

## COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

### EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IN 1991: A BRIEF REVIEW

1991 began on a note of hope with the implementation of the Third Action Programme for Equal Opportunities between Men and Women. However, it was not until June that the Council of Ministers gave political weight to this programme by voting a resolution. Even so, national governments, despite pressure from the European Parliament, remain slow to adopt binding measures to advance equal opportunities prior to the completion of the Single Market. Last December's summit in Maastricht brought agreement between ministers of 11 countries to move ahead on questions of equal opportunity, and to advance social policy in Europe by adopting a majority voting procedure. We outline below progress on the main women-related issues outstanding at the beginning of 1992:

- **Childcare:** in December, the Council of Ministers adopted the Commission's draft Recommendation for improving services and encouraging the sharing of parental tasks.
- **Sexual harassment:** the Commission adopted a Recommendation on the dignity of women and men at work, together with a Code of Good Practice providing for a series of preventive and procedural measures (see **Women of Europe Newsletter no. 22**). Ministers gave their political support to these measures in December.
- **Maternity directive:** in December ministers also adopted the Commission's draft Directive guaranteeing, among other things, 14 weeks' paid leave to pregnant women within the European Community.
- **The organisation of working time:** the draft Directive adopted by the Commission in 1990 is still awaiting a ministerial decision.
- **The reversal of the burden of proof in equal opportunities cases:** there is as yet no agreement between ministers on the Commission's draft Directive presented in 1988.

Other dossiers of specific importance for women remain blocked. These concern



# WOMEN OF EUROPE NEWSLETTER

NEWS

ON THE EQUALITY POLICY  
OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY



Dear Readers,

*The building of a single Europe took a major step forward during the night of 11 to 12 December 1991. During this long night, the Heads of State and Government, meeting at the European Council at*

*Maastricht, agreed the Treaty on European Union which, once ratified by national parliaments, will give a new dimension to the European area. This Union is based on three pillars: economic and monetary policy (including the creation of a single currency, the ECU), economic union and social policy. This latter aspect proved to be the most controversial, with the United Kingdom opting out of the agreement.*

*Even so, this is the first time that Member States (even if only 11) accepted in the future to adopt social measures, other than those relating to health and safety, by a qualified majority. This gives us reason to believe that social policy, including equal opportunities policy, will find its rightful place within European priorities.*

*In early December, the European Commission had presented its initial report on the application of the Community Charter of fundamental social rights of workers. The objective of this Charter, adopted in December 1988 by all Member States except the United Kingdom, was to establish the main guiding principles on which the right to work should be based within the European Community. Whilst the Commission considers that it has fulfilled its commitments by presenting, before the end of 1991, the full set of initiatives provided for in the action programme, it regrets in its report that "the Council has been unable to meet expectations placed on it". The fact is, that as of the end of November, Member States had still not adopted the majority of measures relating to: employment and pay; living and working conditions; the free circulation of workers; social protection; collective bargaining; information and worker participation; equal opportunities between women and men; vocational training; health and safety at the workplace; the aged and the disabled. Furthermore, those texts which have been adopted (for example, those relating to childcare and the protection of pregnant women at work) are less restrictive than the Charter provisions. Let us hope that the post-Maastricht period will modify the political will of governments—a change which will require us to stir up the support and pressure of Europe's citizens.*

*Fausta Deshormes La Belle*

atypical work, parental leave and social security. ■

### A NEW HEAD AT THE EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES UNIT

**T**he Equal Opportunities Unit, which is part of the Directorate-General for Employment, Industrial Relations and Social Affairs, has a new Head, Agnès Hubert who took up her new post on 1 February. An economist by training and a journalist by profession, she entered the European Commission in 1981. She worked at the Directorate-General for Development, where she was in charge of international raw materials agreements, and was also involved in the PNUCED VII negotiations. Since 1986 she has been at the Directorate-General for Audiovisual, Information, Communication, Culture, where she has looked after periodical publications and audiovisual production in the "Europe in the World/Development" sector. She is very familiar with questions of equal opportunities between men and women as she was one of the initiators of an informal network of women in European institutions (Women's Solidarity Network) set up to implement a positive action programme for the personnel of European institutions.

Agnès Hubert takes over from Claire Mandouze who now works as Head of Cooperation in the Indian Ocean at the Directorate General for Development. During her term of office at the Equal Opportunities Unit, Claire Mandouze paid particular attention to the evaluation of the Second Action Programme for Equal Opportunities (1986-1990) as well as the adoption of the Third Action Programme.

The Equal Opportunities Unit is responsible for the European Commission's long-term policies to promote equal opportunities for men and women. The implementation of these policies falls within the Third Action Programme (1991-1995) for Equal Opportunities, which has three main axes: legislation, integration of women in employment and improving women's status in society. To achieve its policy goals, the Unit has created different networks and working parties (see table p.2). It also provides the secretariat for the Advisory Committee on Equal Opportunities, comprised of representatives of national equal opportunities bodies. ■

## THE NEW NETWORKS OF EXPERTS

The networks of independent experts which help the Equal Opportunities Unit accomplish its task have been renewed, by means of a tender procedure launched in summer 1991. Readers will find below a list of successful tenderers and a list of coordinators for each network as well as the contact persons at the Unit.

### ☐ "Expert Network on the Application of the Equality Directives"

This network was set up in 1982 to monitor the application of Community directives. It studies specific problems common to all Member States (burden of proof, indirect discrimination, sanctions, law and positive action etc.). The network has also been given the job of preparing a Community legal encyclopedia on the subject of equality.

☒ *Coordinator: Sacha Prechal, Europa Instituut, Faculteit der Rechtsgeleerdheid, Turfdragersterpa, 1, NL-1012 XT Amsterdam.*

☒ *Contact at the Unit: Evelyn Collins*



### ☐ Network "Position of Women on the Labour Market"

This network was set up in 1983 to analyze the obstacles, problems and challenges facing women in the employment area in Europe.

☒ *Coordinator: Dr. Jill Rubery, Manchester School of Management, UMIST, P.O. Box 88, UK-Manchester M60 1QD*

☒ *Contact at the Unit: Els Van Winckel.*



### ☐ Steering Committee for Equal Opportunities in Broadcasting

Since 1986, this Steering Committee has brought together high-level representatives from broadcasting companies and regulatory bodies in Member States. It provides a forum for the pooling of experiences, sets out to promote the development of positive action and monitors practices and employment structures in this area as they relate to equal opportunities.

☒ *Coordinator: Kate Holman, Geneesheerstraat 9, B-1560 Hoeilaart.*

☒ *Contact at the Unit: Evelyn Collins.*



### ☐ Network on Childcare and Other Measures to Reconcile Work and Family Responsibilities

This network's task is to evaluate information on childcare services in all Member States, to carry out awareness-raising campaigns and to suggest possible options to the European Community in areas relating to the reconciliation of family and professional responsibilities.

☒ *Coordinator: Peter Moss, Thomas Coram Research Unit, University of London, Institute of Education, 22 Woburn Square, UK-London WH1H OAA*

☒ *Contact at the Unit: Janet Hemsley*

### ☐ Network on Local Employment Initiatives (LEI)

The LEI network was set up in 1987 to supplement the programme for supporting local women's employment initiatives by providing enterprise creation start-up grants. The network, comprised of independent experts, provides information and offers assistance and advice to women who wish to benefit from these grants.

☒ *Coordinator: Caroline Turner, Breakthrough Consultants, 14 Victor Hugo Str., GR-54625 Thessaloniki.*

☒ *Contact in the Unit: Eva Eberhardt*

☒ *For all information about women's enterprise creation subsidies: Gerda van Biervliet/Simonetta Risaio, Comitato Impresa Donna, CNA, 1 avenue de la Joyeuse Entrée, B-1040 Brussels, tel. (32.2) 280.00.54/280.09.92.*



### ☐ Network "Women in the Decision-Making Process"

This network's job is to analyze the obstacles confronting women in decision-making processes and to propose strategies. The first area to be studied will be politics.

☒ *Coordinator: Sabine de Bethune, Cabinet du Secrétariat d'Etat à l'Emancipation sociale, 7 Place Quételet, B-1030 Brussels.*

☒ *Contact in the Unit: Helle Jacobson.*



### ☐ Working Party on Equal Opportunities in Education

This Working Party is made up of representatives from Ministries of Education and equal opportunities bodies in the twelve Member States. Set up in 1986 following the Council Recommendation (3.6.1985), its job is to encourage diversification of professional choices, to promote equal opportunities in education and teacher training, and to combat stereotypes in schoolbooks.

☒ *Contact in the Unit: Helle Jacobsen*



### ☐ Working Group on Vocational Training for Women

This working group, comprising representatives of professional training and equal opportunities bodies from the twelve Member States, has been set up to evaluate the application, in their countries, of the Commission Recommendation on vocational training for women (24.11.1987). It is also involved in the development of the IRIS network, which brings together women's vocational training programmes and aims to stimulate vocational training for women through exchanging information on programmes via publications, exchanges, seminars, encouraging partnerships etc.

☒ *Contact in the Unit: Margarida Pinto*

## News from the Networks

**T**he programme for providing assistance to **local women's employment initiatives** has got off to a new start. The recomposed network held its first meeting in Brussels on 10 December to determine its work programme. The LEI Programme now has a larger budget, permitting an increase both in the number of beneficiaries and the amount of assistance per beneficiary (in 1991, financial support increased from ECU 1,000 to 1,500 per job cre-

ated, with a maximum of ECU 7,500). Part of the programme is aimed specifically at women from the new German Länder. This year's programme will provide support for projects begun after 1 May 1991 and applications must be submitted to the responsible bodies no later than **31 March 1992**. The new guide, consisting of application forms and instructions, can be obtained from the Support Management Service, CNA, 1 avenue de la Joyeuse Entrée, B-1040 Brussels.

The network for "**Childcare and Other Measures to Reconcile Work and Family Responsibilities**" met on 8 January and defined its busy work programme for 1992. The network will continue its examination of the potential use of structural Funds for creating childcare services and introducing these services to rural areas. It will also produce a practical guide on the implementation of the childcare Recommendation. A number of studies will be carried out: a description of the existing situation in Member States and the cost of child-

care services, racism, etc. A database will be developed to facilitate the dissemination of information within Member States and Community institutions. Various publications are planned, in particular a working document on the quality of childcare services and a brochure on network activities. The network is also preparing a seminar on the reconciliation of family and professional responsibilities in EC and Scandinavian countries.

*Coordinator: Peter Moss, Thomas Coram Research Unit, University of London, Institute of Education, 22 Woburn Square, UK-London WC1H 0AA.*

### Women in the new Länder

A programme for integrating **women from the new German Länder** into the European Community. As part of this programme, the Unit organized, from 20 to 22 November in Brussels, an initial information seminar and a study visit on Community structures and policies in favour of women. The seminar, which was opened by Mr Degimbe, Director-General for Employment, Industrial Relations and Social Affairs at the European Commission, was attended by some 50 participants, most of them representatives of equal opportunities bodies in the Länder concerned (East Berlin, Brandenburg, Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, Saxony, Saxony-Anhalt, Thuringia).

This programme will be continued in 1992 with a series of more specialized seminars, in particular on Community legislation and on the position of women on the employment market.

*Contact: Eva Eberhardt, 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*

### Equal Opportunities within the European Institutions

Mrs Marie Tzirani has been appointed head of the new "Positive Action Programme for Female Staff" Unit at the European Commission. Since 1978, a working group has been busy trying to achieve equal opportunities for men and women within the European Commis-

sion. This Working Group, which has become COPEC (the Joint Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men), contributed largely to the development of the first Positive Action Programme for Commission Personnel, which came into effect on 8 March 1988. A recent assessment of such action illustrated the need to pursue and intensify it, which is why this unit has been set up inside the administration. Its task will be to implement the Commission's Second Positive Action Programme for its Female Personnel (1992-1995);

*Contact: Positive Action Programme for Female Staff Unit, Marie Tzirani, or JCEO, Francine Zweber, Commission of the European Communities, Directorate-General, Personnel and Administration, 200 rue de la Loi, B-1049 Brussels.*

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION

### Launch of the Third Action Programme

In early December, Denmark and the U.K. both officially launched the Third Community Action Programme for Equal Opportunities (1991-1995). On 2 December, some 100 guests attended the launch in Copenhagen, organized jointly by the European Commission Representative Office in Denmark and the Danish Equal Opportunities Council.

In London, the launch took place on 3 December and was attended by the press and national and European Members of Parliament. Ms Bottomley, Minister of Health and Vice-President of the Ministerial Group on Women, emphasized the value of such a programme and reiterated her support for the general objectives, although she said she would like a more flexible approach. This event was organized by the European Commission Representative Office in London and by the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC).

### 1991 Women of Europe prize

The process to select the winner of the fifth **Women of Europe prize** is well under way, with most Member States already having selected their candidates. These are: for Belgium: Cécile Boerave (for her action in European agricultural policy); Germany: Gundi Gompf ("Children Learn European languages" Foundation); France: Claire Richard

(Academy of European Cultural Centres); Greece: Anna Schlumberger (European Cultural Foundation); Ireland: Judith Ironside ("Carers Project"); Italy: Marina Gazzo (European journalist); the Netherlands: Janneke Gerda (European women in SMEs) and the United Kingdom: Juliet Lodge (professor of "European politics").

The European prize-winner will be selected from national candidates by a European jury of 12 well-known personalities and 24 journalists (2 per Member State). The prize will be presented next April in Lisbon. Awarded for the first time in 1987, the Women of Europe Prize has been created to pay homage to a woman who has contributed to European integration.

*Further information from: Angèle Verdin, International President, rue Américaine 193, B-1050 Brussels, tel.: (32.2) 648.37-59.*

### European Women's Lobby

Women's organizations belonging to the European Lobby adopted a motion on **Childcare** in December. The lobby believes that the European Commission's Recommendation can only be considered "as a first step" and that childcare problems must be taken into account in all European Community programmes and policies. The lobby supports the European Parliament's call for a framework directive on childcare and highlights the need to take account of the specific needs of children from ethnic minorities. The lobby demanded that the co-financing of such childcare by Member States out of structural Funds be considered.

*Further information from: European Women's Lobby, 22 rue du Méridien, B-1030 Brussels.*

## EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

### IN PLENARY SESSION

#### Children's well-being

In a Resolution adopted along with the report by Lissy Gröner (Soc., Germany) on 13 December 1991, the Parliament

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...

asked the Community to define a "genuine children's policy" within the European Community.

The responsibility for the future of some 120 million children living in the Community is incumbent on their parents, but also on society as a whole and on public authorities in particular, the European Parliament believes. It calls for the adoption of a binding European Charter on children's rights, also, for Member States who have not already done so to ratify the United Nation Convention on the Rights of the Child. Community policy for children should involve measures relating to the environment, housing, health, education and road safety as well as the promotion of cultural exchanges between children in the Community. In Parliament's view, children must be protected against violence, whether physical, sexual or moral.

Faced with an increased incidence of kidnapping and disappearing children, Parliament proposes the creation of "Missing Child Register". It also highlights the danger of new reproductive technology and insists on the need to coordinate inheritance law at a European level.

The Resolution insists that a directive be adopted limiting child labour and setting a minimum age of 15, as well as a directive on parental leave and childcare facilities for small children.

In another resolution, adopted in November, Parliament approved a series of amendments modifying the Commission's Recommendation on childcare. The rapporteur, Anita Pollack (Soc., UK) highlighted the fact that a recommendation is insufficient in this area. Through its amendments, and by asking Member States to set annual objectives for availability of places in creches and nursery schools, Parliament was seeking to broaden the scope of this text, insisting on opening hours of these services, the needs of handicapped children, training for personnel etc. ■

### Equal treatment for men and women in social security

Women do not yet benefit from equal social security treatment in the Community: the Third Council Directive in this area (79/7/EEC) needs to be supplemented. In a Resolution adopted on 13 December 1991, the European Parliament expressed its opinion that only a reform of Articles 118a and 119 of the Treaty establishing the European Economic Community on the equal treatment of men and women can bring about "an effective improvement".

The best way to achieve the objective of equal treatment remains to promote the individualization of rights. It is urgent to institute the retroactivity of rights provided for in existing directives on equality in social security to the very date provided for their implementation. Parliament demands a precise definition of the concepts of indirect discrimination, in order to adapt existing legislation.

Finally, the Resolution insists on the danger of perverse effects. These reforms and the application of the directives should not undermine existing achievements and rights, but should rather aim at harmonizing these rights. ■

## WOMEN'S RIGHTS COMMITTEE

### Meeting with Palestinian women

The Women's Rights Committee, meeting in Brussels on 28 and 29 November 1991, heard Palestinian women relate the difficulties of living conditions in the Occupied Territories. Palestinian women are in particular the indirect victims of the conflict. They suffer from collective punishment and repression, but also from very difficult living conditions, as was explained by Mrs Zahira KAMAL, the Palestinian women's representative. Mrs KAMAL highlighted the extreme urgency of these residence problems for women and their children. The Committee expressed its wish that the European Parliament's general report on human rights pay greater attention to the violations of which women are victims.

The Committee adopted unanimously the draft opinion presented by An Hermans (PPE, Belgium) on **social protection**.

### IRIS Network: for a continuation

The Committee was informed of the latest activities of the IRIS network, which brings together almost 500 women's training programmes within the European Community. Set up in 1988 by the European Commission to encourage and stimulate women's training within the Community, the network has introduced a series of activities relating to exchange of information and experience.

MEPs have asked the Commission that the network, due to run till the end of

1992, be extended beyond the initial contract expiry date. A detailed evaluation of the network is under way, and the results, which should be ready by April next, will serve as a basis for a final decision, a representative of the European Commission explained. The major question of women's training will be discussed shortly within the framework of social dialogue, the European Commission added. ■

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

## PUBLICATIONS

**Guide to childcare measures:** supplement to the "Guide to Community Initiatives on Human Resources", NOW, Commission of the European Communities, 1991. An information folder on the NOW initiative is also published in all official languages of the European Community. Available from the NOW coordination unit, Directorate-General, Industrial Relations and Social Affairs, Commission of the European Communities, 200 rue de la Loi, B-1049 Brussels.

As part of the programme for developing feminist studies, a "**Guide to feminist studies within the European Community**" has just been published. Information in this guide comes from the GRACE databank, created by the Feminist Research and Information Group (GRIF) at the request of the Equal Opportunities Unit. The programme provides for a series of meetings on this topic to be held this year, the first one in February.

*Information: GRIF, 29 rue Blanche, B-1050 Brussels.*

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