

Women of Europe

council

Editorial

Rome Hosts European Week on "Women, Politics and Society"

The Charter of Rome, signed on 18 May at the closing session of the Conference "Women for the Renewal of Politics and Society" by 15 European Union women ministers, brings back to mind the Athens Declaration, signed in 1992 by women celebrities, ministers, prime ministers and heads of state, some of whom are still in power today.

The Athens Declaration already highlighted the democratic deficit in European Union countries because of women's under-representation in decision-making. It also drew attention to the fact that the equal rights in law has not brought about de facto equality. It called on the Commission, Member States, elected representatives, decision-makers, those working in the social field and the press to recognise the need for a balance between women and men, a so-called "parity", and to use the means available to them to promote its achievement.

Today parity is falling victim to "semantic reticence" by certain Member States which, using subsidiarity as an excuse or the fear of creating a more favourable situation than other Member States, are attempting to keep equality between women and men under their thumb or at least under tight control.

Figures given in the Charter of Rome are useful reminders: on average, only 15% of members of national parliaments and 16% of government members in European Union countries are women. Surprising disparities also exist. The number of women in national and Community political bodies is over 40% in Sweden, 33% in Finland and Denmark but only 6% in France just "beating" Greece which has 5.7%.

Some people would consider these figures as representing a progress for democracy, others as a set-back. Whatever the view, there is an urgent need to reaffirm the importance of parity as an absolute condition of democracy at a time when, in the framework of the Intergovernmental Conference, changes to the Treaty are being negotiated. Currently the treaty only mentions equal pay.

We must rejoice that women politicians are not only reiterating their will to demand parity, highlighting the role that women can play and their rejuvenating approach to politics but also that it is not enough to express pious hopes, hand on heart, we must also act.

This media event should not hide but reinforce the perseverance of those women who, at grassroots level and within associations, are working daily to promote such parity.

Véronique Houdart-Blazy

Head of Section - Information for Women

Equal opportunities in EU and national policy and decision-making were the focus of a week of meetings and debates hosted in May by the Italian Presidency of the Council of Ministers in Rome. Over 300 women from the world of politics and from national and EU public administrations attended. The week, which was the high point of the Presidency's activities on gender issues, ended with a European Women's Summit. There, women Ministers from 13 Member States signed the "Charter of Rome," a declaration of political will to promote the presence of women in decision-making. The other events organised by the Presidency during the week were a meeting of the European Commission's Advisory Committee on Equal Opportunities, a meeting of the Management Committee for the 4th equal opportunities action programme and a European Conference entitled *Women for the Renewal of Politics and Society*.

The European Women's Summit was the culmination of a six months effort by the Italian Presidency to promote equal opportunities. During this period, it secured the adoption of the parental leave directive and finalised the Council Recommendation on the balanced participation of women and men in decision-making. In January, it organised a conference on the reconciliation of family and professional life in Calabria, in February, it held a convention on women and entrepreneurship in Rome and, in April, a "Forum on women and employment" in Pisa.

Ministers sign the Charter of Rome

Romano Prodi, Italy's new Prime Minister, addressed the European Women's Summit as his first official public engagement. Three Italian women ministers Livia Turco, Rosy Bindi and Anna Finocchiaro, sworn into office that day, also attended the Summit and signed the Charter.

The 15 women Ministers who signed the Charter represented all the EU Member States apart from the UK which refused to sign it for political reasons and Spain which was in the process of forming its new government.

The women Ministers deplored the low number of women in decision-making posts. They said that only with a joint contribution and balanced participation of women and men at all decision-making levels can there be a guarantee that the needs of women as well as those of men are met. This, they argued, will bring benefits to the quality of life of the whole population and reinforce the democratic process.

With their signature, the Ministers committed themselves to develop within their countries incentives, laws and regulatory measures (see full text on page 4) to achieve

a balanced participation of women and men in decision-making.

Action plan for equal participation in decision-making

Women's full and equal participation in decision-making is a question of social justice, a requirement of democracy and essential to achieve a full use of human resources, said participants at the Rome conference which preceded the Summit on "Women for the renewal of politics and society". This is "the only way to ensure decision-makers understand and take account of the needs of the whole population, women and men."

Women's presence in decision-making in public administrations, public health, justice, the financial sector, education, social partner organisations and in politics was explored in parallel workshops at this conference which was jointly organised by the Italian National Commission for Equal Opportunities Between Women and Men, the European Commission's Equal Opportunities Unit (DG V) and the Network on Women in Decision-making. The outcome of these discussions was presented in the form of a four-year European Action Plan (1996-2000) for an equal participation of women and men in decision-making.



Signatories of the Charter of Rome

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Information campaigns, the provision of gender specific data, the setting of targets, positive action and training are just some of the proposed measures under the Action Plan which also recommends the introduction of proper monitoring procedures.

Equality Advisory Committee urges IGC action

The European Commission's Advisory Committee on Equal Opportunities focussed on the 1996 Intergovernmental Conference (IGC). Four Italian ministers

commission

End to Traffic in Women High on EU Agenda

were present at the Advisory Committee (education, the civil service, employment and social affairs, respectively) which was invited to meet in Rome by Livia Turco, President of the Italian National Committee for Equal Opportunities.

Concerned that equal opportunities risked being ignored during the IGC talks, the Committee set up in February a working group to look in detail at the proposed reforms. At its Rome meeting, the Committee decided to send to the Commission a short opinion recommending that references in the Treaty concerning equality should be strengthened. The Treaty should clearly incorporate the right to equal treatment. Positive action should follow from this right, the Committee said. The promotion of equality between women and men should include the concept of mainstreaming with Article 119 of the Rome Treaty extended to cover all areas of working life and not just remuneration as is the case now.

A progress report on the implementation of the 4th equal opportunities action programme was given by a representative of the European Commission. Ireland, which took over the Council of Ministers Presidency from 1 July, said it plans to officially launch the programme in Dublin in October. The Irish Presidency promised to try and secure agreement on a number of legislative proposals concerning equality and to introduce changes, following the Kalanke ruling, to the EU's equal treatment directive so as to clarify the law on positive action. ●

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The trafficking of women to EU Member States for sexual purposes is continuing to increase. It is supported by organised crime which finds the smuggling of human beings less risky than drugs. "This trade has to be stopped," said Anita Gradin, the European Commissioner in charge of Justice and Home Affairs. Since she took up her post in January 1995, she has regularly put the fight against trafficking in women on the EU agenda. It was once again tackled at a major conference in Vienna on 10 and 11 June which was hosted by the Austrian government and organised jointly by the European Commission and the *International Organization of Migration (IOM)*.

Opening the Conference, Commissioner Gradin urged more international cooperation to identify and punish the traffickers and give support to the victims. Judicial cooperation including tougher penalties, and improved law enforcement and police cooperation, were insufficient to develop an effective strategy against trafficking in women, she said. Migration policy because trafficking is a form of illegal migration and social policy to provide victim support and witness protection were also essential elements. All these aspects were tackled at the Conference.

Participants said trafficking in women was a serious form of organised crime and a fundamental attack on the dignity of women and human rights. They also urged greater international cooperation. They called for a strengthening of Member States' legislation in this field and EU measures to discourage trafficking. Improving the economic and social conditions in source countries was one of the long term strategies suggested to deter trafficking. Other recommendations made included information campaigns targeted at potential victims, the general public and officials, including embassy staff. Victims should be granted temporary residence and police officers and counsellors trained to deal with such cases, they said. The proceeds from trafficking in women should be confiscated. ●

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parliament

Committee on Women's Rights

The Commission's Communication to the Council of the European Union on mainstreaming topped the agenda at the May Women's Rights Committee meeting. Rapporteur for the Committee Angela Kakkola said the Communication had insufficiently addressed how mainstreaming will be achieved in a practical way. It left too much up to the political will of the Member States and the Commission, she said. Lissy Gröner welcomed the initiative of Franz Fischler, the European Commissioner in charge of agricultural policy, to include mainstreaming in all areas of agricultural policy. She called for a coordinating committee to be set up to oversee the implementation of this principle in all policy areas.

Examining the Commission's proposal to amend the 1986 directive on equal treatment for men and women in occupational social security schemes, rapporteur Helena Torres Marques said its scope should be extended to cover part-time workers. She also urged greater flexibility in the retirement age for both women and men.

Sue Waddington was critical of the Commission's proposal to update the directive on safeguarding employees' rights in the event of transfers of undertakings. She wants the directive to cover pension rights, which are currently excluded, and to tackle the situa-

tion of women in small companies (less than 50 employees). She recommends including an anti-discrimination clause in the new directive.

Reporting on the 1997 budget, Lissy Gröner said the Committee's four priorities (4th action programme, the follow-up to Beijing, information and mainstreaming) had been included in the preliminary list by the Budgets Committee. She warned, however, that Committee members would have to continue the fight to ensure the 4th action programme received its 11 million ECU budget for its first year of operation as was originally proposed by the Commission.

The role women play in rural areas should be covered in the proposal to create a European Rural Charter, according to Birgitta Ahlqvist, who also urged specific measures to encourage women to remain in these areas. ●

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Parental leave becomes law

EU Social Affairs ministers adopted the parental leave directive based on the recent framework agreement between European employer and trade union bodies (see *Women of Europe Newsletter No 58*) at their June meeting. The agreement will be annexed to the directive and will entitle women and men employees to a minimum of three months' unpaid leave until their child's eighth birthday, and to time off from work for urgent family reasons.

Ministers also reviewed the implementation, both at national and EU level, of the Platform for Action adopted at the World Conference in Beijing. The adoption of the recommendation promoting a balanced participation of women and men in decision-making, an essential part of the EU's follow-up to Beijing, and the proposal to nominate 1997 as European Year Against Racism were blocked by the UK.

Women, Peace and the Balkans

Give Peace a Chance - Women Speak Out in the Balkans, was the focus of a two-day conference held in Brussels under the auspices of the European Commission and the Belgian Foreign Ministry. Organised by Belgian senator Anne-Marie Lizin, and Simone Susskind who initiated the project "Give Peace a Chance," the meeting attracted participants from all the Balkan states. They told their story and shared their vision. They heard from European Commissioner Emma Bonino, Belgian Foreign Affairs Minister Erik Derycke and Suha Arafat, wife of the Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat. During the first day the Conference was chaired by Belgium's Queen Fabiola. Participants agreed to work towards a "Women's Link for Peace" in the Balkans and in other European countries. They reaffirmed the role and contribution of women in the current peace process in ex-Yugoslavia. In the final Conference declaration, they committed themselves to promoting peace, security, tolerance, solidarity and justice. They pledged to combat discrimination, intolerance, extrem-

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ism, violence and all other acts endangering women and children. ●

For further information:
"Give Peace a Chance"

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Women, law, politics and culture in the EU

Integrating Gender: women, law and politics in the European Union is the title of an extensive study tracking the development of equal opportunities policies and laws within the European Union from the signing of the Rome Treaty to the present day. Author Catherine Hoskins, who teaches European Studies at Coventry University in the UK, took ten years to complete the original research which shows for the first time the role played by women's organisations in the shaping of EU equality policy. ●

Available in English from the publishers:
Verso

6 Meard Street, GB-London W1V 3HR.
Tel. (44.171)437 35 46.
Fax: (44.171)734 00 59.

Pari opportunità: Il diritto e la cultura (Men and Women Equal Opportunities: A Goal Achieved). Written by Italian lawyer Ada Grecchi, this book looks at the development of equal opportunities in Italy and its close links with EU developments in the field. Speaking at the book's launch at the European Parliament in Brussels, Véronique Houdart-Blazy praised the author for clearly showing that equal opportunities is not a narrow and limited concept promoted by one part of society but a concept which has wider cultural significance based on valuing difference and diversity. ●

Available in English or Italian from publishers:
FrancoAngeli

Viale Monza 106, I-20127 Milano.
Tel. (39.2)282 76 51 - Fax (39.2)289 15 15.

Women in management

A recent Europe-wide survey carried out by Grant Thornton, a British firm of Chartered Accounts, among small businesses in all EU Member States and in Switzerland and Malta, showed that the number of women working at management level were few and that half of the companies surveyed had no women at all in their management teams. Differences between countries were considerable. On one end of the scale was the UK with 37 percent of companies reporting that they had no women in management. On the other end, was the Netherlands which showed that 70 percent had no women in management and Sweden with 64 percent. In firms with a single man-

ager, only 10% were women. The results indicate that the larger the management team, the more likely it is that there will be female managers. European Commissioner Christos Papoutsis, responsible for SMEs, wrote the foreword to the report. ●

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Sources of financing for women entrepreneurs

Recherche exploratoire pour la création d'outils financiers en direction de l'entrepreneuriat féminin en Europe

An investigative report which identifies sources of funding for women creating very small enterprises in 10 EU Member States was carried out by the Paris-based office Studio Entreprendre for the European Commission's DG V. The report identifies new ways of funding such enterprises which could be provided by banks and financial institutions EU-wide. ●

Available in French from:
Fernando Frechauth

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Charter of Rome

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Women for the Renewal of Politics and Society

We, the undersigned, women ministers of different member states of the European Union, gathered in Rome on 18 May 1996 at the invitation of the President of the European Community Council and on the occasion of the European Summit "Women for the Renewal of Politics and Society" have together adopted the following Charter:

1. We note a democratic deficit.

Notwithstanding the evolution of the respective roles of women and men in European society, the general statutory recognition of the equality of rights for women and men, and the equal opportunities policies pursued in the Member States of the European Union, we note that the situation of women is still characterized by inequality in most sectors of society. This inequality can be seen in decision-making bodies and authorities, in politics, economics, social and cultural life, and at the local, regional, national and European level, where women are usually in a minority position.

We welcome the research done by the European Expert Network on Women in Decision-Making and acknowledge that it greatly contributes to increased visibility in this field and that it thereby constitutes a basis for action.

Substantial progress has been made since the Declaration of Athens, adopted in 1992 on the occasion of the first European summit of women in power. This progress, however, is not yet sufficient. In the field of politics, the average female participation in the Member States amounts to 15% for the national parliaments and 16% for the governments; 28% of the present Members of the European Parliament and 25% of the European Commissioners are women.

In other spheres of civil society where decisions are taken that have an indisputable impact on the lives of citizens, both male and female, female representation at decision-making level can be even lower.

We therefore cannot but face the fact that political life and decision-making in general are still dominated by men. This impairs the quality of decision-making and of democracy.

Democracy will acquire a true and dynamic sense when women and men together define the values they wish to uphold in their political, economic, social and cultural life, and together take the relevant decisions.

2. We call for a renewal of politics and society.

The equal participation of women and men in decision-making is an objective that has priority at European level.

This is necessary to reinvigorate democracy and its mechanisms; a balanced sharing

of power and responsibilities between women and men will improve the quality of life of the whole population; the representation of all parts of society is indispensable if the problems of European society are to be addressed. The effective implementation of policies to achieve equal participation and partnership between women and men is a priority.

Women, if present in sufficient numbers, contribute to changing politics and decision-making, in terms of the priorities and content, as well as the practices of decision-making.

A renewal of politics and society will be realized with the joint contribution and balanced participation of women and men. This contribution and participation bridge the gap between citizens and politicians, revitalize democracy, and increase citizen confidence in the institutions of democracy.

The equal participation of women at all decision-making levels in economic, social and cultural structures is likewise necessary to guarantee that the needs of women and men are taken into account in all policies, programmes and actions.

3. We declare our commitment to the need to recognize equality of women and men as a priority of the European Union.

The principal responsibility of the Intergovernmental Conference (IGC), which will revise the European treaties, as laid down in the Maastricht Treaty, is to reinforce European democracy by bringing the concepts and structures of Europe closer to its citizens. Representatives of national governments, the European Parliament and the European Commission have declared this to be a priority.

More than half of European citizens are female. A democratic European society must therefore be built on the effective and real equality of its citizens of both sexes.

We affirm our commitment to the need of enshrining equality between women and men in the new European Union Treaty. We consider it indispensable to integrate a gender perspective into all policies of the European Union (mainstreaming). This lies at the heart of European citizenship and its conditions of practice.

We call on the institutions and organs of the European Union to adopt, urgently, a strategy for achieving an equal participation of women and men and to set concrete targets to that end.

4. We recognize the necessity of concrete action at all levels to promote the equal participation of women and men in decision-making in all spheres of society.

Where progress has been made, notably in

the area of public life (in elected assemblies, in councils and consultative committees, etc.), this has been the result of putting into force incentives and/or legislative or regulatory measures on the part of governments and political parties.

An integrated and specific strategy is necessary if equal participation is to be achieved in all spheres of society. In this light we welcome the Rome Conference "Women for the Renewal of Politics and Society".

We commit ourselves to take action for the urgent empowerment of women and to develop the necessary incentives and/or legislative or regulatory measures.

We call upon all actors concerned, male and female, to support this commitment by translating it into concrete actions to empower women and to achieve an equal participation of women and men in the positions of power, influence and decision in all spheres of society.

The initial signatories of the Charter of Rome on 18 May 1996 were:

Helga Konrad, Minister of Women's Affairs (A)
Miet Smet, Labour and Employment and Equal Opportunities Policy (B)
Jytte Andersen, Labour (DK)
Claudia Nolte, Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (D)
Vasso Papandreou, Development (GR)
Corinne Lepage, Environment (F)
Nora Owen, Justice (IRL)
Rosy Bindi, Health (I)
Anna Finocchiaro, Equal Opportunities (I)
Livia Turco, Welfare and Family (I)
Marie J. Jacobs, Promotion of Women, Family Affairs, of Disabled and Injured People (LUX)
E. Borst-Ellers, Health (NL)
Elisa da Costa Guimares Ferreira, Environment (P)
Terttu Huttu-Juntunen, Equality, Social Affairs and Health (SF)
Margareta Winberg, Labour Market (S)