

Women of Europe

Editorial

Good news: the new Commission is keeping on an instrument introduced by its predecessors, namely the Group of Commissioners with responsibility for equal opportunities. This group will be chaired by Mr Prodi and will comprise Ms A. Diamantopoulou (employment and social affairs) as Vice-Chairman, Mr N. Kinnock (administrative reform) and Ms V. Reding (education and culture). Other Commissioners may of course be co-opted, depending on the issues at hand. The group will meet two or three times a year and its task will be to ensure consistency of the measures taken by the EU to promote equal opportunities, both within its institutions and in the context of its policies, and to enforce the provisions of the Treaty on this subject. At the same time, an interdepartmental group will ensure continuity. Best wishes for an intensive and productive period of activity!

Olga Profili
Head of Section, Information for women

Three questions for Anna Diamantopoulou



Anna Diamantopoulou is the Member of the European Commission with responsibility for employment and social affairs. Equal opportunities are part of her portfolio but are not something new for her, since, in 1976, when she was a student at the University of Thessaloniki, she was President of the Women's Group. Between 1981 and 1985, she was President of the 'North' regional section of the largest women's organisation in Greece. In 1983, she was a member of the pressure group that sought to change her country's family legislation. She is also a founder member of the European Observatory of Violence against Women. Lastly, she has been a member of an international women's network supporting politically persecuted women throughout the world.

Do you think it is possible to reconcile work and family life?

'This is an area where progress has still to be made ... The now 'historic' agreement on parental leave is a first landmark. Similarly, in its 1999 employment guidelines, the European Commission clearly calls on the Member States to devise and implement employment policies that have regard for the family. Initiatives have been taken more or less everywhere, and we will continue to examine developments in the Member States methodically to see where it is still important to take action. At this stage, I think that there is one fundamental area affecting everybody that needs to be considered in greater depth: the balance to be struck between flexibility and security of employment.'

What legislative initiatives do you intend to take to reduce gender-related inequalities?

'Equality between men and women is a tree with delicate roots that will have to be watered with fresh approaches and new instruments. That is what I said to the MEPs at the September meeting of the Committee on Women's Rights. These roots include the Treaty of Amsterdam, and I propose to make full use of the new possibilities it affords. For example, I intend to make a proposal based on Article 141 which allows the legal provisions on equal opportunities to be strengthened. Specifically, progress has still to be made on the participation of women in decision-making – starting with the European Commission, where in many committees or groups of experts there are virtually no women. I intend to present a proposal aimed at putting an end to this under-representation of women. Furthermore, the 1976 directive on equal treatment ought to be amended in order to clarify certain existing provisions and incorporate new ones, on important issues such as sexual harassment at the workplace. I also want to give a wider dimension to the fifth action programme, 2001–05, in order to bring equal opportunities into all Community policies. Alongside mainstreaming, it will be essential to continue positive discrimination measures for women. As long as our societies do not change, we will not be able to go forward without them. Lastly, in the Community initiative EQUAL, there will be an explicit reference to equal opportunities and a sum of money set aside for this issue. Unfortunately, I am not yet able to put a precise figure on it.'

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European Commission

WOMEN POST-LOMÉ

A conference entitled 'Civil society and political partnership post-Lomé' was held in Brussels in July 1999 with the support of the European Commission in cooperation with the Inter-Press Service. It was attended by over 100 representatives of associations, businesses and media from the ACP countries. One of the six working groups dealt with the subject of equal opportunities. In their conclusions, the participants stated that development policy must absolutely include analysis of the gender issue, while taking care to avoid separating it from the other areas (environment, human rights, social development, etc.) so as not to continue to marginalise women. The feminisation of poverty is an aspect of the concern to eradicate poverty. The post-Lomé negotiators must introduce gender analysis in all the sectors that they cover. The working group recommended that during the post-Lomé negotiations attention be paid to the following questions:

- **terminology (meaning of terms such as 'gender', 'mainstreaming', etc.);**
- **harmonisation of policies at international level;**
- **clarification of the concept of human rights so that it includes women's specific rights;**
- **incorporation of clear commitments as regards equal opportunities;**
- **use of new scientific indicators to gauge the impact of policies (regional economic agreements, trade agreements, etc.) on men and women so as to be able to use them in devising new strategies for eradicating poverty.**

How do you see your role vis-à-vis women in the Third World?

'Development cooperation is obviously affected by equal opportunities, which are even a precondition for the success of many projects to do with women. The Council of Ministers adopted a resolution on this subject in 1995 and approved a new specific budget head-

ing in 1998 (editor's note: see page 2). Moreover, in order to meet the obligations arising from the Treaty of Amsterdam, it is essential to incorporate the gender dimension in the Union's development cooperation activities. I know that the Development Directorate-General has set up a group of experts on gender issues in order to create the mechanisms for practical implementation of mainstreaming in this area. I will certainly be kept informed of the progress made.'

Women and development

Equal opportunities are gradually making their way in European development cooperation, in spite of cultural and administrative obstacles.

In 1995, in the wake of the Beijing Conference, the European Union officially acknowledges that the gender issue has not yet been sufficiently incorporated into its development cooperation policy. The Council resolution of 20 December 1995 states that 'despite the efforts made, the participation of women in development, instead of being to the forefront, is still a secondary issue for the governments of many European countries and for the Commission'. The Council acknowledges that the elimination of the disparities currently existing between women and men is a key aspect of development from the point of view of the effectiveness of aid and social justice. It states that analysis of the differences and disparities between women and men must be a basic criterion for assessing the objectives and results of development policies and measures. Better still: 'development cooperation must encourage and support changes in attitudes, structures and mechanisms at po-

litical, legal, Community and family levels in order to reduce the inequalities between women and men'. In other words, the EU undertakes to promote full and equal participation of Third World women in decision-making, to help them achieve economic emancipation and to support their efforts for social development.

The framing of all the Union's development policies must henceforth explicitly take account of the general principles of equality of the sexes. As regards projects and programmes, special attention must be paid to positive measures designed to correct the most serious disparities between women and men.

Complementary key decision: on 22 December 1998, the Council adopted a regulation (No 2836/98) on integration of gender issues in development cooperation. This regulation offers technical and financial aid to encourage mainstreaming in the European Union's development cooperation policies and measures. In hard figures, EUR 25 million are available up to 2003.

And in practice?

In the ACP countries (1), roughly half of the competent authorities have introduced national plans or measures to promote equal opportunities. However, women's civil society organisations have rarely been party to this political will. The European Union, for its part, has undertaken to help its ACP partners to integrate the gender dimension, which often comes up against serious cultural obstacles. It must be acknowledged, though, that mentalities do not change from one day to the next, neither in the ACP countries nor in the Union. Knowledge of the problem has not been miraculously circulated among all the players involved and the methods and tools used in the past have not yet been modified.

posed in June 1999. This plan contains concrete proposals to encourage mainstreaming at all stages:

- the composition of the work teams;
- national programming procedures;
- training of the personnel involved in Brussels and in the delegations;
- setting up of a 'help desk' specifically for gender issues;
- amendment of the *Project cycle management handbook*;
- evaluation of the measures carried out.

The idea has, however, gained ground and, within the Commission's departments (2), the first markers of a methodological change have been put down. Thus, on the basis of the 1995 Council resolution, which stipulates that 'external aid must guarantee that all development operations, from planning to the evaluation phase, are guided by an approach that is sensitive to the issues of sexual equality', a plan for the integration of the gender issue in cooperation measures was pro-

The avowed aim is that, by the end of 1999, 80 % of the new project sheets will have integrated the gender issues at all levels: development personnel, beneficiaries, action areas and formulation. In 2000, a new type of basic training for personnel will include the gender issue and towards the end of the year at least half of the persons concerned ought to have followed this training.

Furthermore, in spite of the difficulties encountered in the field, many projects have received funding under the terms of Regulation No 2836/98, with amounts ranging from EUR 50 000 to several million (editor's note: The newsletter will try to give some follow-up in the next few issues).

(1) The 70 or so African, Caribbean and Pacific countries that are the EU's partners in development aid.
 (2) Directorate-General for Development Cooperation.

Project management

The EU's cooperation measures generally take the form of projects. The *Project cycle management handbook* is one of the main technical tools available to development personnel (experts, cooperation workers, officials responsible for project follow-up, etc.). It was drawn up in 1993, and it was high time that gender-related issues were included in it. A new chapter was therefore designed and is now annexed to the handbook. Integration of the gender dimension is envisaged at all stages of a project:

- at the stage of framing of national and European policies: to this end, it is necessary to examine the prevailing institutional framework and, in particular, the position of women in policy-making and planning;
- at the feasibility study stage: socioeconomic and gender analysis of the persons affected by a measure and comprehensive analysis of the problems, including the specific problems of women and anything that might impede their access to the project's services and benefits. The documentation aspect of the project is crucial here: a gender index makes it possible to incorporate gender objectives and to assess the way that gender issues have

been taken into account in the design of the project);

- at the project design stage in order to ensure lasting benefits for men and women. The beneficiaries, project promoters and various players have therefore to be distinguished according to gender and their roles, needs and capacities taken into consideration when designing the project. Positive measures must also be taken to correct the most flagrant imbalances. Lastly, reliable follow-up and evaluation indicators of gender have to be developed.

It is clear that there is now a widespread desire for mainstreaming. The NGOs were the first to support women's economic projects, but their efforts often came up against a negative environment. Nowadays, more and more instruments are available. In the context of the EU/ACP negotiations for the 'post-Lomé' phase, the equal opportunities issue occupies a new and important place. Within the European Commission (Development and External Relations DG), an action plan for equal opportunities in development is in the pipeline. And we have all known for a long time now that, in the Third World too, woman is the future of man.

More positions of responsibility for women

As part of the major reorganisation of the Commission announced by Romano Prodi in July and confirmed at the first meeting of the new team on 18 September, Mr N. Kinnock, Vice-President of the European Commission, announced on 29 September the Commission's intention to take positive measures to enable more women to occupy senior management posts. 'The College will take decisions on the achievement of this objective in the near future,' he stated.

It is already known that 45 members of the Commissioners' cabinets are women, that in six cabinets the number of women is more than half and that in five cases the Chef de Cabinet or his deputy is a woman. All the cabinets have at least one woman. It is also known that five Director-General posts have still to be filled. The news — eagerly awaited — is that at least half of these posts will go to women.

Council

Informal meeting on equal opportunities

At the informal Council meeting on equal opportunities held in Helsinki (Finland), the subject was examined from two angles: that of national employment policies and that of taxation and social protection. The Finnish Minister for Equal Opportunities, Eva Biaudet, stated that it is necessary to 'promote the employment of women because it increases the EU's activity rate and hence the standard of living of all Europeans, since the latter depends directly on a high level of employment'. She also said that there was a consensus to guide women towards more lucrative careers than before. Sinikka Mönkäre, the Finnish Minister of Labour, stressed the advantages of fixed-term contracts; she stated that more women than men were working on this type of contract and that it was important that the benefits associated with such contracts were the same as those associated with others. Maj Britt Theorin, Chair of the Committee on Women's Rights, suggested that, as in Sweden, the Employment Ministers be obliged to report regularly on their efforts to promote equal opportunities. Nicole Péry, French Secretary of State for Women's Rights and Vocational Training, in-

formed the meeting that 55 % of her country's assistance for the long-term unemployed and young people would be granted to women because there were too many of them in these categories of unemployed.

Concerning the second angle, Eva Biaudet declared that, as regards the guidelines to be proposed for the year 2000, it was time to assess the impact of tax and social security systems on female employment. There was much discussion of 'tax traps' and of the fact that women often found themselves in situations of conflict in this regard. Many participants stressed the crucial importance of childcare services and greater involvement of men in looking after children.

The Council meeting took place on 30 September and 1 October. It was attended by more than 150 persons, including 11 Ministers with responsibility for equal opportunities, Commissioner Anna Diamantopoulou, MEPs from the Committee on Women's Rights and representatives of the social partners from the Member States.

COURT OF JUSTICE

No maternity grant for men

Some 241 Renault workers were claiming a maternity grant of FRF 7 500, like their female colleagues. They regarded it as a disguised birth grant and claimed it on the grounds of equality of the sexes. They referred the matter to the Conseil des Prud'hommes in Le Havre (France), which asked the Court of Justice whether the provisions of the agreement concluded with the car manufacturer were in keeping with the principle of non-discrimination between the sexes guaranteed by the Treaty. On 22 September, the Court of Justice decided to reject this line of argument and concurred with the employer's arguments: 'the purpose of this grant is to compensate for the disadvantages faced by female workers in terms of their career when they are away from work during their maternity leave'. The Court stated that, when a woman goes on maternity leave, she cannot be put up for promotion, receive performance-related wage increases or take part in training courses even though the rapid development of new technologies will make it more difficult for her to go back to her job.

Court of Justice: the first female judge

Amazing but true! Up to now, no woman had ever occupied a judge's seat at the European Court of Justice. This archaic monopoly no longer exists: Fidelma O'Kelly has just taken up her duties, succeeding Judge John Murray, who has been appointed to the Supreme Court of Ireland. Born in 1945, Mrs O'Kelly Macken is a jurist and professor at Trinity College, Dublin. She was formerly a lawyer at the Bars of Ireland, Wales and England, then a High Court Judge in Ireland.

It is worth noting that the European Court of First Instance already has two female judges, the Finn, Virpi Tiili, and the Swede, Pernilla Lindh.

Central and eastern Europe: above-average unemployment for women

Apart from Albania and Lithuania (for which no data are available), the female unemployment rate is higher than the rate for men (and higher than the average rate) in most of the countries. However, in Hungary, the female unemployment rate was much lower than the male rate throughout the period from 1993 to 1998. Similarly, the data for Estonia suggest a lower female unemployment rate, owing mainly to the fact that women are taken out of the working population rather than encouraged to register as unemployed.

In 1998, an extremely high rate (almost 38 %) was recorded in Macedonia (FYROM); the other high female unemployment rates were recorded in Bulgaria and Latvia (between 14 and 16 %), whereas they were relatively low in the Czech Republic and Slovenia (around 8 %).

These data are taken from a recent report drawn up by the Commission's Statistical

Office (Eurostat) in cooperation with the 'Employment promotion in other Community policies' unit of Directorate-General 'Employment and Social Affairs' and the national statistical offices in the central European countries. We welcome the fact that the report used the gender criterion in its statistics.

• Events

Elderly women and social exclusion

From 20 to 24 October 1999, a conference on this subject will try to identify strategic priorities and lines of action at local, national and European levels. It will be held in Egmond aan Zee, near Amsterdam (Netherlands), and is being organised by the Wemos Foundation, tel. (31-20) 468 83 88.

Eve Show

On 3, 4 and 5 December 1999 an International Women's Show will be held at the Parc des expositions in Brussels. According to its promoters, 'it will feature the essential alongside the trivial and the everyday'. Subjects as varied as the life of associations, leisure, fashion, law or health will be covered by around 70 exhibitors and in a number of talks and debates. The show will also present an exhibition by the photographer, Christine Spengler, entitled 'Un regard de femme sur la guerre' (A woman's look at war).

For further information:
Business and culture
tel. (32-2) 468 50 60

• Publications

Equal opportunities for women and men in the EU: annual report 1998 (abridged version)

This third annual report on equal opportunities presents an overview of the main developments and trends in equal opportunities policy at European and national levels in 1998.

Catalogue No: CE-18-98-502-**-C.
Available in 11 languages. Free.

Results and lessons drawn from projects

This report sets out the results and lessons drawn from the projects supported by the Community action programme on equal opportunities for women and men (1996-2000) during its first two years.

Available in EN, FR, DE. Free.

Interim report on the implementation of the action programme on equal opportunities (1996-2000)

This report gives an overview of the activities carried out during the first half of the programme. It describes the basic features of the programme and the ways in which it is organised. It also presents the activities of the programme with regard to its six objectives.

Catalogue No: CE-18-98-291-**-C.
Available in 11 languages. Free.

To obtain these three publications, please contact the Directorate-General for Employment and Social Affairs, Equal Opportunities Unit, rue de la Loi 200, B-1049 Brussels,

fax (32-2) 29-63562
e-mail: eqop@bxl.dg5.cec.be

