

Women of Europe

Editorial

Five women Commissioners out of nineteen

The die is cast, or almost, as at the point of going to press the confirmation procedure for the new Commission has not yet been completed. But here nonetheless is a thumbnail sketch of the five women chosen by Romano Prodi to serve on his team.

There is a key post for Loyola de Palacio, 49, Popular Party, lawyer and former Spanish Minister for Agriculture in the Aznar Government: she is to be a Commission Vice-President, responsible for relations with Parliament, transport and energy. She is said to be tough, tenacious, combative and conservative.

The Greek, Ana Diamantopoulou, 40, Socialist Party, civil engineer, is to be responsible for social policy. Back home she was an active protagonist of women's rights and adult education, subsequently occupying the post of Secretary of State responsible for the privatisation of public undertakings in difficulty.

Viviane Reding, 48, Luxembourg Christian-Social Party, doctorate in human sciences from the Sorbonne, has just completed her second term as an MEP, during which she was very active on the committee responsible for the inquiry into cults in the European Union. A former journalist, she has always been interested in social affairs; Romano Prodi has given her the education and culture portfolio.

Michaele Schreyer, 47, German ecologist, doctorate in economics, was briefly Minister for the Environment in Berlin before returning to the Federal Parliament. She is said to be hardworking and energetic and has been given the budget and fraud portfolio.

And last but not least, Margot Wallström, 45, Swedish Social Democrat, was first elected to Parliament at 25 and later became Minister for Culture and then Minister for Health and Social Affairs. When there was first talk of her being given the European environment portfolio, she had been working for six months in Sri Lanka for a television company focusing on development.

Three questions for Nicole Fontaine, President of the European Parliament



On 20 July Nicole Fontaine was elected President of the EP in the first ballot by an absolute majority of the votes cast. Her reaction on learning of her victory: 'we have had to wait 20 years since the election of Simone Veil in 1979 for a woman once again to be President of the European Parliament', and thanks to her female colleagues for their support. We asked her for her views on equal opportunities.

1. As a woman and a politician, do you feel that equality of opportunity for men and women is an objective relevant to the major challenges still to be met in the economic and social sphere? Haven't we done enough on this front?

I think that equality of opportunity for men and women is still one of the major economic and social challenges. A healthy society cannot exist without equality and everyone involved in social life must work towards bringing it about. It is a fact that women encounter more career problems than men. We are condemned to the role of good, conscientious and efficient workers. Men still too often fail to understand that it is possible to reconcile family life with a successful career. And I'm referring now only to the struggle of women in western societies. In other societies, with different cultural roots, this battle is even more complex. So I think there is still a lot to do.

2. As President of the EP, do you think there are still 'things to be done' in the legislative field (at European level) to promote equal op-

portunities?

As you know, the *Kalanke* ruling raised doubts about the principle of positive discrimination in favour of women. The European Commission had to propose an amendment to Directive 76/207/EEC on the implementation of the principle of equal treatment for men and women as regards access to employment, vocational training and promotion, and working conditions, which Parliament then asked it to withdraw as it felt it should now be based on the Amsterdam Treaty, which states that a Member State may adopt measures providing for 'specific advantages in order to make it easier for the under-represented sex to pursue a vocational activity'. We are still waiting for the amended proposal. This legal uncertainty cannot be allowed to continue.

3. Still in your capacity as President of the EP, what is your main hope/ambition in the field of equal opportunities (for the European institutions and the people of Europe)?

First, of course, we must complete our legislative armoury and, most important of all, make sure it is complied with. Recent studies into salary differences prove, as if we didn't already know, that there is still a long way to go to make the law stick. I am sure, though, too that there is a huge task ahead of us in terms of eliminating psychological barriers, particularly at the workplace. We are still only at the very early stages of developing new relations between men and women and we must do all in our power to ensure that certain attitudes and behavioural patterns disappear. Only then will it be possible to have a balanced gender relationship that also respects the differences.

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European Commission



European Campaign
Against Domestic Violence

**ZERO-TOLERANCE
CAMPAIGN**

Preparations for the European campaign for zero-tolerance of violence against women has been under way since the beginning of the year. The campaign itself will be gaining momentum from the end of September, complementing a series of projects at national level. The object of the exercise is to encourage cooperation between the various players involved, including ministries, public services and NGOs, and the campaign will target specific groups: young people, violent or potentially violent males, children who have witnessed acts of violence and, last but not least, women who have been victims of violence. A variety of media will be used, including radio and television, the Internet, newspapers and the cinema. A CD-ROM will be distributed to national project leaders who are in receipt of Commission funding. The campaign will close with a conference in March 2000 in Portugal, organised in association with the Portuguese Presidency. It is being coordinated by the European Commission (Women's Information Section in DG X, the Secretariat-General and DG V).

Europeans and violence

On 14 July the European Commission presented the findings of two Eurobarometer surveys on the attitude of Europeans to violence against women and children.

The survey on violence against women was conducted as part of the 'European campaign to combat violence against women' and the survey on violence against children was organised as part of the Daphne programme. Both surveys showed that Europeans — men and women alike, in all walks of life — are loud in their

condemnation of violence, in particular sexual violence, against both women and children. The vast majority are aware of the problem and are of the opinion that it is relatively common. The subject is not often discussed among friends or members of the family; interviewees had more often than not learned of the problem through the media. Very few claimed to know anyone who had been a victim of violence, while the majority thought, wrongly, that the perpetrators were as a rule not known by the victims.

Domestic violence: some facts and figures

Only 4 % of Europeans have never heard of domestic violence against women. Most of those who have, have heard about it through television (89 %), the press (65 %) and radio (44 %).

One European in two (50 %) thinks it is 'fairly common', one in four (24 %) 'very common' and only 19 % 'not very or not at all common'.

Sexual violence against women is considered 'very serious' by 90 % of Europeans, physical violence by 87 %, psychological violence by 65 %, restricted freedom by 64 % and threats of violence by 58 %.

As for the causes of violence, alcoholism is cited most often (96 %), followed by drug addiction (94 %), unemployment (79 %), poverty and social exclusion (73 %) and having oneself been a victim of violence (73 %).

62 % of Europeans think that domestic violence

against women is unacceptable in all circumstances and that it should always be punishable by law, while 32 % consider it is unacceptable in all circumstances but should not necessarily be punishable by law.

As for ways of combating domestic violence, 95 % think that punishing the perpetrator serves a useful purpose, 91 % would support tougher enforcement of existing laws and 91 % feel that teaching young people about mutual respect would help.

More than two in every three Europeans (67 %) feel that the European Union should definitely get involved in combating domestic violence against women, but 79 % are unaware of any policies or measures put forward by the Union in this field.

The Eurobarometer survey was conducted between 12 March and 4 May of this year. A total of 16 179 people aged 15 and over were polled, a representative sample of around 1 000 per Member State.

European Parliament

Committee for Women's Rights

The new Committee for Human Rights held its inaugural meeting on 26 and 27 July. It was chaired by a newcomer to the House, Maj Britt Theorin (PSE), Swedish, 67, flanked by her three vice-chairpersons: Marianne Eriksson (GUE/NGL), Anne Van Lancker (PSE) and Jillian Evans (Greens/ALE). The new Committee has 40 members with the following party political allegiances: 15 from the European People's Party (PPE), 12 from the Party of European Socialists (PSE), 3 from the European Liberal Democrat and Reform Party (ELDR), 3 Greens/European Free Alliance (Greens/ALE), 3 from the European United Left/Nordic Green Left (GUE/NGL), 1 from the Union for a Europe of Nations Group (UEN) and 1 from the Group for a Europe of Democracies and Diversities (EDD).

The main item on the agenda was to prepare the Committee's questions for the hearings of the Commissioners-designate to be conducted in September; the final vote will be taken in the House in mid-September. The EU website at the following address: (http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/newcomm/hearings.index_en.htm) contains all the questions put to each of the Commissioners; it will also publish their replies.

A considerable number of MEPs are wondering how to gauge how successfully mainstreaming is being implemented in the various Community policies. Some of them have suggested a number of methods, including requiring each Commissioner to report periodically on achievements on the equal opportunities front.

Women and the future of rural areas

Women are being called upon to play an increasingly visible role in the dynamics of Europe's rural life and in the viability of its agriculture. This is a must, which has been built into the new regulation on rural development, several provisions of which are geared to promoting equal treatment for men and women.

The sustainable development of rural communities is unthinkable without the active involvement of all those involved. Farm women today are frequently confronted with various forms of unequal treatment affecting their ability to take part in economic, social and cultural life. A recent study on the situation of farm women in rural areas ⁽¹⁾ identified a number of problems: shortage of jobs and training, transport problems, uneven distribution of domestic work, lack of social infrastructure (crèches), persistent stereotyping of the role of women, and under-representation at all levels of decision-making.

Although some of these aspects lie outside the scope of the European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund (EAGGF), the new Council regulation on rural development ⁽²⁾ nonetheless includes a number of measures aimed at enhancing equal opportunities. Article 2, for example, contains a specific reference to promoting equal opportunities for men and women, in particular

⁽¹⁾ 'CAP studies – Labour situation and strategies of farm women in diversified rural areas of Europe', report, 226 pp., Cat. No: EN, CH-18-98-825-C.

⁽²⁾ Regulation (EC) No 1257/1999.

by supporting projects initiated and implemented by women. Other measures also concern activities where women can play an important role: Article 4 refers to investment to promote the diversification of farm activities; in some regions this will provide women with the opportunity to move into projects related to tourism. The same article also provides for the redeployment of production, in other words the development of related products involving, say, dairy products; these new economic activities could well be run by women (production, organisation, sales, etc.) alongside the traditional farming activities. This must be looked at in conjunction with Article 25, which provides for support for investment to help rationalise the processing and marketing of agricultural products. This package of measures will be accompanied by support for vocational training (Article 9) to prepare farmers for the qualitative reorientation of production.

The new regulation on rural development, looked at from the angle of equal treatment, will have a dual impact: financial support for projects developed by women with a view to promoting equality; and support for the diversification of farm production and farm activities into the services sector, where women have a chance to acquire new skills, responsibility and autonomy. These aspects are looked at in greater detail in the new brochure produced by the Directorate-General for Agriculture of the European Commission ⁽³⁾.

⁽³⁾ *The role of women in rural development*, 24 pp., available from autumn 1999.

INDIVIDUAL RIGHT OF COMPLAINT IN THE EVENT OF DISCRIMINATION

An optional protocol on human rights is open for signature and ratification by countries which have already ratified the basic treaty. On 19 March the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, acting by consensus, adopted an optional protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women introducing a complaints procedure against States which have ratified the convention and breached it ⁽¹⁾.

What is new is that complaints may now be lodged by women or groups of women on condition that:

- *the convention has been violated by a State and not by an individual or a private body;*

- *all available domestic remedies have been exhausted (we are talking here not about the State of which the victim is a national but the State guilty of the violation);*

- *complaints must be made in writing.*

The protocol also makes provision for inquiries to be conducted in the State in question. This could in many cases result in the detection of serious and systematic abuse. There are at present three human rights conventions which allow complaints by individuals but this procedure is rarely used and there is therefore very little in the way of case law. Why is this? It is not a question of cost but rather that procedures are slow and often involve years of stress and effort.

Lily Boeykens

⁽¹⁾ This text has still to be adopted by the UN General Assembly before it has legal force.

France, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg and Sweden: in breach of legislation for the protection of pregnant workers?

Directive 92/85/EEC ⁽¹⁾ on the health and safety at work of pregnant workers should have been transposed into national legislation by all the Member States by 19 October 1994. On 15 March 1999 the Commission adopted a report on progress to date. On the basis of the national implementing measures notified to it and of replies to a questionnaire sent to the Member States to assist with the production of the report the Commission initiated a number of infringement procedures for incorrect application of the directive in late July. Reasoned opinions have been sent to Sweden, Luxembourg, Italy, France and Ireland.

The Commission is blaming Sweden for not incorporating the required minimum two weeks' compulsory maternity leave into its legislation. In the case of Luxembourg the Commission considers its insistence on mem-

bership of the national social security scheme as a precondition for entitlement to the rights guaranteed by the directive in breach of the legislation. It also considers that the general ban on night work for pregnant women without any individual assessment of whether such work could be damaging to health is contrary to the directive.

Italy imposes a general ban on night work for pregnant women in the manufacturing industry and, as in the case of Luxembourg, the Commission is of the view that such a blanket ban is incompatible with the directive.

There is no provision in French legislation for women to be exempted from work if there is no other way possible of protecting them against health or security risks. This right is set out in a ministerial circular but this is not enough for the Commission, which therefore concludes that France is in breach of the directive.

In Ireland the list of agents, processes and working conditions in respect of which employers must assess the nature, degree and duration of exposure is exhaustive despite the fact that under the terms of the directive it is indicative, no more.

⁽¹⁾ Council Directive 92/85/EEC of 19 October 1992 on the introduction of measures to encourage improvements in the health and safety at work of pregnant workers and workers who have recently given birth or are breastfeeding (10th individual directive within the meaning of Article 16(1) of Directive 89/391/EEC) (OJ L 348, 28.11.1992); see also report on its implementation (COM(1999) 100 final).

Equal representation in political life

On 22 June the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe adopted a recommendation advocating the introduction of specific measures to correct the under-representation of women in political life. Measures proposed include instituting equal representation in political parties and making their funding conditional on this, setting up parliamentary committees or delegations for women's rights and equal opportunities, and creating the position of European ombudsman/woman for the re-balancing of representation. Proposals also include the organisation of information campaigns and the creation of a system of equality education.

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Women and trade unions

Meeting in Helsinki on 28 May on the eve of the Congress of the European Trade Union Confederation, women trade unionists finalised an action plan to promote equality in the ETUC and its affiliated organisations, subsequently adopted by Congress. The aim of the plan is threefold:

1. to ensure that women are properly represented in collective bargaining and decision-making bodies;
2. to incorporate equality between women and men in all areas of trade union policy (gender mainstreaming);
3. to achieve equal pay.

The ETUC Secretary-General, Emilio Gabaglio, stressed the need to achieve a better gender mix in trade unionism, including at management level, acknowledging that 'women represent a potential on the labour market, a vast pool of intelligence, expertise and militancy which we have as yet been unable to tap in the interests of the European trade union movement'.

Women and science: networking the networks

Women researchers, specialists and representatives of European networks met in Brussels

on 8 and 9 July at the invitation of the European Commission to discuss the vast issue of research by, for and about women. The final declaration includes proposals to enhance the impact of the networks, which are essential tools in the move to improve the balance between men and women in scientific circles, with particular emphasis on strengthening the links between the networks themselves. A policy seminar is to be held in April 2000 following presentation of the experts' report on women and science which should appear in October.

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Upcoming events

Women in the third world

The German Committee of Unifem (United Nations Development Fund for Women) will be awarding its first annual prize to reward projects or programmes supporting women in developing countries. Worth DEM 10 000 (approximately EUR 5 000), the prize has been created on the initiative of the *Evolutionsfonds Apfelbaum e.V. Hilfe zur Selbsthilfe* and will be presented on 30 November in Bonn under the patronage of Heidemarie Wiczorek-Zeul, Federal Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development.

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Mainstreaming in professional life

A ministerial conference is to be held in Helsinki on 30 September and 1 October as part of the preparatory work on the employment guidelines for 2000. The guest list includes the Ministers for Employment and Equal Opportunities of the Member States, representatives from the European Parliament and the Commission, and organisations active on the European employment market.

Towards a European policy on working time

A conference devoted to this highly sensitive issue is being organised on 11 and 12 October, also in Helsinki — it is after all the Finnish Presidency — under the auspices of the Finnish Employment Ministry.

For more information on both conferences:
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Publications

European Community acts on equal opportunities

Community acts devoted in whole or in part to equal opportunities, dating from 1975 to 1997, including the Treaty of Amsterdam, Council directives, decisions, recommendations, resolutions and conclusions, and Commission decisions and communications are to be found in a publication produced by the European Commission's Directorate-General for Employment, Industrial Relations and Social Affairs (Unit D.5 — Equal opportunities for men and women and matters regarding families and children).

Catalogue number: CE-05-97-705-EN-C.

Macroeconomic data

How many women MEPs are there and on which committees? Which political parties in Europe apply the quota policy? How well are women represented at the different political levels in the Member States? This information and much more can be found in a recent publication by the Berlin-based *FrauenComputerZentrum*, produced in English, French, German and Spanish as part of DG V's fourth medium-term action programme.

Any orders should be sent to: seeland@fczb.de

Website: www.db-decision.de