings them closer to men in their relationship to politics (and, in the same way, to Europe), in the second, women still remain very much in the background.

However, the traditional system is increasingly swaying under the effect of two factors. The first is the massive entry of girls into the educational system. It is known, that the longer the attendance of educational establishments, the more interest there is in politics, in the outside world, in the same way, in Europe. The second is integration, this too increasingly marked, into the world of work since women who work feel more concerned than others by public matters.

This 1989 inquiry is significant in that it highlights the interaction of these factors, from one end of the Community to the other and it emphasizes to what extent the socio-economic situation of women shapes their view of the outside world and whether or not European citizens can be made of them.

Appendix
Text of the questionnaire

1. When you are with friends, would you say that you discuss politics often, from time to time, never?

1. often
2. from time to time
3. never
4. no reply

2. Do you consider yourself to be close to a party? If yes, do you feel very close, quite close, or more a sympathizer?

1. very close
2. quite close
3. more a sympathizer
4. not close to any party
5. no reply

3. To what extent would you say you are interested in matters relating to the European Community?

1. very
2. quite
3. not very
4. not at all
5. no reply

4. Would you say that you are interested in politics?

1. very
2. quite
3. not very
4. not at all
5. no reply

5. As a general rule, are you in favour of or against the efforts being made to unify Western Europe?

1. very in favour
2. quite in favour
3. quite against
4. very against
5. no reply

6. In general, do you think that the membership of your country to the European Community (Common Market) is:

1. a good thing
2. a bad thing
3. neither good nor bad
4. no reply

7. Considering the whole situation, would you say that your country, in general, has benefited or not from its membership of the European Community (Common Market)?

1. has benefited
2. has not benefited
3. no reply

8. If you were told that the European Community (Common Market) would disappear tomorrow, would you be:

1. very affected
2. indifferent
3. happy
4. no reply

9. Have you read in the newspapers, seen on television or heard something on the subject of the Single Market of 1992?

1. yes
2. no
3. no reply

10. Overall, do you think that the Single Market of 1992 will be a good thing, a bad thing or neither good nor bad?

1. a good thing
2. a bad thing
3. neither good, nor bad
4. no reply

11. How old were you when you left school or higher education?

1. under 14 years of age
2. 15 years old
3. 16 years old
4. 17 years old
5. 18 years old
6. 19 years old
7. 20 years old
8. 21 years old
9. 22 years old
10. still studying

Footnotes

- (1) cf. supplements no. 16 and 26 to Women of Europe.
- (2) Findings in "Women and Men of Europe in 1987", supplement no. 26 of Women of Europe.
- (3) Ibid.
- (4) Ranger (Jean), "Are the French interested in politics?", in The French voter in questions, Paris, Press of the National Foundation of Political Sciences, 1990, p. 145.
- (5) In statistical language, "actives" means women who have an active working life. It is understood that we do not consider women at home as inactives or not working.
- (6) Findings in Mossuz-Lavau (Janine), Sineau (Marianne), Inquiry on women and politics in France, Paris, PUF, 1983, p.41.
- (7) For example, 37% of the "actives", 32% of the "ex-actives" and only 23% of women at home would consider denial of the right to strike as "very serious". Ibid.
- (8) Ranger (Jean), Ibid. Cf. also Perceron (Annick), "Age, ethics and politics: order and disorder of the ages", in Age and politics, under the direction of Annick Percheron and René Rémond, Paris, Economica, 1991, pp. 151-201.
- (9) Supplement no. 16 to Women of Europe, "Women and men of Europe in 1983".

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