

"WOMEN IN ACTION"

PARLIAMENTARY GROUP OF THE PARTY OF EUROPEAN SOCIALISTS





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WOMEN MEPs PES PARLIAMETARY GROUP



1999 - 2004



INTRODUCTION



The position of women in society has indisputably improved within the last half century. Terms such as “equality”, “equal opportunities” and “women’s rights”, which yesterday were unknown, are now part of the political agenda and are written into our laws. This could not have happened without the determined action of the European Parliament and, above all, its Committee on Women’s Rights and Equal Opportunities, which was established in 1984.

In 1995, the 4th World Conference on Women in Beijing, placed under the aegis of the United Nations, was to take a completely new course of action and become the new reference point of the feminist movement. Following this conference, “empowerment” and “mainstreaming” became the latest trends. From then on, strong demands were made for the full participation of women in power structures, political decision-making and in positions of responsibility, while at the same time taking into account the interests of women in all areas of society.

The women socialist members of the European Parliament have shared this struggle and these demands from the beginning⁽¹⁾. They have fought, often successfully, to establish equal participation of men and women in all areas, to encourage women to enter the social, economic and political life of the Union on an equal footing. Representing 39% of the socialist Group, these MEPs have unquestionably

⁽¹⁾ See the Groener report A5-0125/2000



succeeded in “feminising” the European political environment.

Twelve of them wished to discuss their work here. Each of them has her own special interest. At the beginning of 2004, it seemed an opportune moment for us to take stock of the advances already achieved, the failures to be deplored and the projects to be set in motion, as this is the year in which the European Union will undergo major changes.

In the near future, Europe will see the renewal of the Parliament and the Commission, the enlargement to 25 Member States and, perhaps, the adoption of a Constitution. Socialist women fully intend to make use of these new orders to demand a more egalitarian democracy, greater respect for minority groups and greater solidarity towards the rest of the world.

LISSY GROENER,
PES Group coordinator for the Committee on women's rights and equal opportunities

POWER CAN ALSO BE SHARED!

“ The world would certainly be a better place if women were more involved in political life and the decision-making process. It is evident that they are under-represented in government. This deficit directly questions the very legitimacy of these authorities, monopolised by a minority. This imbalance corrupts the democratic principles according to which the interests and aptitudes of all people should be respected. Furthermore, the absence or lack of the presence of women in the decision-making process deprives our society both from a diversity and a real human resources point of view. Yet, “the other half of the sky”, as a well-known Chinese expression describes women, has a certain sensitivity, if not their own values, to offer the world: a unique sense of justice and solidarity, openness to dialogue, an ethical approach to politics and an ability to prioritise. In June, legislative elections for the renewal of the European Parliament will take place. The problem of equality will once again be a burning issue: how many candidates will be women and how many will be elected? Two key questions for all of us, men and women alike. ”



Anna KARAMANOU

See also the report Karamanou on this subject: A5-0373/2000

IF EQUALITY IN THE WORKPLACE IS NOT UNIVERSAL, IT MUST BECOME WIDESPREAD



Marie-Hélène GILLIG

“ Employment inevitably means financial independence and social integration. This is equally important for both men and women. However, they do not both have the same opportunities. We cannot help but notice that women are often marginalised, including in the European Union. In 2000, differences in pay could be as high as 16%, while 8.7% of women were affected by unemployment, as opposed to 6.9% of men. Similarly, women remain too restricted to stereotypical jobs. The inequality in area of education and training also does not help them. There are fewer women in research jobs and the numerical gap affects them first: less than 20% of students specialising in Information and Communication Technologies are women. The 1976 European legislation establishing equal treatment in terms of employment and working conditions has just been strengthened. But for socialist MEPs, there is other work to be done. They must make sure that women have access to top quality jobs, follow a continuous education, are less exposed to job insecurity, can learn to use new technologies and diversify their professional choices. At the same time, we must ensure the development of complementary services [child and dependent care] so as not to hinder women's professional options. ”

SERVICES AT THE SAME PRICE !

“ All discrimination based on gender is categorically banned in the European Union. Article 13 of the Treaty and the nine resulting framework laws testify to it. Thanks to these measures, a woman can, in fact must, lay claim to a



Christa PRETS

salary equal to that of a man doing the same work. The fact remains that the Community's legislation does not extend beyond the workplace. Outside this field, discrimination remains widespread, without legal restrictions.

One example is occupational pension schemes. A woman usually receives less than a man even though they have made the same contributions. This is because she is deemed to live longer.

The Committee on Women's Rights and Equal Opportunities, at the instigation of the socialist MEPs, intends to tackle sexism head on in all services, by means of legal instruments created for this purpose. ”

See also the Prets report
on this subject: A5-0155/2004

TWO NEW CONCEPTS TO AID EQUALITY



Fiorella GHILARDOTTI

“ The concepts of “gender mainstreaming” and “gender budgeting”, which appeared in the 1990s at the same time as “ the gender dimension ” , have become essential instruments in establishing equality between men and women and

reducing socio-economic inequalities between the two sexes.

To fully understand these technical terms, now associated with European policies, we must first recognise that there are fundamental differences between men and women and that all decisions made, far from being neutral, have separate impacts on both sexes. “Gender mainstreaming” involves taking into account equal opportunities and the interests of women in all political decisions involving society. “Gender budgeting” implies the integration of the gender aspect in all budgeting, while considering that all budgetary decisions, national or European, have a different impact on the daily life of men and women.

In the eyes of socialist MEPs, these are the two methods that currently best respond to the demands of building a society that is more democratic, more transparent (the authorities being doubly accountable) and more efficient (budgetary expenditure, where relevant, distinguishing between the needs of men and women).

”

See also the reports on this subject
by Groener: A5-0060/2003
and Ghilardotti: A5-0214/2003



EQUALITY IN THE EUROPEAN CONSTITUTION

“ The year 2003 was marked by the adoption of a project to create a Constitution, based on the most transparent and democratic principles possible, and drawn up by the “Convention on the Future of Europe”.



Elena PACIOTTI

The Socialist MEPs made their presence felt by demanding a greater and more detailed reference to equality between men and women in Community law.

Thanks to their contributions, the Charter of Fundamental Rights should now become an integral part of the future European Constitution. And this is not an empty word. This Charter goes further than the current treaties in the recognition and practice of equality and parity. Far from remaining simple abstract concepts, they will become more legally restrictive and extended to “all areas”. They will be inserted into a number of “founding values” of the European Union. Promoting them will henceforth be a priority and, if necessary, will be achieved by “strong-arm tactics”, using preferential measures or positive action.

However, this positive evolution must be put into perspective. The European Council of Ministers, at the risk of causing paralysis, will continue to vote unanimously for all anti-discriminatory measures. This is one of the most serious faults of the current constitutional project. ”

DAPHNE TO THE RESCUE OF WOMEN VICTIMS OF VIOLENCE



Lissy GROENER

“ In the European Union, one woman in five has already been a victim of acts of violence perpetrated by her male partner at least once.

The European programme Daphne, adopted by the European Parliament in 1997, aims to finance and support measures in the struggle against violence towards children, young people and women. They are all confronted by this violence, simple domestic brutality or harassment, rape, prostitution or trafficking.

Between 2000 and 2003, Daphne financed some 140 projects of different kinds: first material help, public awareness campaigns and preventative measures. However, the budget was only able to cover 13% of the projects that were worthy of being carried out. Socialist MEPs believe that a budget increase should be awarded for the years 2004 to 2008. They also support the setting up of a helpdesk for non-governmental organisations, particularly in the new Member States, to assist help networks and organisations targeted at women and children in these countries.

A general mobilisation is expected with a view to making 2006 the “European Year for the fight against Violence against Women”.

”

See also the Groener report on this subject:
A5-0280/2003



SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS FOR ALL WOMEN

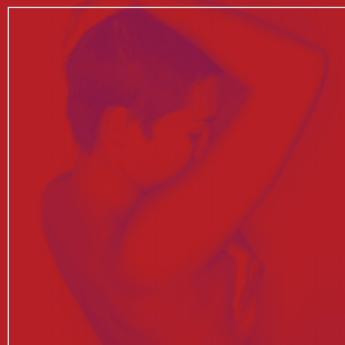
“ Europeans should be able to enjoy equal reproductive and sexual rights and have the choice of all methods of contraception. Women should be well informed and free to choose if and when they want to have children and, if necessary, terminate their pregnancy. In most countries in the European Union, legislation has been adopted to this end. But there are still unfortunate exceptions where abortion remains illegal. The situation can also be discriminatory in some future Member States, where the price of the pill is equal to one-third of a monthly salary. Clearly: this situation results in large-scale inequality between women in Europe, according to their income or country of origin. It is certain that these disparities must disappear. Certainly, these specific health questions are a matter for governments, but the Union, and with it the socialist MEPs, also have a role to play, that of taking the initiative by providing information, promoting the exchange of positive experiences, in order that all European women can claim their rights in terms of sexuality and reproduction. ”



Anne VAN LANCKER

See also the van Lancker report on this subject A5-0223/2002

BREAST CANCER, THE DISEASE THAT STRIKES WOMEN



Karin JOENS

“ The figures speak for themselves.

In the European Union, 216,000 women contract breast cancer each year and 79,000 of them die. If all women had access to screening, 25,000 lives could be saved. 90% of patients would have the

best possible chance of recovery if their cancer was diagnosed and treated at an early stage. The fact is that only eight out of 15 Member States encourage women aged between 50 and 69 to have breast screening every two years as part of a national programme.

Socialist MEPs can congratulate themselves for having inspired the text of a resolution, which was approved by a large majority in the European Parliament on 5 June last year. Although Governments are free from any obligation towards the Union concerning the recommendations made by the Parliament, they are invited to achieve certain targets by 2008: create the conditions necessary to reduce deaths from breast cancer by 25%, systematise mammograms and other screening and open approved multidisciplinary care centres.

A deadline has already been set for 2006 to evaluate the progress made in a fight that concerns all of us.

”



See also the Joens report on this subject:
AS-0159/2003



TOO MANY WOMEN ARE STILL VULNERABLE

“ On all continents, women continue to pay the price of inequality, discrimination and violence. Violence from partners in some places, violence from patriarchal customs in others, the list is extensive. It is true that the lack of alternatives, poverty, illiteracy and health risks affect women most particularly in developing countries. Women in Europe can seem less vulnerable, being nearer to the freedom and autonomy which has been a demand of the left for all, and for so long. It is often patriarchal culture, together with traditions imposed by the lack of resources which keep women subordinate to men, both inside and outside the home. Equality between men and women must become universal. This is one of the tasks of the European Union and in particular socialist MEPs. In many places across the world, people are attentively observing advances made by European women; progress that sets an example. Let us not hesitate to pass onto others news of these successes.”



María Elena VALENCIANO
MARTINEZ-OROZCO

See also the Valenciano reports
on this subject:
A5-0285/2001 and A5-0102/2004

EQUALITY, A PREREQUISITE FOR PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT



Olga ZRIHEN

“ The quest for greater equality between men and women must be universal and not confined to Europe's borders alone. Our commitment as women and as MEPs is to make the world recognise that women are born

free and with equal rights.

In many areas in the world, particularly in developing countries, too many women continue to live in a state of submission, exclusion and great insecurity. In addition to poverty, there is illiteracy, religious constraints and patriarchal oppression.

The United Nations is active in this area, organising several international conferences. In 1995 in Beijing, then in 2000 at the Millennium Summit in New York, the eradication of all forms of discrimination towards women was clearly affirmed. Nevertheless, we need action, solutions and concrete advances.

This is precisely what socialist women endeavour to do, through cooperation efforts, relayed in the field by specialist organisations. No area of activity is neglected - because emancipation, parity and the recognition of women's rights are to be won on all fronts and in all parts of the world.

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See also the Zrihen report on this subject:
A5-0447/2003

AGRICULTURE: CHERCHEZ LA FEMME!

“ They are the main players, but a forgotten aspect of the world of agriculture – even though they make up 37% of its population in Europe. They work without really being noticed: women seem to blend into the agricultural landscape. They are responsible for more than one third of work carried out in family farms, but it is often ignored. Besides, it is “invisible”.



María RODRIGUEZ RAMOS

Women in the agricultural world have specific roles. Thanks to them, farms can further diversify and increase their revenue. We find more and more quality products on our markets, rural tourism is really taking off, socio-cultural activities are seeing a certain development, and this happens with the help of rural women.

They are no less disadvantaged, coming up against a twofold discrimination that deprives them both of social protection and legal status. Equal opportunities, which socialist women hold dear to their hearts, can and must unite with rural development. This is how Europe will be able to profit fully from the vast potential of its rural areas. ”

AFTER ENLARGEMENT



“ On 1 May, ten new countries will join the European Union. Their female populations are entitled to expect certain improvements as a result. But these States still have to give them the means to do so.

The adoption of European legislation into national law, which guarantees equal treatment of men and women, must be accompanied by resolutely voluntarist measures. First of all, they will have to accept inequality as a fact before thinking about adopting any strategies. We are also entitled to hope that the socio-economic development of the new member countries will give women the opportunity to gain financial independence. Moreover, it would be in the interest of the governments to “invest” in this human capital.

Women should not wait for miracles to give them a better lot in life – they should demand it from the European Union! However, they must gather together to take action, become politically involved and convince the generally male authorities that is essential to give them their rightful place. Let us invite the groups affiliated to the Party of European Socialists (PES) to be an example! The truth is that socialists are known for their fight in favour of social well-being and human rights. Involvement in the struggle to help women will naturally be one of their priorities.

”



Joke SWIEBEL



Zita GURMAI

LIST OF REPORTS BY THE COMMITTEE ON WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

- Daphne II programme 2004-2008: combating violence against children, young people and women
- The impact of the sex industry in the EU
- The situation of women from minority groups in the EU
- Reconciling professional, family and private life
- Women in South-eastern Europe
- Development cooperation: promoting gender equality
- Equality of men and women : grants to organisations active at European level, 2004-2005 action programme
- Equal treatment for men and women: access to goods and services and to the provision of goods and services
- Violation of women's rights and the role of the European Union (EU) in international relations
- Women in the new information society
- 2004 elections: how to ensure balanced representation of women and men
- Gender budgeting, building public budgets from a gender perspective
- Women from rural regions of the EU in the context of the Common Agricultural Policy
- Breast cancer in the EU
- Women and sport
- Gender-mainstreaming in the European Parliament
- The objectives of gender equality using the structural Funds
- Equal opportunities for women and men in the EU. 6th annual report 2001
- Representation of women among the social partners of the EU
- Mid-term revision of Daphne Programme 2000-2003



- Implementation of the gender equality programme (2001-2005)
- Health and rights concerning sexuality and reproduction
- Equal opportunities between women and men : employment, vocational training, and working conditions
- Equal opportunities for women and men in the EU. 5th annual report 2000
- Development policy : mainstreaming of gender equality in development cooperation Action programme 2001-2006
- Women and fundamentalism
- The EU's policy and the mediterranean countries regarding the promotion of women's rights and equal opportunities
- Female genital mutilation
- Equal pay for work of equal value
- Gender equality : framework strategy and work programme for 2001
- Balanced participation of women and men in the decision-making process
- Regulating domestic help in the informal sector
- Prevention and settlement of armed conflicts : gender-related aspects
- Gender equality : Community framework strategy and programme 2001-2005
- Equal opportunities for women and men in the EU. 2nd, 3rd and 4th annual reports 1997-1999
- Combating organized crime : trafficking in women, further actions following COM(96)0567
- Follow-up to the Peking action platform
- Equal opportunities: women 's participation in European scientific research
- Daphne Programme 2000-2003 : action relating to violence against children, young persons and women

LIST OF PES GROUP (FULL MEMBERS AND SUBSTITUTES) ON THE COMMITTEE ON WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES 1999-2004

MEMBERS		WEBSITE ADDRESSES
Maria	BERGER	www.spe.at/berger
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Jutta	HAUG	www.Jutta-Haug.de
Mary	HONEYBALL	www.maryhoneyball.net/
María	IZQUIERDO ROJO	www.ctv.es/USERS/mariaizquierdo/home.htm
Karin	JOENS	www.joens.de
Anna	KARAMANOU	www.karamanou.gr
Hans	KARLSSON	www.s-ep.org/hanskarlsson/
Eryl	McNALLY	www.erylmcnallymep.org.uk
Pasqualina	NAPOLETANO	www.dspe.net
Elena Ornella	PACIOTTI	www.dspe.net
Christa	PRETS	www.christaprets.at
Christa	RANDZIO-PLATH	www.randzio-plath.de
María	RODRIGUEZ RAMOS	www.psoe-pe.org/
Karin	SCHEELE	www.karinscheele.at
María	SORNOSA MARTINEZ	www.psoe-pe.org/
Joke	SWIEBEL	www.jokeswiebel.nl
Helena	TORRES MARQUES	www.partido-socialista.net
María Elena	VALENCIANO MARTINEZ-OROZCO	www.psoe-pe.org
Anne E.M.	VAN LANCKER	www.annevanlancker.be
Olga	ZRIHEN	www.olgazrihen.net

PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN ELECTED IN THE NATIONAL PARLIAMENTS OF THE 25 MEMBER STATES AND IN THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT



Country	Total number of deputies	Number of women	Percentage of women
Austria	183	62	33,9%
Belgium	150	53	35,3%
Denmark	179	68	38,0%
Finland	200	75	37,5%
France	574	70	12,2%
Germany	603	194	32,2%
Greece	300	39	13,0%
Ireland	166	22	13,3%
Italy	618	71	11,5%
Luxembourg	60	10	16,7%
Portugal	230	44	19,1%
Spain	350	126	36,0%
Sweden	349	158	45,3%
The Netherlands	150	55	36,7%
United Kingdom	659	118	17,9%

NEW MEMBER STATES

Cyprus	56	6	10,7%
Czech Republic	200	34	17%
Estonia	101	19	18,8%
Hungary	386	38	9,8%
Latvia	100	21	21%
Lithuania	141	15	10,6%
Malta	65	5	7,7%
Poland	460	93	20,2%
Slovakia	150	29	19,3%
Slovenia	90	11	12,2%

European Parliament	626	194	31,0%
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Source: Interparliamentary Union – status on March 2004

USEFUL LINKS



http://www.europarl.eu.int/comparl/femm/ccec/default_en.htm

NCEO - Network of Parliamentary Committees for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men in the European Union



<http://www.socialistgroup.org>
Socialist Group - Women's site



http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/equ_opp/contact_en.html

European Commission - Equal Opportunities Unit



<http://www.socintwomen.org.uk>
Socialist International Women



<http://www.womenlobby.org/index2.htm>
European Women's Lobby



http://www.europarl.eu.int/committees/femm_home.htm
European Parliament - women's rights Committee



<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/>
United Nations Women Watch



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Gruppo Parlamentare del Partito del Socialismo Europeo
Fractie van de Partij van de Europese Sociaaldemocraten
Euroopan sosialidemokraattisen puolueen parlamenttiryhmä
De Europeiska Socialdemokraternas Parlamentsgrupp
Grupo Parlamentar do Partido Socialista Europeu
De Europæiske Socialdemokraters Gruppe
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az Európai Szocialisták Pártjának parlamenti frakciója
Klub Parlamentarny Partii Europejskich Socjalistów
Poslanska skupina Stranke evropskih socialdemokratov
Parlamentný klub Strany európskych socialistov
Euroopa Parlamendi sotsiaaldemokraatide fraktsioon
Poslanecký klub Evropské strany sociálně demokratické
Eiropas Sociāldemokrātiskās partijas Parlamentārā grupa
Europos socialistu partijos parlamentine grupe
II-Grupp Parlamentari tal-Partit tas-Socjalisti Ewropej



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