

# Women of Europe

## employment

### New drive to reduce joblessness and tackle gender gaps

#### Editorial

The end of the year is often a time of review and of making "good resolutions". Let's not break this habit!

Employment was one of our main preoccupations in 1997 and because the matter is of such importance to women, this issue of the Newsletter, the last of 1997 and the first of 1998, has devoted a lot of space to the first EU Summit entirely dedicated to employment.

In 1998, we will continue to inform you about current EU affairs from a gender point of view and we hope to respond even better to your expectations and your concerns.

In the meantime, let me wish you all the very best for 1998. ●

Ana Paula Laissy.

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Head of Section - Information for Women

**T**he first ever European Summit devoted to jobs, held in Luxembourg in November, resulted in European Union Member States agreeing to a set of common guidelines to get young people and the long-term unemployed into work and to develop a coordinated strategy for national employment policies. One of the four main lines of action singled out for 1998 is to strengthen equal opportunities by tackling gaps in unemployment rates between women and men.

Recognising that women's unemployment rate has remained steadily higher than men's, (12.5% against 9.2%, Eurostat, September 1997), the guidelines adopted at the Summit urged Member States to "translate their desire to promote equality of opportunity into increased employment rates for women" and to "pay attention to the imbalance of women and men in certain economic sectors and occupations".

Over two thirds of new jobs created in the EU between 1994 and 1996 have been taken up by women, but as the Commission pointed out in its 1997 Annual Employment Report, this has had little effect on reducing their unemployment rates due to the fact that more women than men are entering the labour force.

#### Guidelines for action

Employment policy has remained a well-guarded national issue, with Member States choosing different paths to reduce their jobless figures, arguing that each country has distinct national problems.

For the first time, at the Employment Summit, common guidelines were set on job creation and helping the young and the unemployed, in the form of recommendations to Member States. It is up to each government to implement them and all promised to do so.

The guidelines are an attempt to develop a common analysis of the situation, a broad line of policy and a common procedure for assessing the results. This still leaves each Member State free to decide how they will tackle unemployment in practice.

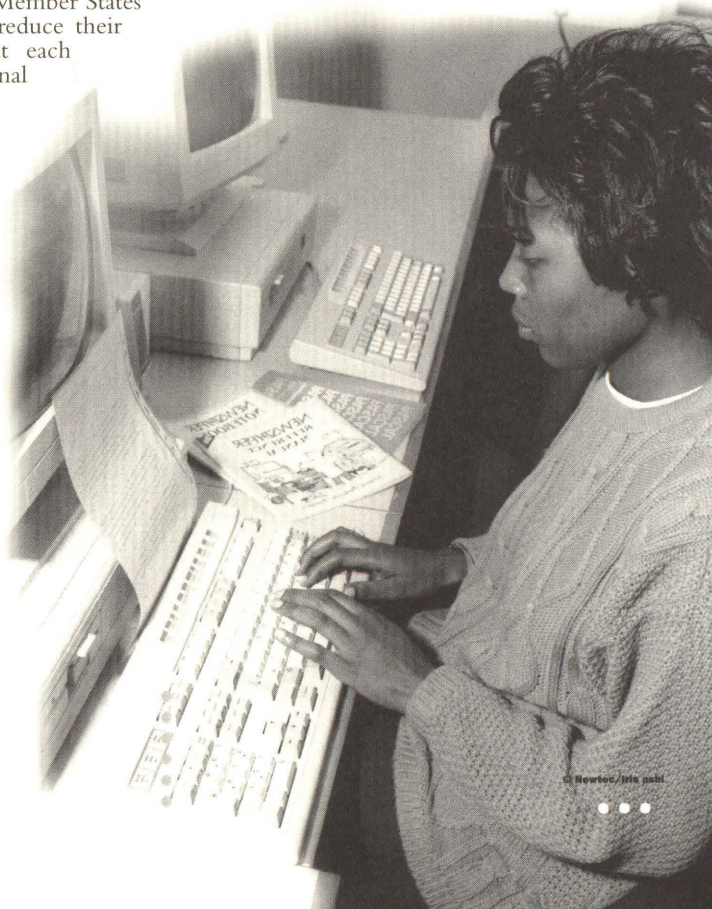
The four main lines of action recommended by the Commission (see Newsletter No 75), namely to **improve**

**employability, develop entrepreneurship, encourage adaptability and strengthen equal opportunities**, have been maintained as the guidelines for Member States in 1998.

Much of the discussion at the Summit focused on the targets to be set for the next five years. Spain, with more than 20% unemployment, was given an opt out clause to extend this deadline. The first target was to offer all unemployed people under 25 a "new start" in the form of training, retraining, work practice or a job before being out of work for six months. The same guarantees should be given to the older unemployed within a year of being unemployed. In addition, governments were asked to ensure that 20% of the Union's estimated 17.9 million jobless would be offered such train-

#### STOP PRESS

The prize for the most European minded woman of the year, the Women of Europe Award, was presented in December to a British woman, **Bettina Carr-Allinson**, for her work with young Europeans to improve dialogue with their elected representatives and to motivate them to take a stronger interest in European affairs. Bettina Carr-Allinson created the European Youth Parliament in Fontainebleau in 1987 to promote a greater awareness of Europe among 16 to 18 year-old secondary school students. In 1994, she set up the European Challenge for Universities for university students. Both initiatives involve some 10,000 young people across Europe each year. Started in 1987, the Women of Europe Award commends a European woman or group of women who have contributed to promoting European integration or developing awareness of European citizenship. ●



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ing or other support measures, against the current 10%.

No targets were set for women despite a European Parliament call, during its discussion on the 1997 Employment Report, for such targets to improve women's employment, particularly employment rates, training and equal pay.

Member States were also invited to improve the quality of school systems so as to reduce the drop-out rate and to ensure that these systems provide young people with the ability to adapt easily to technological and economic change with skills relevant to the labour market.

To develop entrepreneurship, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are set to benefit from up to one billion ECU in loans being made available by the European Investment Bank (EIB) over the next three years. Other than this investment facility, a plan by the EIB to find an extra 10 billion ECU for job creation measures was welcomed by EU leaders as well as a financial

initiative by the European Parliament to release 450 million ECU over the next three years to support innovation and job creation among SMEs.

Member States were urged to simplify rules and administrative procedures for SMEs and to reverse the trend towards higher taxes and charges on labour, which increased from 35% in 1980 to more than 42% in 1995. A similar review of tax obstacles was urged to help all enterprises invest in human resources.

### Modernising working time

The need to balance flexibility for the employer and security for the employee was at the centre of the discussion on the modernisation of working time. The Commission had already launched this debate in a Green Paper published earlier this year entitled *Partnership for a new organisation of work*.

The close involvement of the social partners was recommended to bring change through negotiating agreements at sectoral

and enterprise level. Such agreements could cover reductions of working hours and overtime, lifelong training and career breaks.

Nel van Dijk (Greens, the Netherlands), in her opinion to Parliament's Social Affairs Committee on the Commission's Green Paper, said that any discussion on the new organisation of work must go hand in hand with a reappraisal of women's and men's roles on the labour market and in society as a whole so as to overcome gender segregation. She also warned against the creation of a two-tier society of an unskilled, unprotected and largely female workforce in atypical forms of work and a highly skilled minority benefiting from continuous training in new technologies.

### Reconciling work and family life

To strengthen equal opportunities, the guidelines agreed in Luxembourg invite Member States to ensure there is an adequate provision of good quality care for children and other dependants. This is vital to support women's and men's entry and continued participation in the labour market.

They were also asked to pay specific attention to women and men considering a return to work after an absence and to examine how remaining obstacles could be removed.

### Treaty's provisions on jobs enter into force

Using the guidelines, Member States will now submit national action plans to reduce unemployment. These should be ready by the June 1998 European Council in Cardiff (the UK). These plans will be reviewed by the Council and updated annually.

This procedure follows the terms of the Amsterdam Treaty's new employment chapter and, at the Summit, EU heads of state and government agreed to put it into effect immediately instead of waiting for ratification by each country (*see Newsletter No 75*). The terms of the Amsterdam Treaty also allow Member States to reprimand any partner whose efforts to cut unemployment are considered below standard. ●

### Women and part-time work

The guidelines adopted in Luxembourg said that the social partners agreement on part-time work, concluded between European Union trade unions and employers in June 1997, as well as their June 1996 agreement on career breaks and parental leave, should be regularly monitored.

Over 80% of the estimated 21 million part-time workers in the EU are women. Part-time work has been promoted as enabling many women to take up paid employment, but it can also mean precarious, low status and low-paid work. 32% of women now work part-time in the EU against only 5% of men, according to recent figures by Eurostat, the EU's central statistics office. The Netherlands is ahead of all other EU Member States with 69% of women working part-time, followed by the UK (45%) and Sweden (42%). In countries such as Belgium, Germany and Luxembourg, women's share of part-time employment is 10 times that of men.

The social partner agreement on part-time work, which tried to give some protection to part-timers, was strongly criticised by Karin Jöns (PSE, Germany) in her report to the European Parliament. Although she approved the principle of non-discrimination against part-time workers laid down in the agreement, she regretted it was "limited strictly to part-time workers" and did not cover all forms of atypical employment. The agreement also excluded social security matters.

She also objected to the opt-out clause which allows Member States or the social partners to make "many exceptions" to the principle of non-discrimination for "technical" or "objective" reasons. This leaves part-time workers employed on a casual basis or those who fall outside employment thresholds related to length of service, working time, and wage or salary conditions, open to exclusion from the terms of the agreement.

In her resolution, adopted by Parliament, Karin Jöns said the agreement should only be a start in the creation of a legal instrument aimed at removing existing discrimination against all those in atypical forms of employment. She called for a commitment by the Commission to submit a complementary directive which would cover all forms of atypical work and bring social security provisions for part-time work into the agreement so that they can be put on a par with full-time workers.

At the Employment Summit, Member States urged an annual review to examine if the "technical reasons" used to justify the exclusion of certain employees from the principle of non-discrimination continued to apply. Parliament also asked each Member State to submit a report to the Commission, which lists the group of employees who continue to be discriminated against and the reasons why. This report should contain a specific chapter on women part-timers. ●

# prix Niki

## French, British and Dutch programmes win prizes

**A** poignant French documentary, a moving British drama and a sensitive Dutch children's programme carried off the trophies in the three categories – fact, fiction and children – in this year's Prix Niki awards. Television producers, programme executives, journalists and researchers from 23 European countries discussed the making of gender-sensitive television programmes in a conference opened by Mr Spyros A. Pappas, Director-General for Information, Communication, Audiovisual and Culture.



Left to right: Dorothée Albers (NOS/VPRO),  
Dominique Torrès (France 2)  
and Kay Mellor (ITV/Granada Television)

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This was the fifth edition of the Prix Niki, created by the European Commission in 1988 in response to a European Parliament proposal to improve the portrayal of women in television, both on and off the screen, and to focus attention on the equal and active role women play in society.

### Powerful programmes acclaimed

Winner in the factual category was a French documentary evoking the background to the tragic story of a young girl murdered by a member of her Turkish family in France in 1993 when she rejected their traditions in favour of a "European" lifestyle. Written and directed by Dominique Torrès for France 2 television

channel, the documentary, "Au nom de l'honneur", was praised for its strength and its technical merits.

"Some Kind of Life", a feature film examining the dilemma of a young woman whose life was turned upside down when her husband suffered brain damage in an accident, won the fiction prize. Kay Mellor (ITV/Granada Television), who wrote the screenplay, charts the woman's dilemma as she tries to balance her own needs with those of her son and her husband.

An episode from the Dutch TV series, "Madelief II" (NOS/VPRO), showing the complexities of modern life through the eyes of a girl, won the prize for the best children's programme. The series was praised for its "skilled and sensitive" handling of issues such as adolescence and children living with a single parent. ●

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# interview

## Changing women's images on television

**M**argaret Gallagher, an expert specialised in gender and media issues, has been involved with the Prix Niki since 1989 just after the first competition. She has worked on the four subsequent competitions (1990, 1992, 1994, 1997) trying to make the prize an influential one within the media industry.

*How successful has the Prix Niki been in changing the way women are perceived on television and how has it managed to influence broadcasters?*

There have only been five editions of the prize. Also there was a long gap, almost four years, between the 4th and 5th editions of the prize – from March 1994 to November 1997, so it hasn't really had a chance to become a regular feature on the broadcasting calendar. The ways women are portrayed in the media are linked to deeply entrenched beliefs, among broadcasters, about the place of women in the world. These things are not going to change overnight or even in the space of a few years. The Prix Niki is only one of a number of routes to bring change. The simple fact that the number of programmes entered in the competition has increased steadily over the years (from 16 entries in 1988 to 94 this year) means that more broadcasters are becoming aware of the prize and what it stands for.

*Are any countries or types of broadcasters more receptive to the prize than others?*

I think the main dividing factor is between the public service broadcasting organisations and commercial organisations. We target all organisations but in practice few programmes are submitted by commercial organisations. Given the pressure of competition on public broadcasters from commercial organisations, the Prix Niki is one initiative that can help support the public service sector in trying to reflect some element of diversity in production. This year, 90 of the 94 entries came from public sector broadcasters.

*Is there any one film or documentary that particularly stands out in your memory?*

If only because of the huge impact it had subsequently on television portrayal of women in general, one could mention "Prime Suspect", which won the fiction category in 1992. It had a huge influence internationally and was followed up by a spate of women detective series right around Europe. It won because it was innovative. It wasn't just showing a strong woman in an unusual, typically male role, it also dealt with discrimination against women in the workforce. That is what the jury is looking for. It's looking for innovation, for programmes that break new ground. In one way or another, I think that all of this year's winners do that. They're all first rate productions well worth watching.

*Will this year's winners be broadcast?*

To be eligible, a programme must have been broadcast at least once. We don't know if they will be re-broadcast. We are sending copies of this year's winning programmes to all the eligible organisations and encouraging them to look at them to get a clearer idea of the kind of productions the Prix Niki is hoping to attract. If broadcasters think they are good they might buy them for transmission on their own networks.

*Do you think there is a continued need for this kind of prize?*

I've just been involved in a big pan-European research project on images of women in television and the results show the extent to which women are still under-represented and still stereotyped in television output today. We tend to think things have changed, they have changed a bit but not very much. Research figures show that only one in every three people you see on television is a woman and when you look at how they are portrayed, the stereotyping comes through very clearly. So I have absolutely no doubt that we still need a Prix Niki. It is important for broadcasters to understand that in aiming for more diversity in characterisations, they will not only contribute to the goal of equality but they will also be making more interesting television programmes which more people will want to watch.

### Women in crisis situations

European Commissioner Emma Bonino, responsible for humanitarian aid, told the Committee about her experiences on the ground and explained how it was difficult to ensure women benefit equally from emergency aid. For example, in refugee camps, although the women remain responsible for feeding the family, emergency food aid is usually distributed by men. In this situation, food equals power. She said it was essential to ensure medium and long-term development policies take account of women's and men's needs. The focus should be women's active role in society - they should not be seen as passive recipients of food or health aid. She said that ECHO, the Community's office for humanitarian aid, was drafting a report on an in-depth analysis now taking place to see how women's needs can be better met in humanitarian crises.

The situation of women in Afghanistan was criticised by the Commissioner who had returned from a visit there with the firm belief that Islamic tradition was used as an excuse to oppress women. Since the Taliban revolution, women had lost their jobs and even access to hospital facilities, she said, and were obliged to wear a full-length burqa. She urged Community support for NGOs operating in the field and proposed that in 1998 the International Women's Day (8 March) should be dedicated to the women of Kabul to keep the plight of women in Afghanistan high on the political agenda.



Left to right: Afghan woman and European Commissioner Emma Bonino  
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### Women and Islam

The way women in Algeria are coping with continuing violence was evoked by two Algerian women journalists invited by the Committee. They laid responsibility for the atrocities and massacres of entire sections of the Algerian population with Islamic fundamentalists. They said fundamentalism had nothing to do with Islam but was used as a cover for terrorist activities by extremist groups.

Muslim cultures are not well known in the European Union, said Heidi Hautala (Greens, Finland), despite the presence of some 10 to 15 million Muslims in EU Member States. In her opinion for the Culture Committee on Islam she said there was a need to improve the situation of Muslim migrant women, for example, by providing

individual rights to residence and work permits, the possibility of dual nationality and better opportunities for access to education and training.

### Measures to combat trafficking

The Committee adopted a report by Susan Waddington (PSE, UK) condemning trafficking in women for the purpose of sexual exploitation. The report calls on Member States to implement fully the joint action programme adopted by ministers in February 1997. It calls for better protection for women who are victims of trafficking. Effective sanctions against individuals and organisations involved with trafficking and increased funding for the STOP and DAPHNE programmes were urged. The Commission was asked to give priority to this issue when negotiating its development aid programmes.

### Women's health in the EU

A Commission report on the state of women's health in the EU was welcomed by Nel van Dijk (Greens, the Netherlands) although she remained critical. She said it lacked a comparative analysis of women's and men's health and there were no conclusions and actions proposed. The Committee called for more data on health problems specific to women such as comparative data on the health of women working in and outside the home.

### Burden of proof

Fiorella Ghilardotti (PSE, Italy) won the European Parliament's support when she proposed to retable a series of amendments rejected by the Council when it adopted its common position on the burden of proof in sex discrimination cases. She said the Council's proposal represented a "step backwards". Her amendments, adopted by Parliament, aimed at strengthening the definition of indirect discrimination and improving legal procedures. ●

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### Emma Bonino nominated "Best Communicator of the Year"

One of Europe's top awards for outstanding achievement in the field of public relations was presented to European Commissioner Emma Bonino for her "understanding of the contribution that good media relations can make in delivering complex messages to diverse audiences". The Fleiselman-Hillard Europe Award for the "Best European Communicator" is presented each year by the British magazine PR Week. The magazine praised her openness and accountability to the "EU's 370 million citizens" in her varied fields of responsibility for fisheries, consumer policy, humanitarian aid and food policy. It said her management of media coverage of her recent arrest by Taliban fundamentalists put "the abuse of women's freedom in Afghanistan firmly back on the media agenda". During the prize-giving ceremony, Emma Bonino dedicated the award to the women of Kabul. ●

### Court rules in favour of positive action

Positive discrimination in favour of women applying for employment or promotion in public sector jobs where they are under-represented was legal, according to the European Court of Justice, so long as the appointment or promotion of a male candidate was not excluded from the outset. With this ruling the Court ended the uncertainty on positive action created by its 1995 Kalanke Judgement. (see Newsletter No 61). There it found that positive action giving "absolute and conditional" priority to women candidates was unlawful. The new case involved German school-teacher Hellmut Marschall who applied for a promotion but was told by his local authority that a woman had to be promoted because of a positive action provision in the law of Nordrhein Westfalen. This gave women of equal suitability, competence and professional performance priority for promotion, unless "reasons specific to an individual (male) candidate tilts the balance in his favour". As this clause allows equally qualified male candidates to be "objectively" assessed, the Court said the provision in question was lawful. It agreed that women were often passed over for promotion because of "prejudices and stereotypes concerning the role and capacities of women in working life". ●

Case C-409/95

Hellmut Marschall v Land Nordrhein Westfalen

A copy of this ruling can be downloaded from the European Court of Justice's internet site:  
<http://www.curia.eu.int>