

Equality between Women ^{and} Men



PARLIAMENTARY GROUP OF THE PARTY OF EUROPEAN SOCIALISTS

For us European Socialists, equality between women and men is a basic principle of democracy

- **Women's representation in the decision-making process**

Despite important changes over recent decades which have given women formal access to the political world and most places where decisions about our lives are made, women are still hugely under-represented in politics, in trade unions, in voluntary organisations, and generally in all centres of power. Under-representation of women in decision-making is a form of democratic deficit which results in a waste of human potential and resources. The PES Group believes that, at all levels, responsibility should be shared between women and men, and believe quotas are necessary to this end.

- **Women and employment**

The European project has brought about greater equality of rights between women and men. The PES Group has wholeheartedly supported legislative measures designed to combat discrimination in the field of employment which cover equal pay for work of equal value, part-time work, maternity rights, parental leave, etc. Yet, there remain big differences between legal equality and real-life equality. Even though women are well represented in the workforce of all European Union (EU) Member States, they still face lower salaries, unequal professional career prospects, higher unemployment, and greater job insecurity. Equal participation for men and women in the labour market is an essential part of achieving equality between women and men in society. We need to promote the systematic application of equality in order to allow people to balance professional and family life.

- **Integration of the gender dimension (Gender mainstreaming)**

We believe the European Parliament should be a prime mover in gender mainstreaming, both in its political work and in integrating the gender dimension within its own structures. A Socialist-initiated report, adopted by the Parliament, proposed that each of its committees and delegations should designate a Member to apply a gender mainstreaming approach to its work. We also want this concept to become a reality for every European citizen and want to see its systematic application – with positive action – in all European policies.

- **Women in an enlarged Europe**

The process of enlargement means the reunification of a Europe where women are able to play a new role because women's rights are necessary for social progress. We want to ensure that all States in an enlarged Europe respect women's rights, and that they adapt their laws to incorporate the 'acquis communautaire' in the field of equal opportunities, and more importantly that these laws are translated into concrete equality between women and men.



- **Women and the Convention on the future of Europe**

We believe that the future European Constitution should institutionalise equality between women and men. To this end, the future Constitution should include the principle of equality between women and men in all areas of society and not only in employment. Europe can only be built with the full participation of women if it is to be democratic. Furthermore, we oppose any reference to religion in the new Constitution and believe that a clear separation of church and state, together with genuine freedom to choose one's beliefs, are part of the foundations of democracy.

- **Women and the peace process**

Decisions about war and peace are still virtually an exclusive domain of men. We believe that women should systematically be part of official conflict resolution processes and should be amongst the representatives in peace negotiations, possibly through the creation of women's councils that would advise the UN Security Council. Women also have a crucial role to play in post-conflict reconstruction of their societies.

- **Ending violence against women**

Women from all backgrounds and of all ages face daily psychological or physical violence within the family, in the workplace, or in social situations. We are working to increase public awareness of this violence, but victims lack adequate protection, support or legal defence. At European level, Socialists have secured and supported the DAPHNE programme which finances initiatives to tackle violence against women and children. This programme is open to voluntary organisations, local authorities, and applies also to the countries joining the EU in 2004. We will also be proposing a European Year against Violence.

- **Reproductive and sexual rights**

We are conscious of existing inequalities in the approach to family planning, contraception, sex education, abortion and pregnancy within existing and future Member States of the EU. On our initiative, a report was adopted by the European Parliament which recommends that all Member States (existing and future) should adopt sound national policies covering sexual reproductive health, including high quality standards in the fight against breast cancer.

- **Women and fundamentalism**

We are aware that fundamentalism in any religion has a considerable negative effect on women's emancipation and can result in the violation of women's basic rights. Religion, traditional cultures or practices, and legislation incompatible with women's rights cannot be allowed to interfere with rights set out in international treaties and conventions. We therefore propose that, across the EU, rules or traditions should be banned if they infringe the basic human rights of women.



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