



Carrefours

• Newsletter •

Editorial

One of the great merits of the recent institutional upheaval is that it has paved the way for real change.

It has taken the European Union as we see it today fifty years to evolve out of the original ECSC, and during that time there have been radical changes in Europe and the world about us, in society and its values, in the needs of individuals and the demands made by the public. But these changes are not being properly reflected in the day-to-day functioning of the EU institutions. The institutional system we have today displays three prominent features which are explained by history and derive from the very nature of the process of uniting Europe; yet over the years these have turned into weaknesses and, if nothing is done to cure them, they could very easily undermine further efforts to continue smoothly along that path.

To begin with, Europe cannot allow the political dimension to be overshadowed by the purely economic. Although the ideal in the minds of the EU's founding fathers was a political one, the Union has come together little by little, by small steps, in specific areas which have been limited to the economy and trade. The European Union would probably not exist now if its founders had not made that choice from the beginning.

Now, however, the Union has reached such a level of economic integration that the most pressing challenges facing it, its most crying needs, lie mostly outside the economic sphere. Whether we are talking about the task of building an area of freedom, security and justice, about foreign policy, common security or even the emergence of a democracy shared by the whole of Europe, the virgin territory for further European unification is no longer in the realm of the economic, but in the political.

The low level of democratic control which the Union exercises over its institutions is something else with which the course of events has landed us. In Europe after the war, the Common Market would never have been built if there had not been strong central institutions, capable of standing up to the Member States whenever they wanted to subordinate their common commitments to some short-term individual gain. It was these which gave European integration its great strength, and it explains why, of all the comparable experiments embarked upon since the war, this exercise is the

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|-----------------------|--|
| OUR SYMPOSIA: | • Sustainability of societal development in east Asia page 2 |
| OUR SEMINARS | • Presence of Muslim communities in the European Union Page 6 |
| | • Long-term implications of EU enlargement: the nature of the new border Page 7 |
| | • Governance and women Page 8 |
| OUR STUDIES: | • Intangible assets and the competitiveness of the European economy Page 10 |
| | • Third report of the Competitiveness Advisory Group Page 10 |
| MISCELLANEOUS: | • Forthcoming Page 11 |
| | • We welcome Page 11 |
| | • Renewing our list of candidate contractors Page 12 |

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only one so far to have succeeded. The Union's great strength is that it transcends the nation-states, something which is exemplified by the European Parliament, the European Court of Justice and the European Commission. What we must do today is preserve that strength and build upon it wherever necessary.

Now that the Union is extending its powers into more political areas, however, we must also be prepared to direct that strength aright by mixing in the proper degree of democracy. The imperative now must be to equip Europe's citizens with resources that give them a better grasp of the principles guiding the Union in its day-to-day work and which make sure that ordinary people become more and more involved in the decision-making process.

The third of history's bequests to Europe is a compartmentalised, technocratic approach to dealing with situations. Once again, a sign of the genius behind the famous Jean Monnet method was that it had the sense to cut up a daunting political aspiration into a series of purely technical questions, which got us out of philosophical discussions and meant that we could bring our various countries closer together bit by bit. The last few years, though, have shown that the method has its limits: the rapid expansion in the Union's spheres of action, the counterproductive subdivision of its policies into three pillars which operate independently of each other and the compartmentalisation of powers have created a degree of complexity which is having major, unexpected effects, some of them harmful.

In other words, the watchword for the Union and the Commission nowadays needs to be consistency: consistency in practical terms, with a clearer definition of who is responsible for what and a concern to achieve tangible results whose advantages are obvious to the public.

Putting the political dimension right at the heart of the European project, building a true, shared democracy, putting consistency and unity back into our guiding principles as well and into our day-to-day work: these are three ways of keeping alive the flame which inspired the founders of Europe, and at the same time shaking off the weaknesses we have inherited from the past.

Jean-Claude THÉBAULT —■

Our symposium

SUSTAINABILITY OF SOCIETAL DEVELOPMENT IN EAST ASIA

The Forward Studies Unit invited 15 experts in Asia to the Asia-Europe Foundation in Singapore for a brainstorming seminar on 22 to 23 June 1999 for its study under the title 'Sustainability of societal development in east Asia'.

The five sessions over one and a half days followed a preparatory seminar held in November 1998 in Seville with European experts on sustainability, where relevant indicators and general issues in Asia were discussed at a more abstract level with an outsider view from Europe.

This time in Singapore, the 15 insiders in Asia complemented these discussions with concrete evidence and prospective shaping factors and long-term trends on the basis of our list of indicators. Within east Asia, the particular focus was on China and Indonesia in the timeframe of the years 2010–20 in view of their importance and special roles in the region. These countries were also regarded as representing overall two major cultures of the region — Buddhism/Confucianism and Islam, as well as originating from two different economic models faced with the Asian crises. In that respect, they could be said to epitomise aspects which are also considered important for the understanding of societal patterns in the region in general.

In order to explore issues of sustainability that are symptomatic to the region, we looked, among other things, at ethnic relations and civil society as they are developing in south-east Asia.

ETHNIC RELATIONS

The links between ethnic relations and the notion of sustainability often focus on the struggle for natural resources ranging all the way from land to water. Threats to long-established ways of life and standards of living to many groups located in areas targeted for developments such as dams and reservoirs have mobilised civil society organisations in many countries in south-east Asia.

The social unrest and political instability in Indonesia since the onset of the economic crisis has brought home to many in south-east Asia the continued fragility of ethnic peace and social stability. A high level of stability had been experienced and even taken for granted by most in the region since the 1960s. While the instability of the economic crisis provided many opportunities for civil society groups that had previously worked quietly on the sidelines, it unleashed too the long repressed resentment that had not been allowed to be openly discussed and addressed earlier among the country's many different ethnic groups.

There were clashes between Christians and Muslims in Ambon which threatened to spill over to other parts of Indonesia including Java, Madurese and local Kalimantan residents. There were, of course, the earlier attacks on ethnic Chinese in Jakarta, the capital city itself. Indonesians caught between the conflicting parties took refuge and fled the areas where clashes were the fiercest. So did much of the country's remaining wealth and capital which took flight when it could have done a great deal to address the country's currency and then economic crises.

In spite of burgeoning economic growth and the rising affluence in the rapidly industrialising countries of south-east Asia during the years before the onset of the crises in 1997, some scholars in Europe who had been doing field research work in south-east Asia had already wondered about the sustainability of such rapid development. Their concerns had been with the presence of large groups of people in rapidly industrialising south-east Asian countries who were benefiting much less from the growth in their economies in urban but particularly in rural areas.

Scholars argue for a definition of sustainable development which considers and includes social and distributive justice, self-reliance, basic needs, democracy, harmony, security and welfare. In brief, the argument is for more than a narrow focus on the environmental impact of economic growth and of course the continued basis for such growth. Particularly in south-east Asia, it is pos-

sible to identify as many cases of growth with poverty as the groups themselves — races, ethnic groups and tribes. The contrast is striking between visibly extreme affluence such as five-star hotels located alongside city slums or the plans for developing Silicon Valley-like corridors while urban populations grapple with basic water shortages and supply systems in which more water is lost through leakage than finally reaches the consumers.

For instance, a majority of the native ethnic groups in the State of Sarawak, the Ibans, remain below the poverty line, in spite of decades of strong economic growth in the rest of Malaysia. Ethnic minority groups in Thailand similarly have not benefited from the so-called Asian economic miracle⁽¹⁾. Studies highlight the exports of timber and other products from Sarawak, but the wealth created from such trade appears to have been slow in reaching those in greatest need of it.

Also, the ethnic problems which have flared up all over Indonesia outside of Java are reflective of a national government which has '[...] retained considerable powers, and choices at the local level have continued to be substantially constrained. Many local decisions are made by central government nominees and do not necessarily reflect local preferences'⁽²⁾. Such local preferences particularly outside of Java, are inevitably also different ethnic preferences. Such an assessment of the political and economic situation was as true in the 1990s as it was in the 1980s when geographer Forbes wrote of South Sulawesi, '... neither the indigenous economic or political institutions have been allowed to develop through their own initiative during the past seven decades ... The result has been a build-up of pressures and frustrations — of economic underdevelopment and the maldistribution of political power'⁽³⁾.

The prevailing view of the rapid economic growth seen in the region appears to be that the growth of institutions to ensure sustainability of both economic and social development was lagging far behind the rapid industrialisation and urbanisation as well as all the other related trends. Part of the reason for the lack of these institutions had to do with the refusal of national governments in most of the countries to openly address ethnic relation issues particularly the policies related to ethnicity and the allocation of resources for development. Varying policy approaches have been applied in distributing the benefits of development in the early years of nation-building and policy reviews and discussions have been rare.

Another reason has been the constraint on the growth of strong civil society in most south-east

Asian countries particularly where the role of the State has been dominant. During the colonial period, neglect by the State in most of the colonised countries of south-east Asia led to a flourishing of largely ethnic-based civil society. There are views that these civil society groups are the result of primordial ties rather than reflections of active citizenship. This was a situation which most of the south-east Asian citizens were not to enjoy until the emergence of modern nation States from colonial rule.

ETHNIC PROFILE

South-east Asian countries have had a history in which the main actors have been as global and international as they are today. Colonial powers and migratory processes have given each of the emerging new nation States of south-east Asia a highly diversified ethnic profile. Not only are there racial differences, but also religious and language differences. In countries such as Malaysia, Brunei, Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand, there are ethnic minority groups such as the Chinese who are however the majority racial grouping in Singapore.

Globalisation and inter-regional migration have brought even greater diversity to the population profiles of wealthier south-east Asian countries, at least before the onset of the Asian crisis. In Singapore, for example, construction workers come from Thailand and as far afield as China, Bangladesh and India. Domestic workers mostly come from the Philippines, Indonesia, Thailand, Sri Lanka and India. These categories of workers of different nationalities are also to be found in varying proportions in Malaysia and Brunei. Apart from the low-income and low-skilled or unskilled workers who form part of the new migratory groups in the region, globalisation has also seen the migration of professional, highly skilled and also highly mobile professionals.

If the emergence of the modern nation State has brought citizenship to the peoples of south-east Asia following the end of colonial rule, the new waves of migration are also challenging citizenship and such migration policies now in many of the south-east Asian countries. Ethnic peace and social and political stability among the new nation States of south-east Asia did not come with independence from colonial powers. In most of the emergent nation States, racial strife and rioting led the governments of the countries eventually to adopt highly centralised and firm policies in the management of ethnic relations.

In Indonesia and Thailand, the policies emphasised assimilation with the introduction

and State-driven imposition of a national language. Malaysia opted for preferential treatment for Bumiputra or 'sons of the soil', that is the Malays predominantly. Singapore decided on meritocracy with guarantees that the rights of minority ethnic groups would be ensured. Nearly all these States have frowned upon open discussions of racial issues and policies.

The last three decades or so of racial peace and stability have beguiled most of south-east Asian societies to believe that racial issues are better left out from open debate and discussion. Discussions would just stir up a hornet's nest. The crumbling of stability in Indonesia and the descent of her society into ethnic strife and social as well as political chaos have shaken such beliefs considerably. Continued social conflicts have even led to the questioning of the viability of the nation-State project. There is a view that Indonesia may split up into different territories along different ethnic groupings.

The Civil society that has evolved in the post-colonial period addressed issues other than ethnic ones and many groups were multi-ethnic since the issues were developmental and focused on areas such as women's rights, nature conservation or environmental management. The State on the one hand, such as in Singapore, has promoted self-help organisations which are ethnic-based in the belief perhaps that members of an ethnic group who have done well economically will be in the best position of helping other members in a less economically advantageous position. On the other hand, women's groups which evolved in the early 1960s have comprised members and leaders from all ethnic groups who were focused on gender issues in the newly emerging nation State of Singapore.

CIVIL SOCIETY

Civil society held out the promise therefore, of bridging ethnic differences and working with the diversity characterising south-east Asian societies to improve the opportunities for all groups to benefit from rapid economic development. A strong civil society had evolved in the Philippines in part to fill the vacuum in the provision of many areas of public goods and services neglected by a relatively weak State⁽⁴⁾. The strong State in many other south-east Asian countries had therefore allowed development of civil society organisations in areas of development that the governments had not been interested in addressing. In Singapore, for example, a large number of civil society organisations are so-called "voluntary welfare organisations" or VWOs. These organisations work in the area of social services that the State appears to have largely failed to deliver.

Many civil society organisations emerging in the post-colonial period focused on a variety of cross-ethnic issues. They provided an alternative developmentalist standpoint contrasting with many of the State policies in south-east Asian countries on the management of ethnic relations. State policies effectively defined developmental roles and contributions by ethnic groups in Malaysia and Indonesia. Singapore's policies in development were intended to be meritocratic, but State-initiated ethnic-based self-help groups emphasised the belief that each ethnic group should be helping its own less successful members.

Growing diversity and an increasing demand for greater participation by the public in policy decision-making have, for example, prompted the Singapore government to respond with the introduction of several channels for the public to provide feedback on policies. In addition to the feedback unit established in 1984, town councils and now community development councils have been put in place. Most recently, a 'Singapore 21' process was initiated which invited more than 6,000 members of the public to consult together on a variety of policy areas thought to be crucial for the government and society to address in the new millennium.

There are a few thousand civil society groups in Singapore alone and many are keen on securing more space with which to participate in developmental policy decision-making. Most interestingly, a larger proportion of the young expressed the wish to work for non-government organisations than for government-related community groups.

Strengthening civil society in south-east Asian countries will augur well for ethnic relations in the region. This is not forgetting the negative aspects of civil society groupings which are bent on emphasising ethnic-based solutions or narrowly confined to single group ethnic interests. These can prove to be as exclusionary as many State policies have been found to be. Yet there is basis to expect that with a lively civil society, such negative aspects may be counterbalanced with larger cross-ethnic interests which are more development-oriented and particularly focused on sustainable societal development.

POSSIBILITIES FOR STRONGER POSITIVE LINKS

Strong civil society groups focused on sustainable development and people's interests, regardless of ethnicity, hold out the future possibility of re-instating the social stability which the region has seen in the past. Given State policy mechanisms which are in place for the management of ethnic relations in a number of south-east

Asian countries, it appears time for civil society to take its turn and contribute in the effort towards developing the conviction and belief among the people in the benefit of an equitable distribution of the fruits of development. Civil society has to work on the need to include all stakeholders in social and economic progress. The reluctance to engage in discussion and open debate about policies put into place to manage inter-ethnic relations, particularly in the allocation of resources for development, has implied that managing these relations has been largely the State's role.

Society has, however, to develop stakes in the negotiation and shaping of inter-ethnic relations and particularly in the arena of resources development. In other words, it is time for the ethnic groupings in south-east Asian societies to take ownership of the process of shaping inter-ethnic relations and social stability as well as the process of social and economic development. There are views that ethnic conflict is often related to environmental degradation⁽⁵⁾. In a world of diminishing natural resources and natural areas, there is mounting urgency to address sources of human conflicts arising both between and within States that are triggered by a lack of understanding and acceptance of local needs, ethnic differences and the claims of different ethnic groups on sustainable development. The road forward for south-east Asia has to be found somewhere between growth on the one hand and sustainability on the other for all stakeholders in the development process.

Only a sound balance of these two goals can guarantee long-term progress for the region and also help to overcome ethnic strife as witnessed again most recently in Indonesia.

Wolfgang PAPE —

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Our seminars

PRESENCE OF MUSLIM COMMUNITIES IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

One of the major tasks of the FSU is analysis of the long-term societal change patterns in Europe and their impact on the integration process within the Union. In this particular framework the FSU is initiating an interdisciplinary comparative research project 'The presence of Muslim communities in the EU and the future of society in Europe'. The project intends, above all, to gather more information and contribute to the better understanding of Muslim communities as actors in the European societal transformation process as well as to open up the debate with experts and possibly to stimulate new reflections and investigations in this field of inquiry.

The period of the post-World War II European history has been marked not only by the overall political and economic integration process, but also by a fundamental multi-dimensional societal transformation in Europe: demographic, socio-economic, and cultural. Societal changes have a long-lasting structural impact on the instruments, functions and legitimacy of the Member States and the EU alike. Arguably, the presence of Muslim communities in Europe will have a long-lasting significant effect on the future development of society in Europe and consequently the EU. Therefore, in order to legitimise the existing European order and institutions, it is essential to guarantee integration or co-existence of diverse ethnicities and cultures in Europe.

The project does not intend to present other communities or minority groups as politically less important or viable for the future development of society in Europe. The primary concern, however, is the scope of the challenge presented by the accommodation of the heterogeneous Muslim communities in Europe and the scarcity of research done on the subject. Though there has been a wide range of studies conducted on the national basis, the trans-European comparative analysis is largely missing. Moreover, recent reports of the European Parliament urge the EU institutions and particularly the Commission to get actively involved in the close investigation of the Muslim-related issues.

In this framework the FSU organised a conference on 16 April 1999 in Brussels in order to discuss the

project with more than 20 experts and to stimulate an interchange of ideas and expertise among different academic institutions and researchers in this particular field (as well as to create an international network of scholars in diverse areas of Islamic studies that might be interested in carrying on the project).

The conference was structured so that the first part of the meeting was dedicated to the presentation of the advancement of research in different areas related to the subject of the conference by four experts: Felice Dassetto (Louvain), Frank Fregosi (Strasbourg), Farhan A. Nizami (Oxford), and Ahmed Munier (Hamburg), which was later followed by the general discussion on this topic. The second part, meanwhile, was primarily concerned with specific problems related to the project to be undertaken and above all its methodological approach.

THEMES AND STANDPOINTS

The presentations and discussions revealed some re-occurring themes and common standpoints among the experts present in the conference.

- It is necessary to draw a clear distinction between analytical and normative political or ideological approaches to the subject. The method used for the research should be scientific, i.e. anthropological or sociological, as in studying any other subject.
- It is essential to draw a distinction between Islam and Muslims and to highlight ethnic, social, and cultural heterogeneity of the Muslim communities in Europe. The majority of the participants agreed that despite the fact that sometimes boundaries between ethnic/national, cultural and religious categories are very porous there should be a basic distinction made between Islam as a religious phenomenon and Muslim communities as socio-cultural entities with the latter being the primary subject of the research. Moreover, as a number of examples discussed in the conference demonstrated, the preconceived assumption of the necessity and centrality of an organised religion for all Muslim communities may lead to overgeneralisations and distortions in analysing social and cultural realities.
- The problem of cultural pluralism and peaceful co-existence of communities adhering to different religions and cultures in Europe should be placed

at the centre of research. Such highly debated issues during the conference — such as identity and citizenship, participation in the political process, law in its theoretical substance and practical application, the ‘regulation’ of Islamic affairs by the State, etc. — are all imbedded in the construct of the historically determined multifaceted European legal and political models. Therefore, one of the major contributions of the project, according to some of the participants, might be the analysis of the prospects for reformation of the overall democratic process in Europe: new models should be developed that would be more suited to all communities living in Europe. Other participants, however, had reservations for this kind of approach stressing that there should be a distinction made between the ‘hard core’ of the European model which is not negotiable (like constitutional and legal systems which are already in place) and the part which is possible to compromise. Consequently attempts should be made to examine the nature and scope of this ‘hard core’ and to analyse the extent to which Muslim communities are familiar and accept this ‘non-negotiable hard-core’. Others argued that research should go beyond the ‘hard-core’ dimension and take into account actual changes.

- Research on the Muslim communities should be put in the general context of societal transformation in Europe and globalisation — processes that may have both positive and negative influence upon the prospect of co-existence and integration of different cultures in Europe. Such factors as publicly constructed and sustained stereotypes (mass media, public institutions, such as courts and schools), hostility to ‘the other’, ignorance and lack of objective information may substantially hinder the prospects of long-lasting peaceful and inclusive co-existence of different ethnic, cultural, and religious groups in Europe and even lead to structural disintegration while globalisation and convergence of youth culture may have strong positive influence for this process.

- Particular importance should be attributed to the role and perspectives of Muslim women on the societal transformation process.

- Special attention in the project should be given to the eastward enlargement and Mediterranean dimensions of the EU, as they are going to bring additional variables for the analysis.

- Some of the conference participants raised the question of including theological and spiritual dimensions in the research, while others were strictly against it.

The discussion on the methodological approach of the project was primarily centered on the analysis

of the two opposing models: ‘individual country approach’ or ‘dimensional approach’: i.e. analysis of legal, socio-cultural, economic, etc. aspects in a cross-country perspective. Though there were divergent opinions on this particular aspect, the majority of the experts seem to agree that ‘dimensional approach’ should be preferred though aspects of ‘problem oriented approach’ or ‘individual country approach’ might be also incorporated in the due course of the research. There also seemed to be consensus on the interdisciplinary and comparative nature of the project as well as necessity to involve representatives of the Muslim communities and gaining access to grassroots experience and everyday social practices.

The conference has clearly demonstrated that there is a substantial interest among the experts in different areas of Islamic studies to embark on a qualitatively new epistemological approach to the analysis of the Islamic phenomenon in Europe. Therefore, the project being initiated by the FSU might serve as a groundbreaking initiative for the study of Muslim communities in a pan-European perspective.

Ausra ALELIUNAITE/Thomas JANSEN — ■

‘LONG-TERM IMPLICATIONS OF EU ENLARGEMENT: THE NATURE OF THE NEW BORDER’

In 1998, the Forward Studies Unit set up a joint project with the Robert Schuman Centre of the European University Institute. The aim of the project was to investigate some long-term implications of the eastern enlargement of the EU which would have a bearing on the nature of its extended border. Since the traditional function of borders is being profoundly changed by a number of contemporary trends, it was necessary to go beyond their customary narrow definition. The project therefore aimed from the start to take the wider dimension of border management into account in order to reflect the complexity of EU enlargement in this respect. Subsequently, the following areas are covered by the project: national identity, culture, ethnic minorities, the implication of socioeconomic disparities, mobility in the enlarged Union, border regimes and border protection. The ambition of the project is to provide a strategic view on the enlargement, including an analysis of the challenges that are common to the countries both in eastern and western Europe (economic and social adaptation, migration, illegal immigration,

organised crime etc.) in view of formulating policy options for the enlarged Union. The final report will include policy recommendations as to how the Union may best manage the process of extending its eastern border.

The project was articulated around a reflection group composed of distinguished experts from eastern and western Europe meeting under the chairmanship of Professor Giuliano Amato. Representatives from the European Commission took part in the discussions of the group, but its work was entirely independent and the views expressed in the reports are the group's own. For each meeting an interim report, drafted by Dr Judy Batt, was published by the Robert Schuman Centre. A concluding report will be finalised during the summer 1999 and is also destined for publication.

SNAPSHOTS OF THE FINDINGS

In the report on minority rights, it is argued that the Union in the future will have to recognise the need to have a policy on minorities which is not only directed to countries outside the EU, but also towards its Member States. Minority issues are likely to rise on the political agenda not only in the wake of enlargement, but also as a consequence of the heightened awareness among various kinds of minority groups throughout the Union.

The report on national identity and culture concludes that there is no common European cultural norm within the EU that could be used as a 'benchmark' against which candidate countries' convergence could be measured. Nevertheless, there are basic standards of democratic politics, human rights and the rule of law, acceptable to all, that should be used to ensure the candidate countries' performance in democracy and good governance.

On the issue of socioeconomic discrepancy, the group concluded that EU membership is vital for the candidate countries in central and eastern Europe as a framework for continued socioeconomic reforms. Therefore, the costs which may have to be taken on by the EU and its Member States to assist the socioeconomic transformation process in the east are less significant than having to shoulder the costs from a failed accession and derailed reforms.

The Group's report on mobility in the enlarged Union puts forward the argument that unwanted immigration flows from far afield is a challenge at least as great to the countries of eastern and central Europe as to the western European countries, with the former having less resources and experience to manage them. It pleads for a balanced

view on migration within the enlarged Union and for a common European approach to border management in line with its broader strategic objectives towards neighbouring countries to the east and south as well as to countries further afield.

Finally, the report on border regimes and border protection discusses the need to define clearly the territory within which deeper European integration (the euro, the internal market and Schengen etc.) takes place, and to reconcile this need with an eastern enlargement in stages which requires a 'softer' border approach. It also underlines the importance for the Union to design political and economic partnerships with countries without any immediate prospects for becoming members as a counterbalance to the EU's increasingly restrictive border policy.

These reports can be obtained from the EUI's Internet site: <http://www.iue.it/RCS-PP.htm>.

Anna MICHALSKI

GOVERNANCE AND WOMEN

On the basis of a preliminary report drawn up by Professor Eliane Vogel-Polsky with the assistance of a committee consisting of Judith Astellarra (Spain), Lucie Lamarche (Quebec) and Jean Vogel (Brussels), a seminar on 'Women and government' was held in Brussels on 3 and 4 March (6).

At the four sessions of this seminar, some 15 experts selected for their work and/or experience in Europe, North America, Latin America and Africa deliberated on the question of women and government, approaching the matter from four angles: globalisation and denationalisation, development policy, citizenship and strategies for change.

GENDER: A NEGLECTED FACTOR

Within the political bodies of the European Union, as in other international bodies, there is much talk nowadays of 'government' and the need to define and explore new forms of government which can cope with the challenges and changes in contemporary society.

An analysis of the research undertaken in this field shows just how impermeable the political sciences have so far been to gender studies. Taking as its starting point this gulf between the concepts

of government and gender, the Forward Studies Unit undertook to study the interaction between the Community objective of equal opportunities for men and women, on the one hand, and changes in forms of government within democratic systems, on the other.

The meeting revealed the complexity of the subject. Discussions drew attention to the differences in approach and conduct of gender studies relating to government, depending on the political system, and the work done by international organisations in developing countries. Within the European Union, analyses differed as regards the impact of the Maastricht criteria on social policy.

An attempt was also made to examine the strategies and procedures which had been followed or which had been tried out by militant women, some of whom were present.

CHANGES IN GOVERNMENT

There is no longer any point in reiterating the same old findings about how few women there are on the government stage or in the corridors of power, except perhaps to draw the conclusion that endeavours to achieve political equality for women in public life have been flawed, both in theory and in practice, and that as the new millennium dawns, it is high time to take a radically new approach to equal rights and the workings of political institutions.

But any changes in government with a view to achieving equality between the sexes is pointless unless genuinely alternative strategies are adopted on the basis of the following.

- A more active and responsible attitude on the part of the public authorities. Contemporary political systems take a gradualist approach, showing a preference for 'soft' forms of social change, and are based on institutions and practices which have the unfortunate effect of discouraging the political mobilisation of the citizenry.

- A steady improvement in the level of women's political involvement.

The capacity of a society to bring about frequent and far-reaching reforms for the benefit of women depends on massive and sustained commitment on the part of women themselves. Such commitment will not last for long unless it is placed on an institutional footing. A combination of proportional representation with binding rules to ensure parity could be one way of improving women's political involvement. But the scope for greater political mobilisation of women does not depend simply on adjustments in the political sphere (party organisation, electoral procedures). It also depends on the use of other resources, such as education or

giving women new roles at the workplace and in the family.

- The development of women's role in civil society. Steps must be taken to halt the 'crystallisation' of the population into two categories: the one active in civil society (through various associations) and the other in political society. The participation of women in the former would be massive and decisive, but their participation in the latter would be small-scale and subsidiary. Women would thus continue to play a subordinate role. Any significant political changes will have to be made both from below and from above.

- Emancipation via the educational system. The issue of schools, the place of girls within them and the content of education is a key political question. It should be remembered that, in practice, educational systems and socio-political systems are reflections of each other. Bold steps must therefore be taken to question certain received ideas on the quality of opportunity provided by schools today.

TOWARDS A MORE MEANINGFUL DEMOCRACY

The entry of women into the public arena will therefore mean a rethinking of democracy and its underlying principles, not just in quantitative terms (with the broadening of the electorate) but by defining new principles and new rights, to be established and defended by new men and women. To end the political exclusion of women, for example, it has been stressed that the concept of gender must be introduced into the right of citizenship. As long as the latter is defined and proclaimed as being universal and neutral, there can be no change either in the definition of those enjoying that right or in the content of the right itself. Thought must certainly be given to a restatement of policy and procedures in this area.

Similarly, the call for fundamental social rights, with inclusion of the gender dimension, should lead to more than the 'cosmetic' attempts made so far, producing a new official vocabulary and giving real impetus to 'mainstreaming' and 'empowerment', which are as yet purely symbolic and are incapable of achieving the necessary break with traditional instrumental approaches to sexual equality and imposing equal status for men and women as a fundamental right.

Bénédicte CAREMIER

⁽⁶⁾ This seminar received financial support from DG XII, who will also publish all the experts' contributions and a summary of the discussions.

**INTANGIBLE ASSETS AND
THE COMPETITIVENESS
OF THE EUROPEAN ECONOMY**

At the initiative of P. Buigues (DG III), A. Jacquemin (CDP and DG XII) and J.-F. Marchipont (DG XII), this symposium which took place at the University of Louvain-la-Neuve on 29 to 30 April 1999, has analysed the growing importance of intangibles and how it transformed the sources of competitiveness.

Intangible investment is increasingly important as economies shift from being capital equipment and resource-intensive towards being technology- and knowledge-intensive. At an aggregate level, this is reflected in the increasing share of investment which goes to a wide range of intangibles. At the corporate level, this is reflected in the increasing premium placed inside firms on technology, skills, organisation and software, and by the rapid development of a wide range of strategic service industries, which provide external complements to internally generated intangibles.

As made clear in the various qualitative and quantitative papers presented, it also appears that the growing importance of intangibles is transforming the content of public policies including industrial, R & D, competition and trade policies.

Already the White Paper on 'Growth, competitiveness, employment', published by the European Commission in 1993, encouraged investment in intangibles, support for the diffusion of R & D results into products and processes, and fostering collaboration and exchange networks so as to develop clusters.

More generally, the key elements for competitiveness, that are now of greatest importance, include in particular the quality of education and training, the efficiency of corporate organisation, the capacity to make continuous improvements in production processes, the intensity of R & D and its industrial exploitation and the fluidity of the conditions under which markets operate.

Government policies must in the future accord to these intangible factors at least the same priority as they do to physical investment. This type of

investment is becoming the key element in bringing about growth that is durable.

Alexis JACQUEMIN —■

THE THIRD REPORT OF THE COMPETITIVENESS ADVISORY GROUP

The Competitiveness Advisory Group is now close to the end of its second mandate, under the chairmanship of Jean-Claude Paye, former secretary-general of the OECD. President Santer established it in 1995 to advise the Commission and the Council on how to improve Europe's competitiveness.

In its third report (April 1999) the CAG II examines the most important factors in the agility of the firm as a key to competitiveness, with special attention to the human factor.

Globalisation intensifies competition and leads to a never-ending race in the pursuit of innovation. Information technologies revolutionise methods of production and ways of life. To survive and prosper, firms, which are directly or indirectly responsible for creating jobs, are obliged to exist in a state of permanent and rapid adaptation.

As geographical and historical advantages lose relevance, success depends on ability to identify and exploit competitive advantage. Firms' competitiveness is a function of their agility. Ultimately, this is a precondition for growth and employment today. Agility is a combination of many factors.

The human factor is the most decisive element. The skills, commitment and adaptability of its staff are the foundation for the sustained competitiveness of an enterprise. This suggests that a number of recommendations can be made.

- Everyone should be involved in life-long learning to remain employable in a world of ever-changing job specifications.
- It is not enough for a firm to have the most highly-qualified staff from top to bottom; staff must also be encouraged to make the best possible use of their qualifications, i.e. they need motivation. Remuneration is clearly important, but so is responsibility.

• As the firm's competitiveness is recognised as being in the interest of all members of the staff, trade union involvement in the life of the firm can and must contribute to this competitiveness by helping to create the conditions where agility is viewed by staff as beneficial.

• Other partnerships must be developed, involving partners outside the firm. There should be local or regional cooperation between firms, local groups, associations and trade unions to facilitate retraining and finding positions for people who must change job.

The heart of the problem is finding the proper balance between the freedom, which is essential for firms' agility, and the solidarity needed to maintain social cohesion, without which globalisation risks being called into question. Yet, there is no other sustainable and beneficial way than embracing globalisation. Delaying tactics are the worst services being rendered to long-term job creation. The work of the CAG seeks to provide a way forward.

Lucio PENCH — ■

M i s c e l l a n e o u s

FORTHCOMING

Forthcoming titles in the Forward Studies Series:

La démocratie et la société de l'information en Europe (Democracy and the information society in Europe), foreword by Jean-Claude Thébault

New information and communication tools are becoming a feature of our lives just as Europe is set to move towards closer political union. The Community institutions are having to face not only the challenges of a high-tech environment, but also public calls for greater involvement. These two developments can and must be reconciled. As Europe transforms itself, it may be just the right place for consolidating public-oriented applications of new technologies.

Changer d'économie ou la nouvelle économie du développement durable (Changing economics — the new economics of sustainable development), foreword by Jean-Claude Thébault

Truths long held to be universal are now being questioned throughout the world of science; economics is no exception. James Robertson offers us a survey of movements calling for an 'alternative economics of sustainable development'. Is there such a thing as a new economics, what are its premises and benchmarks; what are its priorities and what does it propose in practice?

L'avenir du travail — un débat européen (The future of work — a European debate), foreword by Patrick Venturini

Since the industrial revolution, our societies in the West have been organised around the model of

paid labour. But can this model continue to play such an architectural role in an age of record unemployment levels and social exclusion where the illusion of full employment has been lost? Should it and can it remain the foundation of social cohesion? These are two of the major issues addressed by this study which is based on work carried out at the European Commission since 1996.

WE WELCOME

Elena Saraceno

The FSU is pleased to welcome a new colleague Elena Saraceno. Elena will be working on future questions in the field of workforce and social issues, with particular emphasis on the candidate countries. One of her first tasks will be to establish a network of contacts in this field.

Elena comes to us from the directorship of the CRES (centre for economic/social research) in Udine, Italy, a professorship in regional economics at the University of Ancona and a lectureship in demography and statistics at Udine. She is particularly qualified in rural labour market issues and rural/urban migration, topics on which she has published widely.

Miguel Mesquita da Cunha

Miguel joined the Forward Studies Unit last spring. From France to America, from Japan to Brussels, his career so far has been as varied in locations as in the sectors he has covered.

A graduate of the Institute of Political Studies in Paris, he started as a Parliamentary assistant in the French Senate before moving to NATO. Since joining the Commission in 1986 he has taken on

several tasks in different departments, ranging from the coordination of structural funds to relations with the Middle East, Eastern Europe, the former Soviet Union and with Asia, within the ASEM framework.

Within the Forward Studies Unit he deals with institutional reform, foreign and security policy, and philosophical aspects of European integration.

Marcus Bleinroth

Marcus joined the Forward Studies Unit as a national expert on secondment on 1st September. He is a civil servant at the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs. After a period of training and work experience in several departments, he worked in the ministry's planning unit from 1997 to September 1999 dealing with European policy issues.

He studied at the University of Witten and in Cleveland and Tokyo. He is something of a polyglot, speaking seven European languages, including Russian, in addition to Japanese and Chinese.

RENEWING OUR LIST OF CANDIDATE CONTRACTORS

From time to time the Forward Studies Unit needs to strike a contract with a research institute, consultancy, or similar organisation to do some work on its behalf.

To find such contractors we go through a two-stage process, in accordance with the current rules on

public procurement. First, we publish a call for expressions of interest, to find firms and institutes potentially interested in working with us. Respondents who are evidently qualified are included on a list which is used in the second stage: when one of our research projects is well-defined and we know what outside help we want, we invite tenders for the work, but only from those who are on our list.

Full instructions on how to get onto our list are given on our homepage : (http://europa.eu.int/comm/cdp/index_fr.htm).

Frequently asked questions include whether applications should be made by individuals within institutes or research departments, or the institutes or enterprises themselves; and whether there is any deadline.

On the first point, we prefer not to receive expressions of interest from individuals, but from the organisation they belong to as such. This way we are sure that the submission comes from somebody with authority to allocate the necessary resources to a project, and to sign a contract on behalf of the organisation. On the matter of deadlines, there are none: organisations can make their submissions at any time. Of course, the sooner they do it, the more chance they will have to be invited to bid in future tenders.

For further information, please contact William Floyd (Tel. (32-2) 296 03 92; Fax (32-2) 295 23 05, e-mail: info@cdp.cec.be)

William FLOYD — ■

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In the near future you will be able to retrieve the contents of literature associated with the European Carrefours on Science and Culture from the server Europa:
(http://europa.eu.int/comm/cdp/index_en.htm)

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