



**LOBBY EUROPEEN DES FEMMES
EUROPEAN WOMEN'S LOBBY**

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Seminar: Strategies to tackle gender discrimination in the workplace**

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Good morning dear friends and colleagues, and thanks to Hiltrud Breyer to have invited me to be with you today and to share with you the experiences of the European Women's Lobby in relation to .

The European Women's Lobby, created in 1990, regroups more than 2000 women's associations in the EU, with a permanent secretariat in Brussels. The EWL is structured in national co ordinations in 28 countries and in 18 European-wide organisations.

Our main goal is to work together with our member organisations throughout Europe to lobby EU institutions for the realisation of equality between women and men and therefore we work in a number of different areas including:

- European policies and legislation related to equality between women and men including gender mainstreaming.
- Employment and social policies
- Diversity (both in terms of internal structures and in terms of policies) and immigration
- Violence against women and women's human rights
- Women in decision-making and the promotion of parity democracy

What is the situation of women in Europe today: a lot of progress but still large gender gaps:

- Women still do about 2/3 of the housework, even if they also have a job outside the house;
- Women earn only 76% of men's gross hourly pay (EU average) for the same job
- Men hold 76% of parliamentary seats in the EU;

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- It is estimated that one woman in five in Europe has been subjected to some form of violence. Women are most likely to fall victim to violence at home.

This shows of course that much more remains to be done on all fronts to reach equality in everyday life in Europe.

Speak about 2 main points: gender gaps in employment and latest EWL campaign in relation to the European elections.

Gender gaps in employment

Large body of European legislation in relation to equality between women and men and more to come (conciliation) but discrimination against women is still present on the labour market: the quantitative progress of women on the labour market has not yet been matched in qualitative terms.

- Increasing proportion of women in the workforce (but still short of Lisbon objectives : 57% v 72% for men)
- accompanied by increased prevalence of part-time work (80% of European part-timers are women)

Persistence of gender gaps (pay, time, employment rate, pension, care, poverty) – the ‘double burden’

Several aspects of the quality of work for women remain problematic and what is very worrying, the indicators for the gender pay gap, labour market segregation and women in decision-making have not shown any significant increase for several years. The pay gap has remained at 15% since 2003 and has narrowed only by one point since 2000. Sectoral and occupational segregation by gender is not diminishing and is even increasing in certain countries, a sign that women who have recently joined the labour market have gone into sectors and occupations already dominated by women. The presence of female managers in companies has stayed at 33%.

Because of the remaining gaps, women enjoy secondary social citizenship rights: lower levels of pension, a lot of women in insecure employment with insecure social security rights, tax & benefit systems penalising unmarried couples and dual-earner households etc.

Women also support the bulk of the unpaid care and domestic work, which heavily impacts on their position on the labour market: **vicious circle: gender segregation of labour market determines gender division of family & domestic responsibilities and vice versa ex lower employment revenue of women impacts on choice regarding taking parental leave.**

Some ideas for the future

- Make gender equality a priority in the European Employment Strategy,
- Flexicurity: has been placed on the political agenda linked to the revised Lisbon Strategy on Growth and Jobs, need to guarantees needed that the concept and practice of flexicurity does not turn out to be yet another means of perpetuating or even widening the pay gap: need gender mainstreaming when developing national policies, strongly link the flexicurity concept to issues of gender gaps, and to place the equal sharing of unpaid work at the focus of this policy + assessment of the impact of flexicurity on the pay gap
- establishment of **concrete European targets and timelines**, notably for the elimination of the gender pay gap, the desegregation of the labour market and the provision of quality, affordable care services for all dependants (to complement the Barcelona targets).
- Make sure that periods of unpaid work are counted as productive time in calculations for full pension rights and other employment related social security benefits.
- Make sure links are made between policy issues
- Institutionalise consultations with women's organisations, as supplement to social partners efforts to eliminate gaps between women and men in employment and society

The EWL approach to equality is that **inequalities between women and men form part of a continuum and are deeply rooted in mentalities, but also in the different social structures and political systems.** It is therefore very difficult to take effective isolated measures to achieve gender equality. This is why in our lobbying and political work we always try to **work on several levels and to make the link between different issues.**

EWL 50/50 campaign

1. EWL vision of gender inequality in politics

In 2008, men occupy 82% of parliamentary seats in the world and women only 18%. The figures for European Union are around 23% women in national parliaments, and 30% in the European Parliament.

The promotion of women in decision-making positions is naturally an important area of activity for EWL and we have been actively promoting an equal representation of women within in politics in particular within the European institutions for many years.

We know that a number of **different mechanisms** lead to the under-representations of women in politics, those are well known:

1. **Women's economic subordination:** economic, social and cultural resources are necessary to attain political decision-making position
2. **Symbolic factors** linked to gender roles: political decision-making is still seen as a male domain
3. **Electoral institutions, laws and functioning:** list system or majority systems, holding of several mandates, political parties as gate keepers, status of elected persons etc

For the EWL, achieving gender equality in decision-making is a condition for democracy: democracy in Europe demands that we rethink the way we see and practice representation. It is not enough that people have the right to vote, but the elected persons should better reflect the diverse citizenry of Europe and that women and men need to be equally represented in European politics, in order to have a say on decisions that affect their lives.

The qualitative difference made by women politicians and their representativity, in particular of the diversity of women is a controversial issue in theory and in practice.

Of course, innovations and real changes in relation to gender equality **don't come from all women politicians**, but in the EWL experience in working daily with decision-makers, major changes and push for progress for realising gender equality **still come through the larger presence of women who can make their voice heard and the ones that constantly push for gender equality issues are mainly women.** This is true for example for discussions within the **Convention on the Future of Europe**, where a critical mass of women was seriously lacking (14% women) and made progress in the draft European Constitution more modest than what we had wished and pushed for,

but where the main progress were achieved mostly through the constant work of some very committed women.

A very effective way to achieve progress in our experience is for women's organisations **to work closely with women politicians**, to support their work in relation to gender equality either technically through policy work or by showing other decision-makers that they are not isolated in their claims. As examples of a combined role of the influence of women's organisations and presence of a "critical mass" of women in parliament/government to achieve progress, we can mention the recent Spanish integrated law on violence against women.

This leads us also to the **question of quotas or other binding measures for the promotion of women in decision making**. Seen from the point of view of the different barriers that women are up against when entering politics, it is really the responsibility of society and of the State (and the European institutions) to change the way politics work. **Quotas or parity democracy are not the only solution, but are an important way of compensating for the obstacles that women face** and I guess most of us in the women's movement are not ready to wait for another century for things to change "naturally"!

The **example of the European institutions** is quite significant in this respect: the proportion of women in the European Parliament and Commission has gradually and rather slowly risen in the last decades and we have now 31% women in the European Parliament and 33% in the Commission. However despite numerous commitments and declarations of intention, the European institutions have failed until now to take any binding measure to insure and equal representation of women and men in the main European decision-making bodies. An article dealing with more gender balance the European Commission that was inserted in the draft European Constitution by the Convention was even removed from the final text of heads of State and governments.

In order to change the family picture and to mobilise voters to cast their votes , the EWL is launching a campaign in the running to European elections. The campaign is called 50/50 No European Democracy without Gender Equality.

Our public campaign will be directed to voters, through engaging decision-makers and other prominent figures in discussions and asking their commitment to parity democracy. Gathering prominent support is a way to show that change is possible and a mean to trigger action and participation

from the part of voters (contacting political parties and governments, reading electoral programmes and of course, going to vote!).

We have started to ask prominent personalities to support our campaign message “No European Democracy without Gender Equality”. With the support of our member organisations, we are currently reaching out to ministers, artists, civil society actors and asking them to endorse our campaign.

We hope that as many actors as possible in civil society and among you present here will participate in our campaign, which in the long run, aims at more committed women representing our voice in the European institutions and at putting gender equality and women’s rights much higher on the European political agenda.

Thank you very much!