

COMMUNITY SEMINAR: WOMEN AND THE COMPLETION OF THE SINGLE MARKET

The effects on the position of women in the labour market in the light of 1992 were discussed at a seminar in Dublin (14-16 February), organised jointly by the Irish Government and the Commission of the European Communities in the context of the Irish Presidency. The consequences of 1992 on regions and sectors, and the impact of these on the different professional categories of women were highlighted. Proposals were put forward aimed at protecting women, who remain vulnerable, in conjunction with the third Action Programme of the Commission of the European Communities (currently being prepared).

In addition to representatives of Equal Opportunities Commissions set up by Ministries of Employment, Government members and national experts, there were numerous employers' and trade union representatives who focused on the importance of the Social Dialogue for matters relating to equal opportunities. Irish members of parliament also attended the seminar. The European Parliament was represented by the President of the Committee on Women's Rights, Christine Crawley, and Marie-Claude Vayssade, a member of the Committee.

MORE INFRASTRUCTURES AND PROTECTION

Opening the seminar, Mr Bertie Ahern, Irish Employment Minister, said measures to regulate the labour market must take account of the specific problems of women: their progress on the labour market is too slow, he said, and although it was difficult to assess the implications of 1992, it was obvious that there would be winners and losers. In view of this, he said, disadvantages arising from the completion of the Single Market should be minimised through a strengthening of the Social Dialogue. Mr. Jean Degimbe, Director General of the Commission Directorate for Employment, Industrial Relations and Social Affairs, presented the main lines of the Commissions's next Action Programme, and said that there was an urgent need to adopt a

WOMEN OF EUROPE NEWSLETTER

NEWS
ON THE EQUALITY POLICY
OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY

Dear Readers,

"Women's Day", like any anniversary, is an opportunity to take stock and sketch out the prospects.

More than a century ago, American women workers were demanding an improvement in their employment conditions and pressing for the right to work. Major progress has unquestionably been made since then towards the legal enshrinement of the equality of the sexes. Women have acquired the right to vote and, at least theoretically, the right to equality as regards salaries and work relations. The European Community, for its part, is attempting to ensure that theory and practice concur.

Effective equality has not been achieved yet, however, and this is not simply because there is still discrimination at the workplace. A major proportion of unremunerated work is accomplished by women, bringing up children and working in the home. Their professional careers are complicated by the fact that they are trying to reconcile their family responsibilities with their desire to work.

Even when they have salaried positions, women do not always benefit from the same opportunities or prospects as men, and are always the first victims of unemployment. Moreover, innovations in the organisation of work involve not only new opportunities but also new risks as regards the efforts to achieve genuine equality between men and women.

The struggle for equality does not simply involve work: it affects every aspect of social life. The permanent absence of women from political decision-making at local, national and Community levels leaves no room for optimism.

Celebrating Women's Day once a year does not mean that we can relax our efforts in other areas. Equality of the sexes is everyone's business, men and women, and it is based on our attitude at each moment of our daily lives, at work, at home and in human relations. It presupposes but also guarantees better understanding and better communication between men and women, and aims to consolidate social justice.

Vasso Papandreou



number of directives concerning women.

Christine Crawley emphasised the difficulties arising from the development of atypical jobs, the problem of a segregated labour market and family responsibilities, still essentially borne by women. She found incomprehensible the lack of directives on childcare facilities compared with the hundreds of other directives adopted relating to the Single Market. The President of the Employment Equality Agency in Ireland, Catherine McGuinness, also criticised the fact that the Commission of the European Communities had not yet decided to regulate this area, and she said that the application of laws on work places should be respected more strictly than at present.

In this connection, the draft resolution on sexual harassment at work, which should be submitted to the Social Affairs Council at its informal meeting in March, is a step towards ensuring the dignity of people at work, said Pauline Jackson Conroy, expert at the Commission of the European Communities.

Agreeing with the need for the adoption of new directives in this field, European trade union representatives also stressed the importance of training measures to ensure the promotion of women at work, and of the different methods of consultation for the financing of projects by the European Social Fund.

SECTORAL ANALYSIS

The working groups examined different aspects of women's employment. The latest research carried out in five major sectors of women's work was presented.

For the **textile** and **clothing** sectors, technological change, the relocation of manufacturing from the North to the South (low salaries) and the opening up of the Eastern bloc countries were more important external factors than the creation of the Single Market, said Dani Meulders (DULBEA, coordinator of the Network on Women and Employment). Flexibility could offer advantages but needs specific action and increased protection for both male and female workers.

The **banking** and **financial services** sectors, still expanding, often have a very large proportion of women workers. The new services being offered require employees with high

... qualifications, yet 80% of women in these sectors are at the bottom of the ladder, and because of restructuring, female unemployment is rising. Well paid positions with good career possibilities must be identified clearly to avoid being trapped. While positive action measures carried out in banks were important, they were far from being sufficient, said trade union representatives.

The **new technology** sector also requires a highly qualified labour force and has seen a drop in the number of unskilled jobs. Training for women is important as they remain segregated in this sector.

ATYPICAL JOBS AND SPECIFIC CATEGORIES

Atypical jobs (home working, part-time work, temporary contracts, etc.) were becoming "typical" for many women workers. They reflected a trend towards the individualisation of work and were part of the move for flexibility. However, the notion of flexibility the participants observed, was losing precision and meaning. They recommended Community legislation protecting these types of workers, either through a series of directives, as requested by the European Trade Union Confederation, or by means of a framework legislation. The working group which discussed the prospects of women belonging to **specific categories** pointed to the vulnerability of women in rural areas and in agriculture, of long-term unemployed women and women from disadvantaged urban areas. Poverty was increasing, said the participants, and particularly affected these categories of women. Training, and also pre-training, was essential for these women excluded from the labour market. The working group stressed the need for economic and social cohesion in the process of achieving the **Single Market** and called for a programme to combat the poverty of women in 1992.

POSITIVE ACTION

Given the outcome of discussions by the various working groups, it was vital to increase positive actions, said Ms Joanna Foster, Chairwoman of the UK Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC). The effectiveness of positive action had been shown (such as, that carried out by the women's committee of ENEL, the national

Italian electricity board), but often it was too limited. To ensure that positive action becomes a tool of change, it needs the backing of specific instruments and the involvement of the two sides of industry. Positive action must not simply be seen as action in favour of women but rather as an integral part of enterprise strategy. Equality measures should be carried out and supported by structures with larger budgets and staff, at both Community and national levels. To some extent, added Ms Foster, this was a precondition for the success of the Third Action Programme.

TOWARDS STRATEGIES

Seminar discussions highlighted the main challenges represented by the social dimension of the Single Market. The gap between different categories of workers may increase in sensitive sectors, through precarious and atypical work and for categories of women who are already the most vulnerable. The Community's most "peripheral" Member States may be more affected.

The Third Action Programme on equal opportunities will be made to measure to meet these challenges, said Chris Docksey from the Commission's Equal Opportunities Unit. Effective strategies have to be developed to meet the legal and structural problems facing women in order to ensure that the achievement of the Single Market does not accentuate their unequal position on the labour market.

The seminar conclusions emphasised the importance of a global approach to remove the obstacles to women's employment and ensure better co-ordination of employment and infrastructure questions. A legislative framework which takes account of the situation of women in employment was also vital.

The implications of 1992 for women were not necessarily optimistic and firm measures would have to be taken. Vocational training was an essential element, participants said, and pretraining could not be neglected, as it was vital for the most vulnerable categories of women threatened with exclusion. Working women needed increased social protection in order to combat the development of the various forms of atypical work which affect them in particular.

The rise in women's employment was an irreversible fact. In the 1992 pro-

cess, all social policy must take account of the equality dimension between men and women in order to remove the obstacles to women's employment and encourage a better distribution of family and professional responsibilities, emphasised Ms Maire Geoghegan-Quinn, Minister of State for European Affairs (Ireland). Economic and social cohesion, concluded the Minister, meant that action carried out by the Commission of the European Communities would have to be extended to include restructuring strategies in sectors where the labour force consisted of a high percentage of women (for example, the textile sector could be handled by the Commission in the same way as the coal and steel sectors).

Summarising the seminar discussions, Mr Cashell, representative of the Irish Ministry of Labour, said the seminar documents will be published in the form of a book. The **Women of Europe Newsletter** will not fail to announce this publication.

THE THIRD ACTION PROGRAMME

To prepare the **Third Action Programme** on equal opportunities (1991-1995), the Equal Opportunities Unit is continuing with its preliminary consultations and activities. The Advisory Committee for Equal Opportunities met informally for this on 15 February. The network coordinators and experts' groups set up by the Unit will meet on 26 March to discuss the next programme on the basis of a "strategy document" submitted to them.

The Member States have just returned their answers to the questionnaires assessing the Second Action Programme. At a meeting planned for 3 April, the officials who replied to the questionnaires and the members of the Advisory Committee will meet to discuss and compare results, and prepare proposals for the Third Programme in conjunction with the Equal Opportunities Unit.

Equal Opportunities Unit, Directorate General for Employment, Industrial Relations and Social Affairs, Commission of the European Communities, 200 rue de la Loi, B-1049 Brussels. Tel.: (32.2) 235.22.64; Telex: 21877 COMEU.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION

The Commission of the European Communities (Directorate General for Information, Communication and Culture and the Directorate General for Employment, Industrial Relations and Social Affairs) and the European Broadcasting Union (EBU) are organising a joint conference on **equal opportunities in radio and television in the 1990s**. Looking to the future, the conference will deal with the changes that will occur in the new decade as well as the impact they may have on equal opportunities between men and women. Under discussion will be the content of programmes as well as matters relating to employment, and will concern all those working in the field responsible for programmes whose decisions enable them to influence the structure of their organisation. The organisers are hoping for a large, balanced number of participants, with as many men attending as women. It will be held in Athens from 7-10 November 1990.

Information: European Broadcasting Union, Postbox 67, CH-1218 Grand-Saconnex (GE) Switzerland. Tel.: (41.22) 798.77.66.

On the fringes of the conference, the **NIKE 1990** prize will be awarded by Mr Jean Dondelinger, European Commissioner in charge of Information, Communication and Culture. Established by the Commission of the European Communities in 1988 following a European Parliament proposal, the NIKE prize is aimed at encouraging the production and broadcasting of television programmes which give a more genuine image of the place of women in society. Participation is open to public and private companies in all Member States.

Information may be obtained from the *Women's Information Service, "Nike Prize", Commission of the European Communities.*

EUROPEAN WOMEN'S LOBBY

Lhe European Women's Lobby is preparing its first General Assembly to be held in Brussels from 21-23 September 1990. The decision to set up a body to exert influence at European and national level has made considerable headway since it was adopted in London in 1987 at the VIth European Colloquium of women's associations. A working group which met in 1988 and 1989 prepared draft statutes and appointed a select committee (composed of 9 members) to coordinate the preparations for the General Assembly and to convene it. This constituent Assembly will adopt the statutes and budget and establish the first work programme and adopt the budget. Numerous associations have already discussed the draft statutes and have jointly chosen representatives for the General Assembly. Every European or national women's association sharing the Lobby's objectives may become an associate member. Applicant associations are asked to contact their national or European coordinating organisations. The preparatory work and establishment of the Lobby were made possible from the outset because of the technical and financial support of the European Commission (Women's Information Service).

Address: Jacqueline De Grotte, 11 avenue du Mercure, bte 4, B-1180 Brussels.

Just published:

The Women of Europe Supplement no. 30 (December 1989), devoted to "**Women in statistics**" (see **Women of Europe Newsletter no. 6**), is currently available in all official Community languages.

Women's Information Service, Directorate General for Information, Communication and Culture, Commission of the European Communities, 200 rue de la Loi, B-1049 Brussels. Tel.: (32.2) 235.28.60.

COUNCIL OF EDUCATION MINISTERS

The Council of Education Ministers, consisting of representatives of the European Ministers of Education, held an informal meeting in Louvain (Belgium) on 19 January. At the initiative of the Irish Presidency, the topic of equal opportunities between boys and girls at school has now been put back on the agenda. Ms Dearbhail Ni Chartaigh, coordinator of the TENET programme (European teacher education network), presented a dossier on equal opportunities in education. This dossier, requested by the Irish Ministry of Education, essentially focused on the initial and continuous training of teachers. Participants welcomed the dossier and gave their support to the equal opportunity dimension of teacher training.

The European Commission congratulated the Irish Presidency for this initiative and reaffirmed the importance of training and education for women's employment. In its Third Action Programme on equal opportunities, the Commission will continue to support the TENET programme (managed by the Equal Opportunities Unit). Equality issues must be clearly translated into concrete action in schools: the Commission will support measures aimed at changing the content of school programmes, encouraging the vocational guidance of girls and developing programmes to provide girls at school with better access to the new technologies. Research-action on the training of teachers is currently being assessed and the third phase, commencing in October 1990, will consist of an extensive information campaign, circulation of the results through seminars, workshops, publications, and a European conference on equality in education.

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

COMMITTEE ON WOMEN'S RIGHTS

At the 29-30 January meeting, Committee Members exchanged views on a draft report on **women and health** (Nel van Dijk) which brings out in particular the problems arising from the working conditions of female medical staff: prejudices which determine responsibilities on the basis of sex, lack of respect, irregular timetables, inadequate salaries, etc. With regard to the users of health services, the report asks the Commission to lay down criteria covering the reliability and harmlessness of hormone based contraceptives.

Examining the **Action Programme** implementing the Community Charter of fundamental social rights for workers, the Committee of Women's Rights regretted the fact that the European Commission had not devoted a separate chapter to equal opportunities between men and women, laying down measures that would guarantee women's rights.

It also produced a list of priorities for the Parliament's Social Affairs Committee which included childcare facilities, financing from the Structural Funds, equality regarding tax measures, reversal of the burden of proof. Action carried out in the context of the IRIS network (European network of training programmes for women) was presented: national seminars, inter-programme exchange visits, publications, data bases, etc. The 1990 programme has seen an increase in IRIS members and in the network's activities. Parliament members emphasised the importance of financing training for women.

The European Commission's 1988 budget allocations for items concerning women were also discussed.

At the 22-23 February meeting, committee members resumed the discussion on the van Dijk report (women and health care). The amendments will be voted on at the April meeting. Ms Maggi Monteith, the President of the Women's Legal Defense Fund

(UK), informed the Committee of the actions carried out by her organisation. Few Member States provide legal aid to plaintiffs in the area of discrimination, she said. A European fund to provide such help would be a first step, stressed Ms Monteith.

The draft resolution on a European women's prize (Carmen Llorca Vilaplana), which would be awarded to a European woman whose action contributed to equality between men and women, was discussed and welcomed. The Committee was informed of other prizes backed by the Member States or by the European Commission (Women of Europe prize supported by the Women's Information Service, for instance).

FORUM: WOMEN AND EMPLOYMENT IN THE 1990S

The Committee on Women's Rights is organising a Forum in Brussels on 19-20 March to which the members of the national Parliaments are invited. The event will be launched by Enrique Baron, President of the European Parliament, and by Christine Crawley, President of the Committee on Women's Rights. Delegates from the national parliaments will describe the specific situation regarding employment in each Member State, and assess the application of equality directives. Ms Vasso Papandreou, European Commissioner, and Ms Maire Geoghegan-Quinn, Irish Minister State for European Affairs will also attend.

Various working groups will discuss subjects such as lobbying, information for women and contacts between the national Parliaments and the European Parliament; the functioning of the Structural Funds, training and childcare facilities; immigrant women and ethnic minorities. At the plenary session, measures taken following European Court of Justice rulings will be outlined.

Information: European Parliament, 97-133 rue Belliard, B-1040 Brussels.

WOMEN'S INFORMATION SERVICE,

Commission of the European Communities,
Directorate-General for Information, Communication and Culture,
Rue de la Loi 200, B-1049 Brussels.
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PUBLICATIONS

Infrastructures and women's employment, V/174/90-EN, CREW: study on infrastructures facilitating or curbing the employment of women. Currently available in English only; the French translation is underway.
Social protection of self-employed workers and helper-spouses, final report, V/175/90-FR, A. De Reus, E. Coenen and A. Elzinga. Available in French and English.

Structural Funding and childcare: current funding application and policy implications, V/2267/89-FR, Bronwen Cohen. Drafted at the request of the European childcare network, the report examines among other things the relationship between childcare facilities and the objectives of the Community's Structural funds; gives examples of childcare subsidies; financing possibilities in the context of current programmes and the policy implications for the subsequent development of the Structural Funds. Also available in English.

STILL AVAILABLE

Women's work and family composition a comparison of the countries of the European Economic Community, final report, V/1795/88-FR, M.L. Delacourt and J. Zighera, in French and English.

To obtain these publications, contact the Equal Opportunities Unit, Directorate General for Employment, Industrial Relations and Social Affairs, Commission of the European Communities, 200 rue de la Loi, B-1049 Brussels.

Community Charter of Fundamental Social Rights, ISBN 92-826-0976-6, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, L-2985 Luxembourg. Available in the nine official Community languages.

IRIS

The latest issues of the Skills Message Board (nos. 4 to 10) have just been published. They describe the training received and qualifications obtained by trainees from IRIS member programmes throughout the Community. Aimed above all at employers and national employment agencies, it is published in all official Community languages.

Information: IRIS Unit, CREW, 38 rue Stévin, B-1040 Brussels.