

EQUALITY CALENDAR

22 and 23 September

Meetings of the European Parliament's Committee on Women's Rights, incorporating two public hearings: one on NOW (22 September) and the other on women and poverty (23 September)

22 to 24 September

Informal meeting of Ministers of Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities in Bruges

27 September

Second European Women Summit: "Women, economics and social policy", organized in Brussels by the International Council of Women in association with the Commission of the European Communities.

30 September to 1 October

"The firm and the family in post-industrial society"

4 to 6 October

The European Parliament's Committee on Women's Rights meets in Thessaloniki

12 and 13 October

"Family, Society and Solidarity", a symposium organized by COFACE

12 and 13 October

The European Parliament's Committee on Women's Rights meets in Brussels

13 to 15 October

Twelfth meeting of the steering committee for equal opportunities in broadcasting on the subject of reconciliation of professional, family and social life, in Dublin

14 and 15 October

Seminar on "Women and the 1994 European Elections", organized in Brussels by the European Network "Women in Decision-Making" and the Equal Opportunities Unit of the Commission of the European Communities

14 to 16 October

European seminar organized by the women's committee of COPA on the subject of "Socio-economic recognition of the work of female farmers", in Dublin

15 October

Launch in Ireland of the guide "How to Combat Sexual Harassment at Work" by the Dublin Employment Equality Agency

19 to 21 October

European Employment Week organized by the Commission of the European Communities

25 and 26 October

Symposium on equal pay for men and women to be held in Brussels. Organized by the Belgian Presidency of the Community in association with the Equal Opportunities Unit of the Commission of the European Communities



WOMEN OF EUROPE NEWSLETTER

Dear Readers,

There is invariably a great burst of activity when public life resumes after the holidays. In the equal opportunities field, September and October promise to be extremely busy months as the European institutions get back to work with renewed vigour and networks and associations launch a number of new initiatives (see the Equality Calendar).

In keeping with the spirit of European Union, the Information for Women Unit of the Commission of the European Communities has decided to herald in the new season by publishing its Women of Europe Newsletter for the very first time in all nine Community languages. "Not before time!", some of you might say. It has, after all, taken five long years for the newsletter to become available in all the Community languages. Even back in 1989, however, when the publication was first launched in French and English, its founder, Fausta Deshormes La Valle, was adamant that this goal would be attained, the very raison d'être of her project being to disseminate information to as wide an audience as possible. The newsletter first appeared in German in January 1991, shortly after unification, thereby increasing the number of languages covered to three. But despite the active support of various Members of Parliament and associations, budgetary and structural constraints precluded publication in the remaining Community languages. Now at last, in September 1993, it is "mission accomplished", and the newsletter can at last come out in all nine Community languages. This brings the ultimate aim – to impart information and to increase women's awareness of the activities of the European institutions, particularly in the field of equal opportunities – considerably closer. The better informed women are, the greater their chances of playing an active role in the enlarged European Market and of reaping the benefits of European Union.

Anne-Blanche Haritos

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COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

WOMEN AND MEDIA

One of the objectives of the Commission of the European Communities in the context of the Third Action Programme for Equal Opportunities between men and women (1991-95) is to develop "innovatory programmes and materials which challenge traditional images and promote positive images of women and men." It is with this aim in mind that the Equal Opportunities Unit of DG V launched a co-financing programme in May 1992 for audiovisual productions on equal opportunities for men and women. Under this programme, grants of up to ECU 25 000 may be awarded by the Commission to any Community producer, whether public or private, for productions which contribute to promoting equal opportunities.

The projects are examined twice a year by a selection board. Applications for financial assistance should reach the Equal Opportunities Unit by 15 January or 15 June.

At its third session on 9 July the Selection Board chose five projects: Abbie Conant – Not Long Now (Germany), 10 years after... (Greece), Long Live the Queen (Netherlands), Femmes de la Rive Gauche (United Kingdom) and The Glass Frontier (United Kingdom). Should you require further information, please contact *Nathalie Davies, Equal Opportunities Unit, DG V/A/3, Commission of the European Communities, rue de la Loi 200, B-1049 Brussels.*

COUNCIL

THE BELGIAN PRESIDENCY

The Belgian Presidency which began in July and will run until the end of December 1993 (when Greece will take over) is at a turning point for European Union. All going well, the Maastricht Treaty should be ratified by the Twelve in the coming weeks and months. The agenda drawn up by this Presidency gives

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prominence to equal opportunities. As announced in the last Women of Europe Newsletter, a number of initiatives will be launched in this field on the initiative of Miet Smet, Minister of Employment, Labour and Equal Opportunities. These will include an informal council meeting (to be held in Bruges from 22 to 24 September) and two seminars – one on equal pay and the other on safety at work. The Presidency also intends to do everything in its power to speed up the adoption of a number of blocked directives – the protection of young workers, alternative working arrangements and part-time work, the secondment of workers, the directive on health and safety at work and two equal opportunities directives, one on the reversal of the burden of proof and another on parental leave. In an effort to stay close to developments regarding the two proposals for directives, the situation to date is outlined below.

PARENTAL LEAVE

The first proposal for a directive concerns parental leave (COM(83)686 final). The aim of the proposal is very clear: “to entitle workers to parental leave and leave for family reasons under harmonized conditions and without discrimination on the grounds of sex.” This proposal was adopted by the Commission in 1983 in the framework of the Community's first action programme to promote equal opportunities for women. It has been blocked at the Council since 1985. The proposed directive provides for working men and women to be given leave so that they can spend a period of time at home caring for their very young children. Such leave already exists in a number of Member States, although the terms and conditions vary from country to country and often only the mother is eligible. However in order to encourage a more equal division of family responsibilities between parents and thus promote true equality of opportunity between working men and women, such leave should be available to both parents. More specifically, the Commission proposes that each parent should have the right to a minimum of three months leave, which may not be transferred from one parent to another. The leave may be taken at any time from the birth of the child until its second birthday (or fifth birthday if the child is handicapped or adopted). It is up to the individual Member States to decide whether this leave should be paid. If it is, payment should be from public funds.

Leave for family reasons is seen as vital to enable working men and women to deal with emergencies and exceptional situations arising at home (death of a child or spouse, illness, etc.). This type of leave is already provided for in a number of Community countries, both by national legislation and collective agreements. One point to note here is that the minimum number of days per year is not laid down in the proposal for a directive, this decision being left up to the individual Member States.

REVERSAL OF THE BURDEN OF PROOF

Although the principle of equal treatment and pay for men and women has been incorporated into the national legislation of each of the twelve Member States in accordance with Community law, there are in fact a number of factors which continue to hamper its application, one of them being the burden of proof. What does this mean in practice? The current state of affairs is that if a woman feels that she has been discriminated against in favour of a man, she has the right to lodge a complaint with a tribunal. More often than not, however, such cases are lost. Why should this be so? The reason is simple: national legislation currently requires the complainant (the woman who has been discriminated against) to prove her allegation. It is often very difficult, or even impossible, to provide the requisite evidence, with the result that the woman loses the case and other women in a similar position are deterred from lodging complaints. In order to make existing legislation on equal pay and treatment for men and women more effective, thereby precluding the sort of situation outlined above, the Commission adopted a proposal for a directive on the burden of proof in May 1988. Unfortunately it was blocked in the Council in December that year and all subsequent efforts to break the deadlock have failed. What is the purpose of the proposal? The intention is to transfer the burden of proof from the complainant to the respondent, meaning that it is no longer the alleged victim who has to prove that he or she has been discriminated against; the respondent would be required to prove his or her innocence. The Commission proposal would not, however, engender a total reversal of the burden of proof. For example if a woman were to

allege that she were less well-paid than her male counterpart, she would still have to establish a basic presumption of discrimination, to enable the tribunal to assess the situation properly. In the example quoted, the woman would be expected to provide either information on the nature of her work as compared with that of her better-paid colleague, evidence of her seniority or reports indicating the quality of her work. The proposed directive would be applicable to all Community legislation in the area of equal opportunities and thereby to national procedures for redress in all sectors, whether public or private. Only criminal proceedings would be exempt. It should also be noted that the proposal is intended to clarify the concept of indirect discrimination for national courts as the definition is at present extremely vague. The proposal for a directive embraces the definition established by the European Court of Justice: “indirect discrimination exists where an apparently neutral provision, criterion or practice disproportionately disadvantages the members of one sex, by reference in particular to marital or family status, and is not objectively justified by any necessary reason or condition unrelated to the sex of the person concerned.”

NEWS OF THE NETWORKS

NOW

A recent edition (No 35) of the “Women of Europe Newsletter” featured an article on the Community initiative NOW (New Opportunities for Women). The NOW programme of activities for 1993 includes three seminars at which a number of projects will be examined and the best ones selected in accordance with priorities set by the NOW programme. The results will be incorporated into a code of conduct to be published and distributed widely. The primary objective of this publication will be to stimulate the development of measures directed specifically at women within the framework of future European Social Fund projects in all the Member States. Two seminars have taken place to date and their conclusions are as follows.

The first seminar was on the “diversification of women's professional choices”. Held in Bonn in May 1993, it was jointly organized by the Federal Ministry for Education and Science, the Ministry of Employment and the Commission of the European Communities.

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There is no doubt in the mind of Norbert Lammert, responsible for relations between the Parliament and the Ministry of Education and Science, that support for women is necessary in order to achieve equality of opportunity in the area of vocational training and to maximize human resources.

All participants agreed that the transnational nature of the projects helped generate new ideas with regard to qualifications. In the context of the diversification of professional choices for women, one possible strategy would be to facilitate their access to jobs in fields traditionally dominated by men; another would be to encourage women to climb the company ladder.

At the second seminar, held in Madrid, the participants also highlighted the importance of the NOW initiative in encouraging new approaches to training and the professional integration of women. NOW has also fostered the development of the concept of "mainstreaming" and created new openings for its implementation. It has made a substantial contribution to the establishment of a spirit of cooperation at local, regional and transnational level, as well as at the level of individual organizations. Such cooperation is fundamental because the extended social partnership created by this initiative serves to heighten awareness of the projects specifically aimed at women and the equal opportunities initiatives launched by Community networks. While NOW has consolidated and developed training programmes for women, the programme goes beyond the concept of training. It is also intended to bring the role of women in society to the attention of people in a variety of walks of life. The NOW programme provides for the enhancement of women's abilities and know-how beyond the confines of the training programmes per se. During the conference a number of recommendations were made to the Member States and the European Commission. There was a widespread desire to extend the duration of the programme, to increase the financial resources allocated to it, to reinforce the structures for the promotion of equal opportunities in the Member States and to push the principle of equality in the objectives of the three Structural Funds.

The results of all these seminars and the recommendations put forward by the participants and experts will be announced at the Congress on the Community "Human Resources" initiatives (EUROFORM, NOW and HORIZON), which will take place in Dublin on 22 and 23 November 1993. More on that later.
Information: Celia Alexopoulou, European Social Fund Directorate, Coordi-

nation Unit, Commission of the European Communities, rue de la Loi 200, B-1049 Brussels, Tel. (32-2) 295 42 95.

INFORMATION- COMMUNICATION

HOW TO COMBAT SEXUAL HARASSMENT – PRACTICAL INITIATIVES BY MANAGEMENT AND UNIONS

At the end of June an important seminar was organized in London by Industrial Relations Services Training to present the Commission of the European Communities' guide for the implementation of the code of practice on combating sexual harassment. The seminar stressed eight concrete experiments conducted at a variety of levels (private industry, the public service, trade unions). The speakers underlined the fact that the only way to combat sexual harassment is for companies to introduce appropriate policies and procedures. However, if such measures are to be effective, they must be subject to regular assessment and review and be tailored to the specific circumstances of the workplace in question.

Furthermore, the policies and procedures of firms for dealing with sexual harassment should be clearly set out, given that the existence of formal procedures for settling disputes encourages victims to come forward. It is absolutely imperative that these procedures guarantee confidentiality for the parties concerned. It seems that an ideal solution would be to put in place a dual system for dealing with both formal and informal complaints. The informal option is important because very often the victim is in a very delicate situation and therefore wishes to deal with the matter in confidence without taking recourse to disciplinary proceedings. If the informal procedure fails, the victim should still have the option of commencing a formal procedure. The case should be dealt with by a counsellor (person of trust in the company who would be made responsible for this type of litigation). Special training should be provided to enable the counsellor to exercise his responsibilities properly. It

is not only important to train the counsellor but also to make other employees aware of this area of concern.

Sexual harassment is undoubtedly a costly business for firms (the stress suffered by victims lowers their productivity and leads to tension at work). The implementation of preventive measures and procedures to help settle conflicts involves comparatively little expense and actually helps portray a very positive image enhancing a company's equal opportunities record. It has also been noted that the most successful preventive measures are those which have been incorporated in more general policies on equal opportunities for men and women.
Information: John Darcy, Equal Opportunities Unit, DG V/A/3, Commission of the European Communities, rue de la Loi 200, B-1049 Brussels.

CONFERENCES

Europa – Een kleur-Rijk Kontinent (Europe, a multi-faceted continent), 24 and 25 September 1993 in Louvain. Conference organized by the Kristelijke Arbeidersvrouwenbeweging and the Hoger Instituut van de Arbeid at the Catholic University of Leuven. This training initiative is aimed specifically at working women and will tackle issues such as consumption and the environment in Europe, monetary union and social Europe.

Information: Ariane, Ruisbroekstraat 22b, B-3360 Bierbeek, Tel. (32-16) 46 22 43.

Employment and social protection: situation and outlook for women, a seminar organized by SOPHIA, the network for the coordination of women's studies in both the French and Flemish communities of Belgium, in the context of its summer university at Louvain-la-Neuve on 9 October 1993. Two main issues will be tackled: women and employment and the restructuring of the welfare state (also from the Community perspective).

Information: SOPHIA, c/o Ada Garcia, UCL-GSW, place Montesquieu 1/1, B-1348 Louvain-la-Neuve, Tel. (32-10) 47 42 08.

Women and the 1994 European elections, Brussels, 14 and 15 October 1993. This seminar will serve as a springboard

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for a public awareness campaign on women in decision-making with a view to the European elections scheduled for June 1994. Organized by the European network "Women in decision-making" and the Equal Opportunities Unit of the E.C. Commission, this seminar will address the issue of political communication from a woman's point of view and will also examine campaigning methods. At the end of the two days a debate will be held on European policies for women and their contribution to the building of Europe during the current legislative period.

Information: Sabine de Bethune, European Network "Women in decision-making", rue Mercelis 33, B-1050 Brussels, Tel. (32-2) 512 77 23.

Socio-economic recognition of the work of female farmers, Dublin, 14 to 17 October 1993. A European seminar organized by the women's committee of COPA. The aim is to scrutinize Directive 86/613/EEC article by article and come up with concrete proposals for improvement. This Directive concerns the application of the principle of equal treatment for self-employed men and women, including those active in agriculture, and also maternity protection.

Information: John Darcy, Equal Opportunities Unit, DG V/A/3, Commission of the European Communities, rue de la Loi 200, B-1049 Brussels.

Employment in Europe. Policies, practices, prospects, first conference and exhibition organized by the Directorate-General for Employment, Industrial Relations and Social Affairs of the Commission of the European Communities, to be held in Brussels from 19 to 21 October 1993.

Information: DG V/A/1, Commission of the European Communities, rue de la Loi 200, B-1049 Brussels.

Equal Pay, a seminar organized in the context of the Belgian Presidency in Brussels on 25 and 26 October 1993. An attempt will be made to determine the reasons for differences in wages and salaries between men and women. The debates will focus on problems linked with job classifications and systems for evaluating duties performed. Representatives from the two sides of industry are to attend.

Information: Belgian Ministry of Employment and Labour, rue Belliard 51-53, B-1040 Brussels, Tel. (32-2) 233 41 11

Quality, Equality and the EC, a conference organized in London on 28 Octo-

ber 1993 by the Women's Returners' Network (WRN). This conference will underline the need to promote a quality workforce which goes hand in hand with high-quality training and the principle of equal opportunities for women and men. The conference will tackle issues such as education, training and the resources needed to facilitate the reintegration of women into the job market.

Information: WRN, 8 John Adam Street, London WC2, UK, Tel. (44-71) 839 81 88.

New resources towards the new Millennium, 9th annual conference organized by the European Women's Management Development Network (EWMD) in association with the Català de la Dona Institute, in Barcelona from 10 to 13 November.

Information: EADA, Aragon, 204, E-08011 Barcelona, Tel. (34-3) 323 12 08 or the Equal Opportunities Unit, DG V, Commission of the European Communities, rue de la Loi 200, B-1049 Brussels.

Professional training for young women in Europe, in Hanover on 25 and 26 November 1993. Congress organized by "Sans Frontières", DGB-youth. This congress will attempt to establish a favourable environment in which to introduce positive action measures, and to outline current measures and strategies which contribute to improving the outlook for young women embarking on their careers.

Information: DGB-Landesbezirk Niedersachsen, Abteilung Jugend, Dreyerstrasse 6, D-30169 Hannover.

PUBLICATIONS

Employment, Equality and Childcare, annual report of the European Childcare Network and other measures to reconcile working life and family responsibilities.

This document is available in all Community languages except Greek, Dutch and Italian (which will be available shortly) from the Equal Opportunities Unit, DG V/A/3, Commission of the European Communities, rue de la Loi 200, B-1049 Brussels.

Equal Opportunities for Women in the Community, from the documentation series, "Europe in Movement". Currently available in English (the other

Community languages will follow) from the Publications Unit of DG X or from the Equal Opportunities Unit, DG V/A/3, Commission of the European Communities, rue de la Loi 200, B-1049 Brussels.

Annual report of the Equal Opportunities Commission in Great Britain.

This document outlines results and developments in the field of equal opportunities in the United Kingdom (employment, positive action, pensions, childcare, etc.). It is available from the Communications Unit, Equal Opportunities Commission, Overseas House, Quay Street, Manchester M3 3HN, UK.

Women on the Air, second issue of the bulletin of the steering committee for equal opportunities in the field of radio and television. This publication appears twice a year (spring and autumn) and contains details of all action undertaken in favour of women in the field of radio and television by both the steering Committee and the Commission, both at European level and in relation to national broadcasting bodies. The bulletin is available in all nine Community languages from: Kate Holman, Geneesheerstraat 9, B-1560 Hoeilaart, Tel. (32-2) 657 37 26, or the Equal Opportunities Unit, DG V/A/3, Commission of the European Communities, rue de la Loi 200, B-1049 Brussels.

How to combat sexual harassment at work. A guide to implementing the European Commission Code of Practice. This document is available in English (other languages to follow) from the Equal Opportunities Unit, DG V/A/3, Commission of the European Communities, rue de la Loi 200, B-1049 Brussels.



Editor in Chief and coordination:

Anne Blanche HARTOS

WOMEN'S INFORMATION UNIT

Commission of the European

Communities

Directorate-General for Audiovisual

Information, Communication and Culture

Rue de la Loi 200, B-1049 Brussels

Tel. (32.2)299.94.11