

# Women of Europe

## Editorial

9 May is Europe Day, and it is on that day that the European project was born, a project which has affected so many individuals and peoples. Founded on peace and solidarity, these principles still remain the cornerstones of our European Union.

But times have changed, fast and significantly, modifying planetary equilibrium's, reorienting national perspectives, overwhelming the European citizen who sometimes worries, often wonders, but who hopes as well.

Of course, the Union's enlargement perspectives are an essential issue in the framework of the IGC. Europe's highest ambition, however, is to be "the business of its citizens", not only for those already in the Union, but also for all citizens whose countries have democratically chosen to enter into that Union, respecting the principles which govern European construction.

With this fundamental task before us, it is our responsibility, we who are in charge of Information in the Community, to do all that we can to ensure that no information gap is going to create a democratic gap within the European Union. We shall undertake this task with even greater fervour with respect to the female public, as it is particularly women who have felt most alienated in the European project, and they know that in order to act, one must know how to participate.

Last year, the May issue of the Newsletter traced the history of the rights acquired by European citizens, under the impulse of the Community institutions. In 1996, in the context of the IGC, the Newsletter has opened its columns to women and men - writers, journalists or political figures - concerned about the Union's future. One such person is Simone Veil who everyone knows, through her personal and public engagement, has advanced the cause of women's emancipation in Europe, and was the first - and, alas, until now the only - woman president of the European Parliament.

These figures have been invited to present to you their viewpoints on European perspectives and, in particular, on the major themes of the IGC: democracy and enlargement. Through their analyses, their concerns, their convictions, you will discover the hope, the emotion and the strength that each one invests, beyond their critique, in this Union of Peoples.

Colette Flesch,  
Director-General DG X

"Information, Communication, Culture and  
Audiovisual Media"

## Women in tomorrow's Europe

by Simone Veil

Simone Veil has served as French Minister of the Interior, Minister of Social Affairs, Health and Urban Affairs, as well as President of the European Parliament.

Over the course of the 1990s, Europe has experienced greater changes than over the four preceding decades. Added to the upheaval caused by the collapse of the former Soviet block, is the mutation occurring in society brought on by the economic crisis and, at the same time, by scientific and technological progress.

Indeed, the European Union faces many challenges: the first is to answer to the aspirations of the new democracies emerging from communism, by progressively opening its doors to them. To do this, it must adapt its institutions, making them more efficient and more democratic. The tragedy of the former Yugoslavia reminded us of the necessity for Europe to be capable of fully assuming its responsibilities at the international level, especially with regard to foreign and security policy.

Due to the global dimension of exchanges and the interdependence of economies, Europe cannot close its borders. It is by becoming stronger that it will better be able to face international competition and create jobs. In this perspective, the single currency is a vital tool for guaranteeing the stability of exchange rates and for putting an end to speculation and competitive devaluation.

To become stronger also means to develop the single market by implementing truly common policies in the sectors of the future, notably high technology, and by increasing research. A minimum amount of co-ordination among European companies in industries where total deregulation brings better organised competition to the European market, the reinforcement of solidarity through Structural Funds, favouring the harmonisation of the situations among Member States - this too will contribute to a better social and economic balance.

Growth obtained in this way will not be

sufficient to substantially lower the number of unemployed and people living below the poverty level. Such exclusion of a part of the population which endangers social cohesion is not tolerable.

Together, Europeans must explore new ways to find a social organisation better adapted to current priorities, knowing that

## 9 May

For the occasion of 9 May, Europe Day, the Women of Europe Newsletter has asked political figures and journalists to express their personal views on Europe's perspectives.

The articles and quotes reflect only the views of their authors and engage solely their personal responsibilities.

Maren Sell

French nominee for the 1995 Women of Europe Award, is the author of quotations which mirror such views.

social spending is already a heavy burden for our economy, and cannot be increased any more. In taking advantage of its size and its diversity, Europe could be an immense social laboratory for research and experimentation, if it can show audacity and imagination.

Women are closer to everyday reality and are often confronted with the difficulties related to time management and the absence of local services, but their experience and viewpoints are only rarely taken into account.

If there were more of them participating in the decision-making process, especially in politics, they would surely be in a better position to change society.

More readily accepted in posts related to the social sector, they rarely have access to the economic and budgetary responsibilities where the real power is.

We can no longer wait for men to accept to make room for women. Positive, binding measures are needed to change the situation.

Whatever disgust one may feel for quotas, we are going to have to resign ourselves to imposing them until we reach a balance in decision-making.



Simone Veil



Such recognition of women's role and the status that would be attributed to them, both in the Member States and within the European institutions, would serve as a symbol for women the world over who, today, are fighting for their rights.

A European identity will not be forged on purely economic ambitions, but on the conscience which unites us around common values.

The hope for peace and reconciliation which drove the Founding Fathers of Europe has become a reality. It is the absence of hope for the future which torments today's youth. A Europe capable of offering a new model of society, taking better account of the needs and aspirations of all of its citizens, capable of defending a new world order which is more attentive to the respect for human rights, and a more balanced distribution of wealth - this would surely give them the hope that would make them proud of being Europeans. ●

*For men and women, culture is the reflection of their identity and singularity, but also a reflection of what they share with others of their understanding of the world, of their past. It is a fundamental anchor, and at the same time a critical distancing. It is a look into one's self and others in a permanent tension between the particular and the universal, between a guarded content and roving in other spaces, bodies and times.*

we have rarely ever felt so excluded. The twenty-first century could be much more explosive than we care to admit.

Europe is having trouble finding out where it belongs. It represents a level of authority even more distant, something all the more difficult to understand when it is not a menace to the State and, nevertheless, its task is one of renovating the latter. But, more recently, the situation has grown ever more complex. The State, business, Europe - all that has been thrown into the same basket. Confidence crisis.

Will it suffice to brandish new Treaty articles on human and social rights, to fight to insert a few chapters on social and employment issues, to improve procedures...? Europe has all too often placed its trust

in these treaties. It would be suicide to believe that a "good" intergovernmental conference will win the support of the people. If we believe the European Commission's figures, 15% of all Europeans have even heard of the famous IGC!

Let's be realistic. The European identity can only be developed on solid local, regional and national foundations. Of course, we must work to improve the functioning of democratic institutions, to restore confidence between the elector and the elected. But the development of an active citizenship depends on the improvement of the level of competence and comprehension of citizens. There can be no citizenship without a concerted effort in training. By being "formed" - and not only informed - the citizen can be active. This is all the more so for European issues.

But in other words, developing citizenship is also a question of power: that which the major actors accept - grudgingly - to transfer to the population, and the latter discovering that, henceforth, it has a say in its own destiny.

Thorough renovation of political and social practices is needed at the national level. For its part, the European Union could also become the mould of a new utopia, "tomorrow's progress". But this will only come about through a radical change in the course taken until now.

Perhaps it is necessary to break away, to clarify objec-

tives and to put economic and political instruments back in the service of society. It is from this perspective that debate over human rights, social rights, equality between women and men is necessary. But a re-evaluation of the status of actors (States, business, unions, associations and citizen action groups) is also needed. While they speak of "ethics" and new social contracts, the dominant actors at the European level, i.e. business and government, should accord greater importance to the projects and demands of civil society. Having become a centre of power, the Union must urgently support the role played by counter-powers. Recent initiatives such as the European Social Forum are important because they work towards giving a voice back to civil society, without falling into the trap of opposing "undoubtedly corrupt" political delegates and "absolutely angelic" citizens. For that reason, the "associative"

world must re-think its unity, its role of mediator and witness.

European society has top-pled into complexity. Henceforth, it must rediscover the meaning of the word "solidarity" at every level.

Provided we take the risk of clearly addressing the issue, sovereignty can be rebuilt at the European level. That identity cannot prosper, however, if the Union reigns as a super-State. With the diffusion of power at the national level, Europe might appear like a new regulatory structure, a dominant force. But above all, it is the States which will have to resolve the problem of their project, their destined community and the international responsibility of the Union, and defend fundamental human and social rights for men and women in and outside of the Union. ●

*What constitutes our cultural identity today grows from such traditions, masculine and feminine.*

## Citizenship: Will a conference suffice?

by Michel de Meulenaere

Michel de Meulenaere is a European correspondent for the Belgian daily "Le Soir".

Democracy, citizenship, human rights, free press, social rights... With such "pillars" of support, European countries will face, fearlessly, the challenges of the twenty-first century. Then how can it be that the populations are in doubt, that they feel like neglected minorities? They feel that neither the economy, nor politics work for them... that business and government pursue their own vision, ignoring those they leave along the wayside. Has no one ever considered what a grandiose paradox it is to incessantly refer to new "European citizenship" before people who doubt their citizenship altogether!

But the margins reveal the text. What goes on in the periphery is important to what goes on at the centre of society. Never has there been so much talk of communication, economic growth, dialogue, technology, of "giving people a voice". There,

*Europe is moving towards uniformity: single currency, same infrastructures, MS Dos and Yves Rocher, the advertisements are the same everywhere. Cultural Europe can only be deployed through diversity, dialogue, exchange of traditions, the understanding of conjunctions, absolute respect for differences, thus: multiformity.*



## Development: What is Europe's role?

by Jean-Paul Marthoz

Jean-Paul Marthoz is director of the programme "Media for democracy in Africa" of the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ).

"How does one escape the euphoric idealisation and the vain self-complacency", Edgar Morin asked in *Think Europe* in 1987. The European vulgate, indeed, sometimes feeds dangerous illusions. Seen from the institutions in Brussels, the European Union seems to rhyme with openness and co-operation. Seen from Northern Africa, Mexico or Russia, it increasingly incites such names as "fortress Europe" or "bastion Europe".

Caught up in the whirlwind of economic and cultural globalisation, troubled by the rise of identity-related nationalism at its doors and within its walls, before the world, Europe is hesitating between drawing into itself and relentlessly moving onward.

What could it possibly fear? To believe the "stenographers" of its destiny, European identity, in essence, is democratic and united. Europe's intervention on the international scene, however, offers a less magnanimous picture. From China to Nigeria and from Bosnia to Rwanda, few are those who are delighted with the European Union's international action. In the end, what distinguishes European foreign policy from that of other powers?

Historically, however, in relation to the

countries of the South, Europe has a role to uphold. At a time when the United States, driven by their most fist-clenching of conservatives, is de-prioritising its cultural centres and reducing its international co-operation, and as the former Soviet

Union wavers between the chaos of virtual capitalism and the nostalgia of unreel socialism, the European Union has no other alternative but to open itself up to the world and international co-operation. It is in its economic interest, but is also an essential part of its identity. At the end of this millennium scarred by the rise of ethno-nationalism, who can still recall the word development? The absence of democracy, the arbitrary, the irresponsibility of governors appear today to be among the major causes of the "development of underdevelopment" in the majority of African countries, in Asia and in Latin America. It would be illusory to believe in the magic power of elections.

*Last year, when we published a book of European short stories, we wanted to bring together twelve authors from twelve different countries. They gave us in writing their imaginary flowers, and we planted a garden.*

Elections - although necessary - are cruelly insufficient and have only produced, in most cases, "low-intensity", fragile and overturnable democracies. Combined with structural adjustment programmes, the privatisation of State-owned companies and the suppression of subsidies, they are confused with their most disastrous social effects.

Support for democracy is essential: there can be no development as long as the Third World is dominated by "kleptocracies" and dictatorships. Nor, however, can there be democracy if, concurrently with the democratisation process, there is no support for development.

Nonetheless, contrary to fundamentalists of economic liberalism, development and democracy are not confused with the open-

*We defend this cultural Europe so that European construction does not become an empty shell void of profound meaning, but an encounter with the spirit of beings and peoples.*

ing up of markets and privatisation. This democracy-development couple has as a precondition a more balanced distribution of power and wealth, not only within each nation, but also between North and South. Therefore,

Europe mustn't only export the rituals of parliamentary democracy or the principles of healthy management. It must also promote within such societies, a social model which fosters solidarity, and fights against inequality and exploitation. It is on these conditions that Europe can convince its own citizens to accept a real development aid policy. The "democratic conditionality" must be clearly announced by Europe in its relations with the world. It is less a question, however, of sanctioning than rewarding. Priority must be placed - with no complexes - in supporting in the South these same actors who in the North have forged and defended democracy: citizens groups, women's movements, independent journalists, independent unionists, all those who refuse to allow the comparative advantage of their country to be repression and exploitation.

To abandon the objective of the development and democratic rebirth of poor countries, is to abandon the objective of solidarity and democracy within the European Union.

Europe is what it pretends to be when it chooses to follow the steps of the universal from the mould of its history. ●

*The desire to succeed, to appear, to correspond with the commercial efficiency standards, to speak or write to sell or sell one's self, have made the attention to true words, the quest for meaning obsolete, marginal. Added to this is the modern conviction of the primary importance of the physical. But without the demand for true words and without attention to the spirit, there are no books, no paintings, no music.*





## Meeting the challenges of enlargement

by Rory Watson

Rory Watson is deputy editor of "European Voice", a weekly newspaper on the EU published by the "Economist Group".

**B**arring a major upheaval, membership of the European Union will continue to grow. Enlargement has become an article of faith among the 15 countries already in the Union and the dozen or so knocking on the door.

But no one can predict with any certainty the date of that expansion, the countries involved or the terms on which they will join. Strong advocates of the Union's continued geographical growth point to the year 2000 as a realistic target for the next in a series of enlargements which began in 1973 and were repeated in 1981, 1986 and 1995.

Whatever the entry date, it is clear that the next wave of membership negotiations will begin towards the end of 1997 at the earliest and by mid-1998 at the latest. The exact timing depends on the completion of the current Intergovernmental Conference (IGC) updating the Maastricht Treaty.

EU governments are committed to starting membership negotiations with Cyprus and Malta within six months of the end of the IGC. These countries will not be alone. Talks are also likely to include Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic and possibly Estonia, the countries most likely to meet the economic and democratic requirements for membership.

What no one can sketch out is the possible impact six new members - and if the trend continues a further seven or eight countries by the year 2010 - will have on existing EU practices. It takes a great deal of imagination to consider how a Union with

such numbers will operate, but it is clear it will be a markedly different animal from the one we know today.

An expanded membership will require greater policy flexibility among the Member States. It is unrealistic to expect a score of countries in widely differing stages of economic development to move in the same direction at the same speed. Introducing a single currency has shown that. Concessions have already been

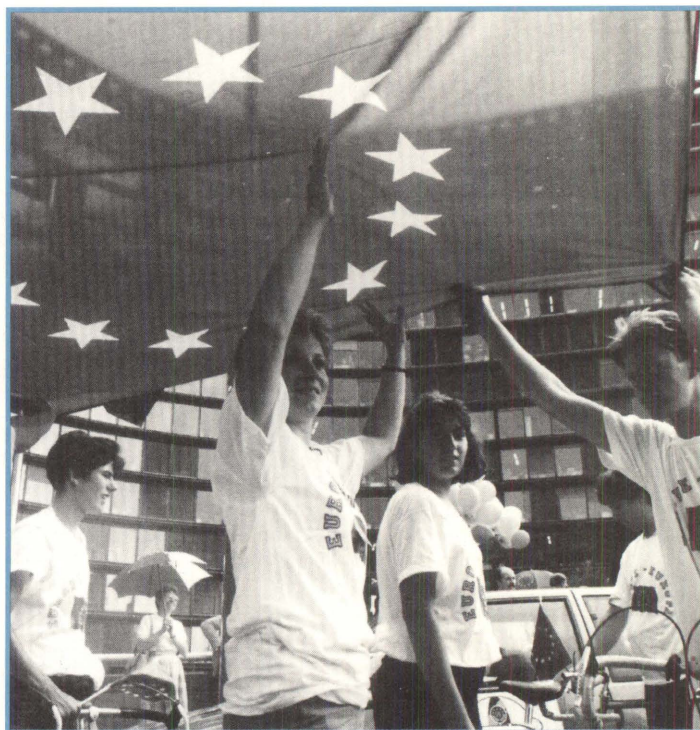
*The authors of the book exist in the same way, each with his natural language, translated eleven times to render it comprehensible to the next. Their texts co-exist in their beauty and in their diversity. But beyond such diversity the reader feels that everything expressed, all of these flowers of different colours and fragrances, form a collection of meaning which could even do without the support of the language, a meaning which is transmitted within a language by its purely spiritual content.*

made with existing EU members - transition periods, opt outs and derogations - and even they are examining ways to enable some of their number to integrate their policies closer and faster than others. That trend will continue.

But membership will still require all countries to accept a core of Union policies. This will ensure that EU legislation which, for example, provides equal treatment for women and men and outlaws discrimination on grounds of nationality, will have to be respected by all Member States. Such rights will continue to be enforced by the European Court of Justice.

The internal market is seen as supplying the basic foundations of economic strength, but, as now, the main responsibility for job creation will lie with national governments.

The past few years have shown the impossibility of getting Member States to agree to concrete and concerted economic programmes on a European level with the necessary financial backing to supplement their verbal commitments. There is no evidence that this will change. The new members will have access to the Union's regional and social funds



where emphasis is given to employment generating schemes. The size of the funds available will only be known towards the end of 1998 when the Union's current five-year budgetary package is renegotiated. But funding will be limited.

No one is promising that EU membership will be easy for the current group of applicants. But the more they prepare themselves for the new challenges and the more the existing Union adapts to cater for the changed circumstances, the smoother that transition will be. ●

*We can also make sure that femininity is not limited to a perverse usage for advertising spots, nor the demand for equality of the sexes, for equality means uniformity and what is perhaps acceptable for money would be a sad destiny for passion and love between women and men.*