

COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

THE DIGNITY OF WOMEN AT WORK

From 6 to 9 November, a key European seminar was held in The Hague on the protection of the dignity of women and men at work. Organized jointly by the Dutch Employment and Social Affairs Minister and the Equal Opportunities Unit, it marked a major initiative by the Dutch Presidency. One of the aims of the seminar was to increase public awareness of the Council Resolution of May 1990 on the protection of the dignity of women and men at work and of the Recommendation and the Code of Good Conduct being proposed by the European Commission, which should be adopted in the near future. A further aim was to encourage implementation of these initiatives by presenting examples of good practice and suggesting means of evaluation.

Some one hundred participants attended, including government representatives, national equal opportunities bodies, the social partners and women's organizations specializing in problems of sexual harassment. During one of the most enlightening sessions, chaired by the Dutch Secretary of State, Elske ter Veld, representatives of Member States had a chance to outline their plans for implementing the European Commission's proposed Recommendation and Code of Good Conduct.

Sexual harassment was also discussed in detail at the last meeting of the Steering Committee for Equal Opportunities in Radio and Television, held on 14 October 1991 in Brussels. On this occasion, the Steering Committee invited Michael Rubenstein, the author of the 1987 study for the European Commission on «**The Dignity of Women at Work – Report on the Problem of Sexual Harassment in the European Community**», as well as Ligia Amacio from Portugal, who has carried out research into the nature and extent of sexual harassment in the European Community.

Contact: Evelyn Collins, Equal Opportunities Unit



WOMEN OF EUROPE NEWSLETTER

NEWS ON THE EQUALITY POLICY OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY



Dear Readers,

Nine million people work full-time in farming in Europe today. 3 million of these are women, working on family farms. In certain southern European countries, women

make up 40% of the farming population. For this reason women are very concerned by the development of this sector of activity.

The reform of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), aimed at introducing changes into Community farming, will also affect their lives as active participants in the farming economy, and, more generally, in the social and economic life of the rural world.

As Mrs Cécile Boerave, President of the Women's Committee of COPA, stated during a seminar organized in collaboration with the Women's Information Service at Barbotain in France, women play an essential role in the management of Europe's farms, the overwhelming majority of which—90% of all Community farms—are family-run.

“Take away women's work from farms and you will destroy most of them”, Mrs Boerave remarked.

Conscious of the fundamental role of women in farming but also of their specific needs, the Commission also made provision, when adopting Council Directive 86/613/EEC of 11 December 1989 (on the application of the principle of equal treatment for self-employed women, including in farming) for the possible revision of this Directive. Article 13 of the Directive requires Member States to provide the Commission during 1991 with “appropriate data to enable it to prepare a report evaluating its application”.

The Commission is now analyzing the replies provided by the Member States. Based on the situations in different Member States and the opinions expressed by the social and professional organizations, the Commission will decide on whether there is a need to revise the Directive. Any revision should be presented to the Council of Ministers before 1 July 1993.

The opinions presently expressed will enable the Commission to take account of the wishes of women in the farming and rural worlds.

Fausta Deshumes La Valle

NETWORKS AND WORKING GROUPS

Vocational training of women

The Working Group on Vocational Training for Women met in Brussels on 22 October. It was informed of the recent activities of the IRIS network, which has over 300 member training programmes throughout the Community. These activities include inter-programme exchange visits, partnership and publicity grants and seminars. Four national seminars were organized in 1991 on the subject of «Women in new technologies and male-dominated professions», concluding a cycle of national seminars begun in 1989.

This year's seminars were held in Denmark (March), Ireland (September), Germany and the United Kingdom (October) and highlighted the essential role of women's training in the implementation of the internal market. The conclusions of these seminars also underlined the need to give wide publicity to good practice and innovative teaching methods tried and tested in women's training as well as to the evaluation of programmes.

The Working Group went on to look at the progress made by Member States in implementing the 1987 Recommendation on Equal Opportunities in Vocational Training. An evaluation of the progress measures is currently being made by the European Commission.

Contact: Margarida Pinto, Equal Opportunities Unit

Positive action and women's training

A practical handbook on the creation and management of in-service positive action programmes and training for women, based on the experience of experts from the former «**Diversification of Vocational Choices for Women**» network, will soon be available. This network of experts, created in 1984, established and followed up positive action in the twelve Member States. The handbook draws on their experience in this field, presenting basic principles and suitable procedures for implementing such activities and outlines the steps to be taken at both the preparatory and management stages. As such, it can serve as a guide to anyone wishing to introduce women's training or in-service positive action programmes in order to improve the conditions and status of working women.

Contact: Janet Hemsley, 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

POVERTY 3: PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED IN RESEARCH

A publication prepared under the «Community Action Programme to Foster Economic and Social Integration of the Least Privileged Groups», reports on research work presented at a conference organized in Bath (United Kingdom) on 30 and 31 October 1990. In carrying out their work, the researchers had three objectives: to provide a summary overview of the subject area, to offer new perspectives and research at national level, and to put forward proposals for comparative international research. These studies are grouped under different topics: the relationship between poverty and inequality in family structures; the labour market and social protection; geographic and social localization of poverty; equal opportunities and poverty. This document is the first of a series of scientific publications to be published under the Poverty 3 Programme. *Information: Ms Odile Quintin, Poverty 3 Programme, Commission of the European Communities, Directorate-General for Employment, Industrial Relations and Social Affairs, 200 rue de la Loi, B-1049 Brussels OR: GEIE «A & R», 60 rue Jacquemart-Gélée, F-59800 Lille.*

WOMEN AND CANCER: A EUROPEAN SURVEY

The fear of cancer is widespread among women of all ages and in all Member States. A survey on the prevention of women's cancers published in October by the European Commission shows that more than half the women in Europe have at one time or other considered that they could one day have cancer. This fear varies from country to country: 74% of women respondents in Luxembourg; 70% in Denmark and 42% in the United Kingdom.

The survey shows that major progress remains to be made in preventing cervical and breast cancer. Even if women are fairly well informed about the importance of early detection and prevention, it appears that they are still far from acting on this advice. According to the survey, about 1/3 of women aged between 20 and 49 have never had a gynaecological examination. One third of the total women respondents—and almost one quarter of the women in the critical 40-69 age group—do not practice breast self-examination or present themselves for mammographies. Examinations are rarely carried out at the ages or frequency recommended by the **European Committee of Cancer Specialists**—that is, every two to three years from age 50 onwards.

However, there are grounds for hope: comparing results carried out during the «Europe against Cancer» programme since 1988 shows that the situation is improving. The

number of women aged between 25 and 54 who have vaginal smear tests has increased from 61% to 79%. The number of women aged between 40 and 69 who have a mammography has increased from 27% to 36%. However, the survey shows that this upward trend is limited to the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and France. In other countries, the survey believes, major efforts still need to be made «both in providing information and education for the general female public as well as in training the medical profession». The best way of passing on this information, the authors emphasized, is through schools and universities: 40% of women under 25 say that they are very interested in receiving information on cancer prevention. Readers are reminded that as part of the «Europe against Cancer» Programme, information events took place in several Member States during the week 7 to 13 October 1991.

Information: Europe against Cancer Programme, Directorate-General for Employment, Industrial Relations and Social Affairs, Commission of the European Communities, 200 rue de la Loi, B-1049 Brussels.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION

Services for women farmers

This year, the women's section of COPA (Committee of Professional Agricultural Organizations) once again held its annual European seminar in collaboration with and with the support of the Women's Information Service of the European Commission. Some one hundred women farmers met at Barbotain-les-Thermes (France) from 19 to 24 October 1991 to discuss «Replacement Services in Agriculture». These services set out to enable women farmers to obtain replacement farm labour in the event of maternity, work accidents, vocational training or trade union activities. Participants underlined the essential role to be played by women farmers in farming-linked socio-economic activities such as agro-tourism, crafts and the valorization of folklore and cultural traditions. Finally, participants examined work safety issues and insisted that a series of preventive actions should be taken in the farming sector in 1992, which will be European. Year of Health and Safety at Work.

Information: COPA, 23-25 rue de la Science, B-1040 Brussels

Women entrepreneurs and the single market

Over 130 women company directors from 20 countries (EC, USA, Eastern Europe and the new German Länder) attended the

second international congress of women entrepreneurs in Dresden from 17 to 19 November. This important event was organised by the world association of women company directors (FCEM) in collaboration with the European Commission's Women's Information Service. Several speakers outlined the activities of the European Community regarding the integration of the new Länder and its support to central and eastern European countries. National German policies aiming to develop the economy and enterprises in the new Länder were also widely discussed.

A round-table discussion provided women entrepreneurs from East and West with an ideal opportunity to exchange views. This was followed by more concrete contact for future relations with women from the USSR, Czechoslovakia, Rumania and Hungary.

Women entrepreneurs from the new German Länder also exhibited a range of their products during the congress.

Contact: Hilde Albertini, Women's Information Service.

The European Women's Lobby presents its strategy

Officially founded one year ago, the **European Women's lobby**, which provides a forum for women's non-governmental organizations in the twelve Member States and European organizations, held its second General Assembly in Brussels on 18 to 19 October. The General Assembly unanimously agreed to support a Community Directive guaranteeing the protection of pregnant women at work. The meeting also decided to begin action to defend acquired fundamental women's rights and to oppose in particular recent moves to limit the voluntary termination of pregnancy. The 1992 work programme includes the insertion of the principle of equal opportunities into the present reform of the Treaty of Rome and supporting the implementation of the Third Action Programme for Equal Opportunities in the twelve Member States. The Lobby will also develop and support action aimed at accelerating women's access to decision-making posts, with special attention being paid to the presence of women in Community institutions. The working programme will also include questions specific to migrant women.

Information: European Women's Lobby, 22 rue du Méridien, B-1030 Brussels, Tel. (32.2) 217.90.20, fax: (32.2) 219.84.51

Women's Information Service, Directorate-General Audiovisual, Communication, Information, Culture, Commission of the European Communities, 200 rue de la Loi, B-1049 Brussels

COUNCIL OF MINISTERS

MATERNITY PROTECTION: INITIAL AGREEMENT

EC Social Affairs ministers, who failed to agree at their 14 October meeting on minimum protection for pregnant working women, reached a political agreement on this directive at the 6 November Council. Ms Papandreu, European Social Affairs Commissioner, is dissatisfied, however, and considers that the voted text remains below the objectives set out in the Commission proposal. Although the agreement includes, among other things, the right to at least 14 continuous weeks maternity leave, it does not guarantee, as the European Commission proposed, a minimum percentage of remuneration and simply speaks of «maintenance of sufficient remuneration». Ms Papandreu announced that she would be presenting the Commission's position to the European Parliament during the second reading of the directive in 1992. She added that she would take account of the Parliamentary debates and would put forward the European Commission's definitive position during the final examination by the Council.

The Commission has, nonetheless, obtained a major improvement in relation to the Council's initial position. A paragraph has been added to Article 1 of the directive stipulating that its application will not reduce the level of protection of working women as it exists in individual Member States prior to the coming into effect of the directive.

Under the directive, the dismissal of a pregnant woman will be forbidden, except for reasons not linked to her condition and which are permitted by national legislation or practice.

Agreement on the directive was obtained by twelve votes with two abstentions (United Kingdom and Italy). This is a new development, as the proposed directive fell into the social security category by virtue of Article 118a of the Treaty (health and safety), thereby permitting a qualified majority vote.

The other items on the agenda, the directive on working hours and the second report on poverty, were not examined.

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

PLENARY SESSION: SEXUAL HARASSMENT

The European Parliament intends that the question of sexual harassment in the workplace be taken seriously. This was clearly shown at its plenary session of 23 October in Luxembourg when Parliament passed by 193 votes and 26 abstentions Christine Crawley's (Soc., U.K.) resolution supporting the European Commission's Recommendation on the protection of the dignity of women at work (see **Women of Europe Newsletter No. 20**). Parliament considers that a series of measures are necessary, including the definition in writing by employers and workers of what constitutes correct behaviour; the provision of clear information by trade unions, which should treat complaints seriously and train delegates to handle this type of problem; and the guarantee that, if a transfer is decided, that it is the harasser and not the complainant who changes position. Finally, Parliament asked for indemnification of victims of sexual harassment. However, one should not forget, as Christine Crawley pointed out, that the Commission's Recommendation, together with the Code of Good Conduct, are not binding instruments in Member States.

SOCIAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

On the eve of the publication of its 1990 annual report on the **European Social Fund (ESF)**, the European Commission faced questions by the Social Affairs Committee meeting on 15 October in Brussels, on the funds' management. MEPs had many questions relating to the portion of funds granted to women and the long-term unemployed, the distribution of funds by region, the lack of information on programmes, the degree of use of certain budget lines and the control of actions. Ms Papandreu, European Social Affairs Commissioner, highlighted the progress to date: in September, 73% of total funding had been committed. Women's participation in ESF-financed programmes has fallen, according to the latest figures, but the European Commission is endeavouring to increase this. It has also improved the procedure for the payment of funds so that delays do not exceed 6 weeks. But the Commission cannot be held responsible for all the problems, Ms Papandreu stressed, in particular the slowness of banks and

national administrations. Parliament should also examine the problem of political preferences which, she recognized, played a part in government's selection of programmes. Finally, the European Commission is preparing to review the principle of «additionality» which stipulates that national or regional authorities must match the amount of Community aid. MEPs have pointed out that this requirement leads to an underutilization of available funds in the poorest regions.

WOMEN'S RIGHTS COMMITTEE

Meeting in Brussels on 28 and 29 October, the Women's Rights Committee exchanged views on «women's information policy» with Ms Colette Flesch, Director-General at the European Commission for Audiovisual, Communication, Information, Culture. Ms Flesch listed Community initiatives for providing information to women in Europe. Even if we can expect changes within the internal structures of the Commission, the accent will remain on information to women, which is a positive action par excellence, Ms Flesch declared. The Women's Rights Committee regretted the disappearance of «**Women of Europe**» and expressed the hope that «**Women of Europe Newsletter**» would be distributed to a wider audience, and also translated into 9 languages. Replying to proposals and questions, Ms Flesch welcomed the suggestion to prepare a file on the present state of legislation on voluntary termination of pregnancy in all Member States. The need to extend the distribution of information to women in the new German Länder and in Central and Eastern Europe has also been taken into consideration by Ms Flesch (see the brochure announced below).

Childcare

Anita Pollack (Soc., U.K.) presented her draft report on the Commission's proposal to Council on a childcare Recommendation. The report does not reject the Recommendation but says it is a starting point for a directive. Amendments relate to the need to establish calculated objectives and to obtain legislation from national governments in this area. The report asks Member States to provide the Commission with progress reports after two years and that the Commission itself prepare a report after five years. After a discussion on the percentage of children for whom childcare places are available, the Committee stressed the importance of promoting the individual rights of each child. The European Commission announced that the «Childcare» network would publish, in early 1992,

...

a discussion document on the financing of childcare.

The «Women and Youth» Committee of the German Bundestag

The Women's Rights Committee welcomed members of the «Women and Youth Committee» set up just under a year ago when the first government of the reunited Germany was being established. Its president, Edith Niehuis, stressed the need for information, in particular on the consequences for women of the Single Market. Parliamentarians from the two «Women's» committees expressed the hope that they would become superfluous in the long term, as other committees paid more and more attention to women specific problems.

Exchanges with the Council

Ms Elske ter Veld, Dutch Secretary of State for Social Security and Emancipation, reported on progress and delays in a number of directives concerning women.

The directive on the protection of pregnant women at work (see above) is being slowed down by discussions on questions about its legal basis, whilst the directive on atypical work would already have been adopted «if more men were in this type of employment», Ms. Elske ter Veld said. She said she hoped that the Council of Social Affairs Ministers would adopt the childcare Recommendation on 3 December.

The Women's Rights Committee also unanimously adopted the draft report presented by Ms Ria Oomen-Ruijten (PPE, Netherlands) on the application of the Third Council Directive on the progressive implementation of the principle of equal treatment for men and women in matters of social security (Directive 79/7/EEC). Parliamentarians went on to exchange views on the opinion presented by Marijke Van Hemeldonck on the labour market after 1992, and its consequences for women.

Useful address: European Parliament, 97-113 rue Belliard, B-1040 Brussels or Plateau du Kirchberg, L-1919 Luxembourg.

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE

At its plenary session of 30 and 31 October, the Economic and Social Committee (ESC) adopted an own-initiative opinion on **single-parent families** presented by Ms Slipman (United

Kingdom, various interests group). Faced with a substantial growth in the number of single-parent families in all Member States, the ESC is asking the European Commission to adopt an integrated strategy, aimed at giving these families equal access to social and economic benefits and advantages. The measures being recommended by the ESC are an attempt to respond to the specific needs of single-parent families. They include extending childcare infrastructure to meet the needs of both parents and children; improving opportunities for qualifying vocational training to facilitate returners to the labour market; tax benefits for working single parents; increased availability of good quality social housing and services offering information and advice to single parents.

Useful address: ESC, 2 rue Ravenstein, B-1000 Brussels, tel.: (32.2) 519.92.07/519.92.02/519.93.20.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON EMPLOYMENT

The Standing Committee on Employment, comprising representatives from Member States, the European Commission, the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) and the Union of Industrial and Employers' Confederation in Europe (UNICE), met in Brussels on 7 November. The Committee was chaired by Mr De Vries, Dutch Labour and Social Affairs Minister.

The meeting examined a European Commission document on the **situation of women's employment** in the European Community (part of the «1991 Employment in Europe Report»). The Committee assured the European Commission of its support for promoting training and employment of women within the framework of the Third Action Programme for Equal Opportunities. «Economic growth alone is not enough to ensure the full integration of women in the labour market», the Committee recognized, adding that «active policies at appropriate levels are also necessary in order to remove the specific handicaps which women encounter». The Committee invited the Commission to take account of the specific needs of women in its education and training programmes and to encourage women to enter sectors in which they are under-represented. The Committee emphasised that the social partners have an important role to play, in particular in respecting equal opportunities in recruitment and promotion and protecting the dignity of women and men at work. Finally, it reaffirmed the essential participation of the structural

funds and regional policy in ensuring economic and social cohesion which should be strengthened and made more effective.

PUBLICATIONS

IRIS dossiers: «1990 Inter-programme Exchange Visits» and «An Evaluation of the IRIS network by its members». Available in English and French, IRIS Unit, CREW, 21 rue de la Tourelle, B-1040 Brussels.

The impact of the introduction of new technologies on the health and safety of women at work, V/341/91-EN, Nexus Europe, annotated bibliography.

ERGO: Répertoire européen de projets locaux. (European Directory of local projects). A directory of 1,700 activities to combat unemployment throughout Europe. This information is also available «on-line» from the ECHO information retrieval centre.

Information: ERGO, CEI Consultants Ltd, 205 rue Belliard, B-1040 Brussels

Frauen in Europa (Women in Europe), by Marlene Lenz, MEP, presents equal opportunities policies within the European Community. Available in German only.

Information: Europa Union Verlag, Europa Zentrum, Bachstr. 32, Postfach 1529, D-5300 Bonn 1.

Europa für die Frauen: (Europe for Women): produced jointly by the Women's Information Service of the European Commission and the Permanent Representation of the European Commission in Germany, this brochure aimed especially at women in the new Länder, presents the Third Action Programme for Equal Opportunities between Women and Men 1991-1995, the Community's new NOW initiative as well as various Community measures and institutions dealing with equal opportunities issues.

Information: Women's Information Service, Commission of the European Communities, 200 rue de la Loi, B-1049 Brussels OR Kommission der Europäischen Gemeinschaften, Vertretung in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, Zitelmannstr. 22, D-5300 Bonn 1.

Editor in Chief:

Fausta DESHORMES LA VALLE
Head of WOMEN'S INFORMATION SERVICE

Coordination: Paula LAISSY
Commission of the European Communities

Directorate-General for Audiovisual Information, Communication and Culture

Rue de la Loi 200, B-1049 Brussels
Tel. (32.2)235.28.60