MEN AND WOMEN IN EUROPEAN MUNICIPALITIES

Assessment
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Seminars co-financed by DG V (Section for equal opportunities) of the European Commission within the framework of the 4th mid-term action programme of equal opportunities for men and women (1996-2000) of the European Union
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"We want a Europe which reflects the aspirations of women. We have a particular responsibility to ensure that the aspirations and concerns of women, who comprise at least half of all European citizens, are fully addressed. In this regard we consider it essential that women have full access to the political process, and to ensure that they have the opportunity to participate equally in decision-making at all levels, in fulfilment of the principle of parity democracy."

CEMR Declaration adopted at the General Assembly in Thessaloniki, May 1996
The following texts were presented by researchers during the seminars organised by CEMR’s Standing Committee of women elected representatives of local and regional authorities which took place in:

Sintra, Portugal on 20-21 April 1997
The Hague, Netherlands on 20-21 November 1997
Sofia, Bulgaria on 19-20 March 1998
Amfissa, Greece on 4-5 May 1998

The seminars held in Sintra, The Hague and Amfissa were co-financed by DG V under the 4th Community Action Programme (1996-2000) for equal opportunities between women and men. The Sofia seminar was co-financed by DG X. We believed it useful to publish two of the texts presented at the seminar in Sofia as they both concern the programme for equality. One concerns an EU member country, France, and the other focuses on the Central and Eastern European countries. The first reports on how women are able to climb more quickly in politics when the political will exists. The second text is particularly interesting, coming at a time when the Central and Eastern European countries are knocking on the door of the European Union, in order to understand the obstacles faced by women in this region in obtaining decision-making powers.

This document constitutes a first stage. CEMR’s ambition is to present a publication which reports on the situation of women in local decision-making bodies in the fifteen European Union Member States at the end of the 4th medium-term action programme for equal opportunities between women and men. We are still lacking information on five countries which is necessary to have a complete overview with regard to women’s political participation in municipalities.

The ten countries studied are the focus of the first part of this publication. The second part contains the text concerning Central and Eastern Europe and other speeches presented at the seminars of the Standing Committee of women elected representatives of local and regional authorities mentioned above. Included in these is a text on women civil servants of local and regional authorities in Germany. We hope to be able to develop this field of study in the coming years. Equality in decision-making concerns more than just politics. It should be noted (although the text on Ireland makes reference to this aspect) that studies on the place of women in local government are exceptional and that statistics in this area remain incomplete.

The French version of this document was edited under the supervision of Françoise Gaspard. The English version was supervised by CEMR’s translation department.
To judge the degree of modernisation of a society, one needs to look at the position of women in public life. In this regard, local authorities are a useful and pertinent place for observation. In particular, are municipalities not the administrative level where one’s civic duties and rights are exercised and learned? What do statistics tell us? This document demonstrates: within the European Union, one municipal elected representative out of five is a woman. A great deal therefore remains to be done to attain equality. Worse: there are significant disparities from one country to another, as the number of women local elected representatives can be derisory in certain countries, and even in those where it is higher, the majority of mayors are men.

CEMR's Standing Committee of women elected representatives of local and regional authorities is particularly dynamic. The nature of its work encourages discussion on the strategies to help achieve a balance of women and men in decision-making bodies. The texts which follow must be read by all elected representatives so that they can appreciate to what extent Europe can set an example in terms of constructing a more balanced society. This presumes that public decision-making, starting at local level, be equitably exercised by women and men.

We therefore wish to call attention to the nature of this work and hope that the elected representatives as well as the governments of European Union States, the European Parliament, the European Commission, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions give it the attention it deserves.

Valéry Giscard d'Estaing
President of CEMR
Former President of the French Republic
President of the Regional Council of Auvergne
Foreword by the President of CEMR’s Standing Committee of women elected representatives of local and regional authorities

Was a committee of women elected representatives of local and regional authorities necessary? At a time when mainstreaming is being discussed, is the maintenance of such a structure useful? The answer to these two questions is obviously yes.

The success of the seminars organised by this Committee, the creation of a network of women local and regional elected representatives in Europe, the favourable response received to the newsletter as well as the webpages for women elected representatives on CEMR’s web site demonstrates that this undertaking has responded to long awaited expectations. The co-financing granted by the European Commission under the medium-term 4th Community Action Programme for equal opportunities between women and men has widely contributed to the development of its impact. Women local and regional elected representatives from the fifteen European Union Member States meet, exchange information and experiences and encourage women to stand for election.

This document is one of the results of these meetings. One of the original aspects of our actions is to work in partnership, not only with the public authorities and EU Institutions, but with researchers. The latter allows us to become more familiar with the situation in each of our countries, to determine the obstacles faced by women everywhere in entering politics and to discover the strategies allowing them to overcome these difficulties. Our objective is to provide, in the year 2000, to women elected representatives, the States, the political parties, the social partners and NGOs, an overall view of the situation at local level which integrates the aspect of gender. Without the relentless work of our Committee, it is likely that such information and analyses would not have been compiled.

We are furthermore convinced that mainstreaming — the integration of gender in all policies and at all levels — can only be achieved if actions like ours are pursued. Equality is not a given. It is constructed. It must be given an impetus. The Committee will have fulfilled an important objective on the day when as many men as women pursue the work of the Committee of women elected representatives of local and regional authorities and especially when there are as many women as men in all of CEMR’s Committees. That time has not yet come!

Our hope is that those who read this document will use it while keeping in mind that its aim is to construct, at local and regional level, the basis of a more democratic society.

Cllr Joan Taylor
President of CEMR’s Committee of women elected representatives of local and regional authorities
Chair, Equal Opportunities Panel, Local Government Association
Councillor of Nottinghamshire County Council
It is only recently that the disparity in the numbers of men and women in the decision-making process has been considered as part of the stakes in democracy. The action plan adopted at the outcome of the UN’s first world conference on women, held in Mexico City in 1975, indicated that an “increase and equal participation of women at all levels of decision making” would contribute to accelerate and promote peace. Yet, it was not until the end of the 1980’s and the beginning of the 1990’s that the issue of equal participation in decision-making was included on the public agenda. In 1989, the Council of Europe set up a working group on the theme of parity democracy. Shortly after, the former Eastern-Bloc countries began to seek admission to the Council of Europe. They had aspirations of democracy. Yet, at the same time, the Western European countries were questioning the functioning of their democratic systems. The rarity of women in government and the elected assemblies was analysed by the Council of Europe as an indicator counter to the democratic ideal. The Interparliamentary Union of Geneva, an organisation which has monitored the functioning of national assemblies for one hundred years, contributed to making people aware of the disparity of women and men in politics by publishing, beginning in 1985, statistical data on women’s presence in governments all over the world. The report which followed the first free elections in the Eastern European countries showed a decrease in the number of women elected.¹ This evaluation led to the questioning of the link between democracy and the exclusion of women.

For the first time, the increase in the number of women in positions of power was the basis of a Community objective within the framework of the third medium-term programme on equal opportunities between women and men (1990-1995). The activities of the network of experts on “women in decision-making” focused particularly on the formation of a statistical ideal which allowed them to compare the situation of women in

the Union’s Member States with this new criteria: what percentage do they hold in the
governments, elected assemblies, and the States’ administration? Attention was first
concentrated on the State and parliamentary level. The World Report on Human
Development\(^2\) published on the eve of the World Conference in Beijing also introduced
the Indicator of Women’s Participation (IWP) in politics, economic and professional life
as one of the indicators to measure development. This enabled the authors of the report
to determine that there was no correlation between economic development and women’s
participation in public life on the basis of their participation in the national parliaments,
as the European countries were situated somewhat below the world average. The presence
of women in local politics is certainly as much a strategic matter as it is at national
level. Yet, the fact is that is has not been the subject of many surveys or studies.

Women local and regional elected representatives, as players in local democracy,
took the initiative of implementing actions and a reflection on the subject, starting in the
early 1980s. Within CEMR, women elected representatives initiated a debate on the
topic “Women, Politics and Democracy.” The conferences in Pisa (1983), Saint-Jacques
de Compostelle (1986), Anvers (1988), and Heidelberg (1992) demonstrated the willingness
to tackle this problem. At the fifth conference for women elected representatives
held in Dublin, which attracted more than 400 participants, the concern about the organi-
sation and commitment to the concept of parity democracy was substantiated. What
remained to be accomplished was the recognition of issue of equality by male elected
representatives.

This was achieved at CEMR’s 20th General Meeting held in Thessaloniki in 1996.
The 2000 representatives adopted, included within the final declaration, the paragraph
cited at the beginning of this text.

A history of this “women elected representatives’ movement” should be the focus of
a study. Why has it emerged now instead of during the international women’s movement
that marked the preceding decade? In the 1980’s, militant feminism seemed to be
defunct. Which women elected members contributed to the construction which was to
become a network? How did they handle its launching, as it was demonstrated particularly
in Dublin, characterised by the demands of young women municipal councillors for
an effective organisation and the use of modern methods of communication like the
Internet? One thing is certain: elected women, whose beginnings most likely were first
modelled after “male politicians”, began to build a collective identity based on gender.
This change was made possible by the existence of a European organisation of elected
representatives. It was solidified by the creation, within CEMR, of the Committee of
Women Elected Representatives of Local and Regional Authorities, and since 1996, the
setting up of the European Network of Women Elected Representatives.

This network has been developed with the assistance of the European Commission
(DG X, and DG V following the implementation of the 4th medium-term Action
Programme on equal opportunities between women and men). The gathering in Sintra

\(^2\) Programme des Nations unies pour le développement, *Rapport mondial sur le développement humain*,
(April 1997), following the ones held in Tallinn (November 1996) and Rome (February 1997), revealed the demand of women elected representatives for such a network. This gathering gave proof, by the unexpectedly large turnout of both men and women, not only of the interest in introducing the problematics linked with gender in local administrations, but also the high anticipation in regard to holding similar meetings in other countries. The Committee of Women Elected Representatives of Local and Regional Authorities was thus proven to be seen as an ideal place for meetings, exchange of experiences and the dissemination of practical, productive models for equality.

It is essential that the discussions and analysis carried out at these seminars be made available to a wide audience. CEMR’s newsletter and the possibility of consulting CEMR’s Internet site for information concerning the Committee of Women Elected Representatives of Local and Regional Authorities have already allowed for the circulation of the work carried out and the dissemination of the activities in progress. A publication is currently being prepared, the result of the first year’s work and the signed agreement between the Commission (DG V) and CEMR. It is being realised with input from each of CEMR’s national Sections, who were sent a questionnaire in early 1997. It has several objectives.

The first is to provide statistical information concerning elected representatives, by gender, in the European Union member States. It has been observed that there is a lack of statistics based on gender in various countries. It is generally these same countries which suffer from inadequate representation of women in decision-making positions. The recommendation of the Council of Ministers meeting, held on 2 December 1996, exists precisely to encourage these States to implement the necessary changes. Counting women is tedious, irritating, and in some ways humiliating for women: are women not first members of the human species? This does not belie the fact that these figures show that women everywhere - including those countries which are presented as model democracies - remain minorities in the circles of political, economic and cultural power. Women from Northern Europe demonstrated that displaying the disparities between men and women, by publishing the figures, allowed for the opening of the debate. This publication would like to contribute in this area at European level. Countries other than those of the current Union are members of CEMR and their Women’s committees have sent us these statistics. They are included in the appendix.

The second objective is closely linked to the first. Using statistics and the comparisons we can make between EU countries, our purpose is to try to understand the reasons behind the differences which we observe from country to country and to disseminate strategies which help to result in more equality of representation. Over 40% of the Swedish regional assemblies are made up of women. On the other hand, less than 4% of the Greek regional assemblies are women.

These are two extremes. Nevertheless... an attempt to explain the European diversity is useful. This is even more the case while opinions, at large and especially within the Political parties, are still tainted with prejudice. An example of this is the view that it is easier for women to be elected in her community than it is at regional or national level. Or further still, that local level (for women that is, since this is not applied to men) can
serve as an apprenticeship on politics. These ideas should be examined starting with an analysis of the situations which seem to be linked to the culture, history and particularly the politics of each country. According to this view, the community structure, the voting methods, the possibility, or lack thereof, to hold several offices, the existence, or lack thereof, of an elected representative’s status must be taken into consideration.

The third objective is to attempt to answer the following question: does an increased presence of women in municipal councils result in a difference in how decisions are taken? It is not a question of disputing between the essentialist or egalitarian concepts which divide feminists, but to “measure”, using empirical analysis, the changes that bring about a “demasculinisation” of elected assemblies. The experiences of women elected representatives and the analysis of experts are important contributions in this regard. Women’s admission to the full rights of citizenship, which no one would no longer dare oppose, is one of the elements of a revolution that we have yet to appreciate fully. The opposition that women continue to encounter in their quest for parity in decision-making is certainly linked to the fact that their presence rightly calls into question an old order of being which carries repercussions not only in public life but in the private sphere as well. Here again, the municipality is a field of experimentation in the sense that it is the place where elected representatives are responsible to the citizens.

One statistic must be emphasised: in 1997, only one out of five local elected representatives in the European community is a woman. There are still fewer women elected representatives in the executive areas of municipal administrations. Yet the local level, as has been pointed out, is a strategic part of the democratic construction. It also constitutes a special area for analysis of the transformation which women, as soon as they are in a position to influence public decision-making, can introduce to benefit the larger whole. It goes without saying that the point is not to prove that women are “by nature” better administrators than men. On the other hand, it appears, in view of the current state of society, that the contribution of women’s experiences is important, if not essential, to the management of public affairs. These experiences, for historical reasons, are different from those of men due to the separation established in modern times between public life and the private home.

Françoise GASPARD
First part

Women's political participation in European Union municipalities
Women’s Participation
in Elected Assemblies in Belgium

Eliane VOGEL-POLSKY

Belgium has a population of 10.5 million inhabitants. Universal suffrage (men and women) was introduced in 1948 after World War II. In 1919, all male citizens held voting rights. Belgium has three linguistic communities of differing size: the Flemish speakers, the French speakers and the German speakers. The political system is mixed, with a federal system regrouping the different linguistic regions, which in turn, each have their own political institutions.

Provinces and municipal organisations have existed from the time of the Belgian Unitary State to the present.

THE BELGIAN ELECTORAL SYSTEM

At federal level, the legislative chambers are directly elected by the Lower Chamber — Chamber of Representatives — and partially through a direct vote by the Upper Chamber — the Senate. Belgium is divided into thirty arrondissements (administrative districts) for the election of the Chamber of Representatives and in twenty districts for the Senate, which is elected by direct vote. Elections are held by using voting lists with a proportional distribution of seats according to the d'Hondt method. The remaining

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1. In 1918, women were forbidden to vote with the exception of political prisoners returning from German prisons, widows and mothers of military personnel and civilians killed by the enemy. The voting rights of the latter were exercised through delegations in homage to those who fought in the war. Several thousand women were affected by this provision. In 1920, universal suffrage was expanded to give voting rights in municipal elections to all women, with the exception of prostitutes.

seats are assigned by the ten provinces. The candidate at the head of each list holds an influential position as many voters choose to vote in block for the list presented by the party. Thus, the parties are able to present their preferences between candidates on the same list. The splitting of votes is not allowed.

**THE LAW OF 24 MAY 1994 AND WOMEN**

The 1994 law considerably modified the rules of the so-called neutrality of equal political rights for all citizens, and consequently, the existence of women and democracy. The law is progressive in nature and introduces gender quotas, which are increased in several stages. The first stage was implemented during the provincial and municipal elections of October 1994. A quota of 25% of candidates of the same gender on the electoral lists was imposed.

In the next elections, to be held in 1999, the quota will be increased to 33%. In 2005, it might be increased to 50% but the law needs to be modified.

**ORIGINS OF THE LAW**

The objective of the law of 24 May 1994, the so-called quota law, is to attain parity to enable democracy and popular sovereignty to be exercised equally by both men and women. It deliberately shatters the so-called neutrality of equal political rights, which has enabled men to monopolise political power for more than half a century. The law is the result, or rather the culmination of a fight which lasted from 1980 to 1994. Different bills were deposited and debated by the Parliament and encountered strong resistance from the large French speaking parties: the Socialist Party (PS) and the Liberal Party (PL).

The bill drafted by Paula d’Hondt, deposited by the Senate on 22 January 1980, aimed to ensure the increased participation of women in municipal policy, by providing that electoral lists must not have more than three-fourths of candidates of the same gender. This law attempted to modify the situation in view of the upcoming 1982 municipal elections. If unsuccessful, the next elections would be in six years. This proposal was submitted for examination to the State Council (8 May 1981) which handed down an unfavourable opinion, by judging the quota to be unconstitutional, proclaiming that the existence of a gender quota was contrary to the principle of equality of all citizens (Art. 6 of the Constitution), the principle of non-discrimination (Art. 6), and the principle of free association (Art. 20). In addition, the State Council invoked the “European Convention of protecting human rights and fundamental liberties” inscribed in Articles 11 and 14, which forbids any discriminatory hindrances motivated by gender to the free exercise of citizens’ rights to free political association. In 1979 in New York, Belgium ratified the “United

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Nations Convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women”. This was successively approved by the Council of the French Community (1983), by the Parliament (law of 11 May 1983), by the Flemish Council (1985 Decree) and by the Council of the German Community (1985 Decree). Article 4.1 of the Convention, which entered into force in Belgium in 1985, provided that “adoptions by States Parties of temporary special measures aimed at accelerating de facto equality between men and women shall not be considered discrimination (…); these measures shall be discontinued when the objectives of equality of opportunity and treatment have been achieved”. This UN Convention was to serve as a legal basis for the bill on political parity.

A women’s action group, “Vrouw en Maatschappij”4, part of the Flemish Social Christian Party (CVP) was formed in 1973 to lead the combat aiming to attain parity democracy in all political bodies at all levels. It promoted and obtained “women’s” quotas for the decision-making structures of the party and on the electoral lists of the CVP in 1991. Moreover, to mobilise public opinion, the group organised an action which aimed to highlight the under-representation of women in Parliament and to present its claims: the participants besieged the Chamber and occupied half of the seats5.

Following this event which was closely followed by the media, “Vrouw en Maatschappij” presented the first draft of the bill which later became the quota law. Legal provisions had to be abandoned, theoretically egalitarian and not based on gender, and instead guarantee by a compulsory provision of the law, the equal representation of women and men in all political offices. The text proposed a series of measures relating to the legislative and executive branches. The first ones aimed to guarantee a minimal presence of one-third of candidates during elections according to two standards: namely, their presence on the overall list and the order in which they are listed.

The co-opting of senators was used to help attain the quota. The sanction provided consisted of the non-eligibility of lists which did not respect these two standards, as well as a loss of 10% of the annual endowment of the party concerned6. In addition, to guarantee women’s participation in the executive branch, the bill included the compulsory quota that (a minimum of) one-third of government and executive members were to be women (through a constitutional amendment and special laws). All of these provisions applied to decentralised authorities as well. The Vrouw en Maatschappij group launched a call to women from all women’s political groups to defend identical measures in their own party.

THE TREES-MERCKX BILL (5 MARCH 1991)

At the close of internal negotiations held within the CVP, it was decided that four deputies would deposit a bill in order to include an Article 117 b in the Electoral Code, which would provide a quota on the lists of legislative elections, elections to the council

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4. “Women and society”
5. Women represent 52% of the population in Belgium
6. Cf. the law of 4.7.1989 on the financing of the political parties
and provincial elections: “There cannot be more than 4/5 of candidates and/or substitute members of the same gender on the electoral lists. At least one eligible position or one “fighting position” ought to be assigned to the gender the least represented”7. Furthermore, one representative at least of each gender should be part of the government, the executive bodies and the permanent delegations.

This text was greatly weakened compared to the one drawn up by Vrouw en Maatschappij, but it constitutes a politically significant stage since it demonstrated that the principle of quotas was recognised by one of the main political parties in the government’s majority coalition. To ensure their credibility, the authors were mindful of making references to concrete legal reasoning, by using both Article 4 of the UN Convention (cited above), and the jurisprudence of the State Council and the Belgian Jurisdiction and Procedure Court (Cour d’Arbitrage).

The State Council (November 1987), in the Brosens decree, had considered that “the principle of equality does not preclude that different genders being treated differently, provided that the difference be based on a valid goal under the law and that it be founded on a reasonably acceptable motive”.

In July 1990, the Belgian Jurisdiction and Procedure Court took up a position regarding the decree on the distribution of seats in the European Parliament, providing that the principle of equality has been violated when the means used is not in proportion to the goal attained. This jurisprudence thus admits that in certain cases, the concept of legal equality does not necessarily imply that the laws be identical and uniformly applied to everyone. In fact, to guarantee the practice of individual rights, to restore equal opportunities, particular laws can be passed in order to promote certain disadvantaged categories of citizens.

Regarding the argument of the breach made by quotas of the right to associate, the authors relied on the principle that support could not be given to a measure which “unreasonably” restricted the voter’s freedom of choice, given that this choice has already been limited by political parties in the way which they have drawn up the lists. Yet, one could hardly imply that the setting of a quota for 1/5 of each gender as forcing the elector to vote against his/her will for a woman candidate.

As regards the principle of equal access to the process of standing for election, it has been affirmed that faced with the de facto existence of an imbalance in the candidacies of men and women, which is authorised and recreated through the neutral and formal equality of candidates, this measure did not violate the principle of equality but aimed to achieve a de facto equality.

In April 1992, the female deputy for Trees-Merckx deposited a complementary bill providing for sanctions in the case of non-adherence to the relevant provisions, which consisted of a fine of 10% of the total annual endowment of the political party found to

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7. The eligible positions are the places at the head of the list corresponding to the number of mandates obtained in previous elections. The “fighting position” is the first position following the eligible positions. The position of first substitute members presents the short-term or medium-term possibility of winning a seat since under the State reforms, the parliamentary and ministerial mandates are to become incompatible.
be guilty under the law. In April 1993, it was proposed to replace “four fifths” with “two thirds”.

The women of the CVP progressively rallied women representatives of the French speaking and Flemish speaking political parties to the defence of parity democracy. A common front was organised in view of the 1991 legislative elections and a joint memorandum was addressed to the government.

THE GOVERNMENTAL ACCORD OF 9 MARCH 1992, THE MIET SMET (CVP) AND LOUIS TOBBACK (SP) BILL\(^8\) AND THE LAW OF 24 MAY 1994

The declaration of the governing coalition formed after the 1991 elections explicitly provided that the government was going to “resolutely promote a balanced participation” of women and men in decision-making.

How was such a law made possible? The adoption of the law was not accomplished without a fight. Several parties were fiercely opposed to it, particularly the Socialist Party and the Liberal Party (PLP, today the PRL).

Arguments against quotas

No one dares to publicly assert his/her opposition to the objective of equality between men and women in politics, but opposition is voiced regarding the legal and political means to be used.

For the PRL, the formal principal of equal treatment must be respected but

1° without the imposition of quotas upon citizens which would violate a fundamental right, namely the free choice of voters;

2° and with respect for the political parties’ right to free association and to freely draw up their electoral lists.

Quotas would be a violation of the Constitution, of the European Convention on Human Rights as well as other United Nations Conventions. The other French speaking parties are against the bill on the basis of the same arguments.

The bill originated in the two large Flemish parties, and was deposited by the CVP (Ms Miet Smet, Minister responsible for issues of equality between men and women) and the SP (Louis Tobback, Minister of the Interior). This constituted an additional phase as, this time around, it was a governmental initiative and no longer parliamentary. These were the two majority parties in Flanders and within the government. Thus, the linguistic divisions are reproduced within the political parties with regard to quotas, and curiously, within the same political ideologies, Socialist and Social-Christian.

Faced with this practically never-ending conflict, a compromise was needed. The bill was submitted to the State Council to determine its constitutionality in 1992. It must be recalled that in 1982, the d’Hondt proposal (quota of 25% women) had been rejected as it was judged unconstitutional by the same legislative section of the State Council on the basis of Article 14 of the European Convention on Human Rights which states that the

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8. SP : Flemish Socialist Party.
enjoyment of the rights and freedoms set forth in the Convention shall be secured without discrimination on any ground such as sex. However, this time around, the opinion of the State Council was only partially negative. Regarding the quota principle, the State Council admitted that the form used respected the principle of equality since it referred to a quota of 25% of persons of the same gender and could therefore, theoretically, apply to men as much as women.

On the other hand, regarding the sanctions stipulated in the bill, namely:
1. irregular lists will be considered null and void;
2. obligation of setting a quota for the eligible places on the list;
3. loss of an official number of the party during the electoral campaign; and above all,
4. loss of the State’s financial endowment for the financing of the electoral campaign of political parties, the State Council responded negatively. Using extremely subjective reasons (the section consisted of 9 male magistrates), the State Council declared that the objective of equal opportunities in (notably) politics constituted a governmental decision (and therefore was a fundamental right or liberty) and that by imposing sanctions upon the political parties or other bodies of democratic, political expression when they did not respect the “government’s opinion” would constitute a violation of the political freedom of citizens. A significant as well as scandalous assertion.

In short, the State Council’s arguments culminated in the decision that a law which proposed that only quotas of 25% for candidates of the same sex was legitimate, but which refused to introduce any financial constraints or sanctions. Therefore, what was proposed was a law with no teeth — a paper tiger!

Faced with this opinion, the government took on its political responsibilities and decided to submit a modified bill to the parliament (in which it held a majority).

What modifications were made

They mainly concerned sanctions:
1. The lists which do not meet the quota requirements would become incomplete lists through the removal of male candidates from lists on which they exceeded 75%;
2. Financial sanctions were completely removed;
3. The reference to quota for eligible places was removed.

As a result, the law truly seemed to be a law with no teeth. Yet, it has had positive results.

Initial results

Municipal and provincial elections of 9 October 1994

Municipal and provincial elections were held on 9 October 1994. Prior to the elections, Miet Smet, Minister of Employment, labour and equal opportunity policies, lost

9. Following the State Reform, municipal and provincial elections were held simultaneously.
no time in compiling data from the country’s municipalities. The results showed that out of all the lists received, 32% of candidates were women, which largely exceeded the legal minimum of 25%, both in Flanders and in Walloon. The Brussels Regions showed surprising proportions of nearly 40% women. All the parties managed to place more than 25% women on their lists. The percentages varied between 28 and 44% for the Flemish parties, and between 29 and 50% for the French speaking parties in Walloon and Brussels.

For Miet Smet, these results were a promising sign for the upcoming elections.

In order to galvanise the electors to vote for women and to encourage the latter to stand for election, Miet Smet had lead a large campaign, starting in January 1994, using the theme “Vote for a balance of women and men in politics”. At this time, Belgium was entering a heavy electoral period with European (June 1994), as well as municipal and provincial (October 1994) and legislative elections (May 1995).

The day after the municipal elections, results showed that one municipal councillor in five was female, or 20%. Thus, 2,339 women out of 11,739 elected representatives were voted into office in the municipal councils for a six-year mandate. In the previous elections of 1988, nearly 14% (13.9) of those elected were women. There was an average increase of more than 6% nation-wide. The province of Liège was in the lead with a leap of 8%, followed by Antwerp (7.5%) and West Flanders (6.5%). Four provinces — Namur, Luxembourg, Hainault and Flemish Brabant — increased their representation of women in the municipalities by 6%; Walloon Brabant followed with 5.5%, Limburg and East Flanders with 5%, and in last place, Brussels with 3%.

Brussels had the largest number of women elected with 28.22% (same figures as in 1988). Flanders had the second highest number with 20.19% (compared to 14.3% in 1988), then Walloon with 18.14% (compared to 11.74% in 1988).

If we compare these figures by province, Brussels once again has the highest percentage of women with 28.22%... and Namur, with the least — 16%. With regard to the parties, three of them showed results of more than 30 women elected: the FDF (8.5%), Agalev (35%) and Ecolo (32%); followed by the CVP (23%), the FN (21.5%) and Vlaams Blok (21%). The PRL (20%), the SP and the PS (each with 19.5%), and the PSC (19%) obtained percentages averaging around 20%. The VLD (16%) and the VU (12%) obtained the smallest percentages of women in the municipal councils.

**Number of women candidates in the municipal elections of 9/10/94**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of municipalities surveyed</th>
<th>Number of municipalities</th>
<th>Number of replies</th>
<th>% of replies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Flanders</td>
<td>308</td>
<td>289</td>
<td>93.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walloon</td>
<td>262</td>
<td>209</td>
<td>79.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brussels</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>63.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>589</td>
<td>510</td>
<td>86.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of candidates by region</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Women</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flanders</td>
<td>9,799</td>
<td>30,944</td>
<td>31.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walloon</td>
<td>4,293</td>
<td>13,759</td>
<td>31.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brussels</td>
<td>1,204</td>
<td>3,021</td>
<td>39.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>15,296</td>
<td>47,724</td>
<td>32.05</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of candidates by party</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Women</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FDF</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>307</td>
<td>50.16</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agalev</td>
<td>1,229</td>
<td>2,809</td>
<td>43.75</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecolo</td>
<td>874</td>
<td>2,003</td>
<td>43.63</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VU</td>
<td>535</td>
<td>1,627</td>
<td>32.88</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSC</td>
<td>529</td>
<td>1,613</td>
<td>32.79</td>
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<td>1,614</td>
<td>5,151</td>
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<tr>
<td>PRL</td>
<td>521</td>
<td>1,713</td>
<td>30.41</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PS</td>
<td>890</td>
<td>3,072</td>
<td>28.97</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>CVP</td>
<td>1,604</td>
<td>5,576</td>
<td>28.76</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vlaams Blok</td>
<td>394</td>
<td>1,393</td>
<td>28.28</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VLD</td>
<td>1,406</td>
<td>4,997</td>
<td>28.13</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of women elected representatives</th>
<th>Number of municipalities surveyed</th>
<th>Number of replies</th>
<th>% of replies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number of municipalities</td>
<td>Number of replies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Flanders</td>
<td>308</td>
<td>299</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Walloon</td>
<td>262</td>
<td>227</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Brussels</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>589</td>
<td>544</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage of women elected representatives in the municipal elections by region</th>
<th>% of women elected in 1988</th>
<th>% of women elected in 1994</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Flanders</td>
<td>14.30</td>
<td>20.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walloon</td>
<td>11.47</td>
<td>18.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brussels</td>
<td>25.30</td>
<td>28.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>13.75</td>
<td>19.92</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Comparison of the percentages of women elected in 1988 and 1994 by province

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>% of women elected in 1988</th>
<th>% of women elected in 1994</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Antwerp</td>
<td>16.44</td>
<td>23.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vlaams Brabant</td>
<td>13.32</td>
<td>19.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limburg</td>
<td>14.37</td>
<td>19.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oost-Vlaanderen</td>
<td>13.65</td>
<td>18.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West-Vlaanderen</td>
<td>13.06</td>
<td>19.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brussels</td>
<td>25.30</td>
<td>28.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brabant Walloon</td>
<td>15.00</td>
<td>20.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hainaut</td>
<td>11.19</td>
<td>17.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liège</td>
<td>11.65</td>
<td>19.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luxembourg</td>
<td>10.29</td>
<td>16.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Namur</td>
<td>10.50</td>
<td>16.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>13.75</td>
<td>19.92</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Comparison of the percentages of women elected in 1988 and in 1994 by party

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>% of women elected in 1988</th>
<th>% of women elected in 1994</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>VU</td>
<td>14.28</td>
<td>12.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VBI</td>
<td>16.66</td>
<td>20.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VLD</td>
<td>11.65</td>
<td>16.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CVP</td>
<td>16.29</td>
<td>22.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SP</td>
<td>12.60</td>
<td>19.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agalev</td>
<td>28.57</td>
<td>35.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FDF</td>
<td>29.00</td>
<td>38.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecolo</td>
<td>25.00</td>
<td>31.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRL</td>
<td>15.05</td>
<td>19.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSC</td>
<td>13.02</td>
<td>18.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PS</td>
<td>12.20</td>
<td>19.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FN</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>21.66</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Who holds the power? The political party and not the voters

The law imposes a quota of 25% for the entire list (candidates and substitutes) but does not stipulate a compulsory quota for the eligible places on electoral lists or for the “fighting position”.

All the studies stress the exorbitant power granted to political parties in Belgium by allowing them to decide, before the elections, who will be elected. It is not the voters who freely choose which candidates will be granted a political mandate or not.

Article 172 of the electoral code constitutes the key to the political parties’ discretionary power of decision-making. Article 172 stipulates that:

- *When the number of candidates on a list is equal to the number of seats up for election, these candidates are all elected.*

- *When the number is higher, the seats are assigned to the candidates which received the greatest number of votes. In the case of parity between two candidates having*
obtained the most votes, the presentation order of the lists determines who is elected. Prior to the designation of elected representatives, the main bureau of the arrondissement individually votes for candidates in order to determine the presentation order of electoral lists. This assignation is carried out in a devolved manner. The list votes are added to the nominative votes obtained by the first candidate on the list, up to what is necessary to reach the figure of eligibility for this list, which is obtained by dividing the electoral figure for the list by the number, plus one, of seats which are definitively assigned; the excess, if there is any, is assigned through a similar measure, to the second candidate, and so on until all the list votes have been assigned.

In other terms, the farther down the candidate is on the list, the lesser the chances he/she has of being elected. A candidate who is not assigned by the political party to an eligible position can only be elected if he/she receives more priority votes than the candidate placed just before him/her.

For nearly a century, from 1919 to 1995, only 30 candidates (all men) succeeded in getting past the order fixed by their party to obtain a seat in the Chamber of Representatives.

Furthermore, only candidates from the large parties managed this breakthrough, because the number of seats assigned to their party was a determining factor.

From the system of carrying over of lists, stipulated by the Electoral Code, there is little guarantee that a relatively large number of women candidates will effectively be given political mandates since the placement of names on electoral lists is crucial.

Thus, the 1994 elections, in which a quota of 25% or more, and not only with regard to the eligible places, had been applied by the parties, showed the following results:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>% of women candidates</th>
<th>% of elected representatives</th>
<th>Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Flanders</td>
<td>30.7</td>
<td>19.4</td>
<td>11.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arrondissements</td>
<td></td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>15.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antwerp</td>
<td>35.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bruges</td>
<td>32.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghent(^{10})</td>
<td></td>
<td>33.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walloon</td>
<td>30.7</td>
<td>17.7</td>
<td>13.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arrondissements</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liège</td>
<td>35.0</td>
<td>21.0</td>
<td>14.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Huy</td>
<td>32.0</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>12.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Namur</td>
<td>29.0</td>
<td>17.0</td>
<td>12.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brussels-Capital</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arrondissement</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>28.0</td>
<td>12.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{10}\) Ghent is a good example since it attained the percentage which will be compulsory in 2000 — and the gap remains 15\%.
Proportion of women candidates at municipal level broken down by political party

First group: Law making parties

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>% women candidates</th>
<th>% women elected representatives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PSC</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
<td>22.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SP</td>
<td>31.2%</td>
<td>19.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Second group: Party which includes parity in its statutes (Zipper system)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>% women candidates</th>
<th>% women elected representatives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agalev</td>
<td>43.8%</td>
<td>35.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Which women are in decision-making positions?

| Women councillors, deputy mayors and burgomasters within the 589 municipalities |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Office                          |      |      |      |      |                                |
| Councillors                     | 9.2  | 9.8  | 13.8 | 19.9 | + 10%                          |
| Deputy Mayors                   | 6.4  | 7.1  | 10.4 | 14.1 | + 7.7                          |
| Burgomasters                    | 2.0  | 2.9  | 3.9  | 5.1  | + 3.0                          |

Women in the Provincial Councils

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>Seats</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>% of women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>West Flanders</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>19.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Flanders</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>18.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antwerp</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>28.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limburg</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>17.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flemish Brabant</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>30.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walloon Brabant</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>27.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hainaut</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Namur</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>28.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liège</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>20.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luxembourg</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>17.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>725</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>21.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Belgium, the composition of the lists is a crucial factor which allows the parties to practically have a monopoly when selecting candidates. This selection procedure is not uniform within the different parties, and the influence of the party members varies widely. Polling methods are still used. It acts as a system of pre-selection by which party members choose candidates. It is probably the most democratic form of the parties’ functioning. However, studies demonstrate that in practice, certain candidates are made permanent through interventions of the party bureau, or through the pressure of those hol-
ding key positions within the party, the old boys network, etc.

A study showed that the percentage of “polled” deputies is constantly diminishing. Within the traditional parties, it amounts to 0.97%.

Certain parties use models of lists drawn up by using proposals from the local head of the party, and sometimes with the collaboration of the national party bureau. Entrusting the composition of the list to an ad hoc committee may be used as well.

The participation of members of the political parties in the polls wavers between 40 and 50%, which represents 5% of all electors.

In 1985, 12% of all persons belonging to a political party (2.1% of all voters) participated in different polls.

This democratic deficit clearly shows that the parties represent an oligarchy and not a democracy. No recourse has been introduced to challenge this system as a violation of citizens’ free political choice. On the other hand, the State Council uses the argument that the quotas encroach upon the liberty of voters in order to justify the absence of sanctions in the law on quotas.

Is this oligarchy in favour of women?

Obviously not, since men are strongly over-represented in the leadership of the political parties. It can be said to work as a funnel system.

Example: Table for 1997 (Socialist Party)

1. Funnel: militant members of the PS: 118,000
2. Congress of local Federations:
   - Namur Federation: out of 8,268 members, 300 present, or 3.6%
   - Thuin Federation: out of 5,526 members, 200 present, or 3.8%
   - Charleroi Federation: out of 18,812 members, 600 present, or 3.2%.
3. Present in the Federal Congress: 970 participants (men + women)
   - Number of women: 102 participants, or 10.5%

Duration of remarks of the federations before the Federal Congress:
Total: 350 minutes, with 30 minutes for women, 320 minutes for men
4. Composition of the leadership bodies
   - Bureau: 2 women out of 26 members, or 7.7%
   - Executive: 9 members, no women

CONCLUSIONS

As with any national analysis, the situation in Belgium is closely linked to its political history and the development of its democratic institutions. Is active citizenship a constant concern of the people and political parties? Nothing is less certain. It was only after certain tragic events, such as the murder and rape of young girls who were kidnapped and imprisoned, the ensuing focus on the inertia and incompetence of the police following the sordid Dutroux affair, that the civic population revolted, demonstrating by the
thousands in the streets of all the towns and villages in Belgium, and that the question of the political leaders’ responsibilities was raised, questioned and challenged.

Beginning with the White Marches, the funeral ceremony of young Loubna, of North African origins, the population bonded together to put forward its legitimate claims, recalling to the government, the parliament and the nation’s institutions that explanations were owed and that they did not hold power taken from the citizens but were instead a delegation legitimately elected by the people which could in turn take back this mandate. Within this atmosphere, a demonstration in response was held on renewing the political class with speeches, proclamations of new commitments and democratic rhetoric that the population viewed with suspicion and derision. On the other hand, new ideas circulated and promoted all possibilities of radical change in the political culture, addressing the “untouchability” and the oligarchy of political parties. Within this context, the wish to attain parity was accepted with much openness, even while it seemed to be more a means to modify the rules and the functioning of the institutions of power than as the realisation of a genuine democracy, based on the fundamental right of women and men to equality.

The women’s movement and that of feminist organisations within the parties understood that these events had provided a unique opportunity. A proposal to modify the Constitution was deposited by a group of women senators which included MPs from several political parties: the law aimed to inscribe recognition of the fundamental right to equality of women and men, with related corollaries, and the equality of status and parity in the political, economic and social decision-making bodies. An electoral bill modifying the 1994 law was deposited which aimed to include changes recommended by the Equal Opportunities Council, summarised above.

The next elections will be held in 1999 to elect members of the European Parliament and the federal and regional parliaments. Campaigns have already begun. They mainly aim to push the political parties to modify their male-based culture and to present candidates and alternate candidates on the electoral lists, the so-called Zipper system. Feminist organisations contribute to the institutional mechanisms of equal opportunities by using new means of making public the claims and reasons to support them. In particular, it should be stressed that the European Women’s Lobby supports the initiative which I launched with the help of EUDIF, a European body of information on European integration for women, whose activities go back to the negotiations of the Intergovernmental Conference which lasted for more than 18 months in view of the revision of the Maastricht Treaty.

For the first time in the history of European integration, the Treaty of Amsterdam has introduced “the equality of women and men” as part of the general missions of the European Community. This is undeniable progress, since from now on, this equality is seen as a mission which cuts across all boundaries to be promoted and realised in all areas under the jurisdiction of the European Union.

However, this mission remains dependent upon the political will of the member States, which exercise authority through their seats on the EU’s Council of Ministers. There is no mandatory Community regulation for the European Institutions to take active and immediate measures to carry it through.

In our area of interest, namely parity in decision-making bodies, I doubt that this
Men and Women in European Municipalities

general mission can act as a direct legal basis to impose a balanced composition of women and men in the main decision-making bodies and institutions of the European Union, such as the Commission, the Parliament, the Court of Justice\textsuperscript{11}, the Committee of the Regions, etc.

The December 1996 Recommendation of the Council of Ministers of the European Community on the balanced participation of men and women in decision-making was adopted during the negotiations to revise the treaty, but it demonstrated the true autism of its authors who solemnly committed themselves within the context of the Union, but soon forgot their commitment when meeting to modify the treaty, and completely ignored the recommenda-tions made to ensure a balanced composition in terms of gender within the institutions and decision-making bodies of the Community.

This experience was common to all the member countries. It showed how much significant changes are dependent upon the conscience of all citizens with regard to the legitimacy of a parity democracy, without which our institutions remain semi-democratic and monopolised by the power of men who make decisions about the present and future of our societies without the legitimate and necessary contribution of half of the population.

An enormous mobilisation effort of all the active, democratic forces in order that women be present in the exercising of power in all areas — as citizens and not only as a corporation defending the so-called specific interests of women based on social relations relating to gender and which are not natural. This mobilisation must take place at all levels of power, from local to national, and at the supranational level of the European Union.

In an age of globalisation, women have forged a vision of the stakes and societal choices owing to their exclusion that has rendered them more creative and less subjected to the money calf: the relentless pursuit of competitiveness, of competition and the market as values to which must be sacrificed the weakest, the deprived, millions of women, men and children, the standard of living, a society built on solidarity, the concern for others and the respect of differences.

Their contribution is indispensable to civilisation in the third millennium in order to not have a society of those excluded and the privileged, selfishly ensconced behind an accounting vision of the organisation of a joint society in which the State of Providence is too costly and is reduced to the evaluation of costs to be included in the economy, the dismantling of protective legislation, the relegation of a majority of the population to the status of inferiority and misery engendered by an economy above all.

\textit{Amfissa, 4-5 May 1998}

\textsuperscript{11} It must be recalled that there are no women on the Court, which plays a central role in the interpretation and the development of Community law and that recently its interpretations regarding equality between the sexes and positive actions showed a clear diminution of equality, restricting equal opportunities, in Community law, to progressive equalisation and to the promotion of measures tending to gradually produce changes, but certainly not to the equality of the status of women and men, through measures producing a concrete and immediate result.
The Role of Women in Local Government

Lucila CORRAL RUIZ

INTRODUCTION

The limited number of women in Spanish local government is the result of a complex series of factors, which we will be discussing in due course.

In the few short years of democracy, Spanish women have shown a strong commitment to the difficult process of changing the attitudes of centuries. These attitudes have stood in their way, and denied them their rights as citizens. The 1978 constitution recognised the equality of men and women in law, but there is still too great a gap between accepted legal principles and what happens in reality.

Although these barriers remain, it is possible that in no other decade of Spanish history have women made such significant progress towards equality. The attitudes of individuals and society as a whole have changed, and people have had to overcome outdated stereotypes. As a result, women have gradually become more integrated within the world of work, and of course politics.

Looking back briefly, it is important to recognise that the creation of structures in local government, such as the Instituto de la Mujer, departments for women within the autonomous communities, and particularly the women’s councils promoted by local government, has played a very important role in changing people’s values and outlooks and combating sexist attitudes. Most importantly, they have implemented equality plans dealing with those aspects of the economic, political and social structure which are preventing women from becoming fully integrated.

Clearly, there has been a significant increase in women’s participation in politics, but this increase has been less apparent, and more difficult to achieve, than in other areas of life where women are better represented. The greatest advances have been in the educational system, where 50% of employees are now women. In the important area of employment as a whole, women accounted for 37.2% of the active population in the last quarter of 1996, 26.4% of the total employed, and 29.1% of the unemployment figure. This situation is far from satisfactory, particularly since women have become better educated and society more progressive in its outlook.
To return to the subject of the debate, politics in this country is a place of power, influence and prestige in which women play a minority role, both in terms of elected posts and senior administrative jobs.

Of the three levels of government, national, federal and local, it is in elected local government posts where women are most under-represented. They are also less likely to hold appointed political posts involving a high level of decision-making responsibility.

WOMEN IN ELECTED POSTS IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT: THE CURRENT SITUATION

I would like to begin with some comments on the number of women mayors and councillors in Spain, which has just over 8,000 local councils.

After the last local elections, in 1995, women held 13.5% of elected posts on local councils. This was only a slight increase on the previous elections, in 1991, when the figure was 12%. The figures show that the highest proportion are in towns and cities with populations of over 20,000, where the figure is 16.4%.¹

The proportion of women mayors is much worse; it is only half that of women councillors. In February 1997, only 548, or 6.7% of the 8,097 mayors in Spain were female. This was an increase of 4.7 percentage points on the second post-democracy election in 1983.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Legislature</th>
<th>Total payors</th>
<th>Total women payors</th>
<th>% women mayors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>8,061</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>2.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>8,061</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>3.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>8,098</td>
<td>406</td>
<td>5.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>8,097</td>
<td>548</td>
<td>6.79</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Women Mayors In Each Legislature

In addition, the proportion of elected women is very unequally distributed between the 17 autonomous communities of Spain. The regions with the highest proportion are Madrid, with 12.8%, and the Balearics, with 11.9%. ² The lowest figures are those of Cantabria, at 2.9%, and the Canaries, at 3.4%. In one region, Cantabria, the proportion of women has actually declined since the last legislature, and in two others, the Basque Country and Asturias, it has remained the same. In the remainder, the figure has increased, with the biggest rise being 7.5 percentage points in the Balearics (table 1).

Of the 408 women mayors in the 1995 legislature, 356 are in villages of fewer than 5,000 inhabitants, 37 are in towns of up to 20,000 people, and only 15 are mayors of towns and cities with a population of over 20,000.

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¹ FEMP. Local newsletter, September 1995: sociological study of the new local councils. "Los nuevos concejales españoles".
² Data provided by the Ministry of Public Administration.
There are only five councils in the whole country with populations of over 10,000 which have no female councillors.\(^3\)

In towns and cities with over 10,000 inhabitants, 13,510 (27.5\%) of the 49,050 candidates at the last election were women. Of these, 2,643, or 19.5\%, were elected as councillors. This means that women are significantly less likely to get elected, and also suggests that people are electing "token women" to give an appearance of democracy.

There is also a higher turnover among women in local government than among men; women are more likely not to be re-elected, particularly in villages and towns with a population of 5,000 or less. In the last elections, nearly 70\% of the women were elected for the first time, compared to only just over 40\% of men. The question of why two out of three women councillors were not re-elected, compared to one in three men, may merit further investigation.

Other figures which may help to explain the broader context of this situation are as follows.

These are the proportions of women elected to other levels of government in Spain:

- European Parliament (1994) 33.0\%
- Congress of Deputies (1996) 25.4\%
- Senate (1996) 13.2\%
- Local councils (1995) 13.5\%

The statistics show that the proportion of women in local councils and in the Senate is only half that of the European and national parliaments.

I would now like to comment on the possible causes of this situation.

**OBSTACLES TO POLITICAL PARTICIPATION**

Spanish women are encountering a great deal of resistance as they try to achieve equality with men in society as a whole, at work, and of course in politics; they have been relegated to a secondary role in the decision-making process. I would like to discuss some of the barriers to equality between the sexes, which I am sure will be very familiar to this audience.

Some people still hold the ridiculous but very deep-rooted conviction that men are better suited to public life and to politics, and that women are more effective when they are out of the public eye. This attitude is only changing very slowly.

This opinion is a result of the centuries-old division of labour between men and women; women are responsible for looking after the family and the home, while work, culture and politics are a male preserve. The belief that the best way of meeting basic human needs is for men and women to have different but complementary roles is still quite widespread in rural areas and among the over-40s.

Women have therefore been brought up to be passive members of society, and they have not been allowed a role of leadership and responsibility in social and political life.

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\(^3\) Isabel Boter, Mayte Martínez, Marisa Castillo, Fernando Colodrón and José de la Paz: Análisis estadístico de las elecciones autonómicas y locales de mayo 1995 desde la perspectiva de género.
This difference in the way men and women are brought up to live their lives puts women at a disadvantage, because it requires them to make more of an effort, and in many cases discourages them from becoming involved in public affairs. It may also be related to the insecurity many women feel about decision-making.

If I had to identify one of the biggest obstacles, I would say it is men’s unwillingness to share responsibility for the family and the household. This is changing, but it is changing only very slowly in this country. It is quite common to meet women who do a day’s work, are involved in trade union or political activism, and still do all the housework themselves. This is why women have traditionally opted for shorter hours and flexible or part-time working, in order to fit in work with looking after a family.

This attitude to work has been both the cause and effect of discrimination against women in the employment market; it adversely affects their career prospects, their pay and, most importantly, the negative stereotype of women as second-class workers.

It must also be borne in mind that political involvement reflects a very male outlook on life. The nature of the work and the hours involved can be a disincentive to women; politics is often not compatible with their schedules and their personal responsibilities. This is a particular problem in small villages and remote rural societies where women are not allowed to participate in public life. The figures show that in these areas, women are particularly poorly represented among elected local government posts.

I would now like to summarise the obstacles which are still proving difficult to overcome and are affecting women’s participation in local government.

- Those resulting from stereotypes or preconceived ideas; there is a tendency to over-value male experience and male styles of leadership.
- Those resulting from the fact that a large proportion of men do not like women invading their territory.
- Those resulting from the difficulty of setting up effective women’s organisations.
- Those resulting from the responsibilities which society has traditionally allotted to women, and in which men are playing little part.
- There is also a great deal of research which shows that the family, the educational system, and the media treat girls and boys in different ways, and prepare them for adult life differently. As things stand, therefore, women may be less willing to compete for power.

FACTORS LIKELY TO PROMOTE MORE EQUAL PARTICIPATION FOR WOMEN IN LOCAL POLITICS

Clearly, there is still considerable room for improvement in our democracy if it treats women so unjustly. We have a great deal of work to do to ensure that women have equal access to local government in the next millennium.

I would like to make two sets of proposals: some general, and some specific to politics.

My general proposals are as follows.

There is no doubt that the positive action and equality plans implemented by local authorities in this country have opened the door to greater participation by women, and encoura-
ged them to become more involved. They have also helped to bring about change in the way people relate to one another socially, culturally, at work, personally and politically.

I believe that this is the right way of giving women a greater say in the decision-making process. But there are other measures which must be taken, particularly in the employment market. If we can achieve equality between the sexes in terms of employment, we will have made progress on two fronts: we will gain the professional skills we need to attain our objectives and, no less importantly, we will be able to achieve financial independence and personal freedom.

We must bear in mind that if we really want equality between men and women in terms of employment, society and politics, we must make the effort TO SHARE THE responsibilities involved in running a household and bringing up children. The development of the welfare state has helped to make some of these responsibilities easier, but we must still try to reach a consensus with men and overcome their reluctance to take on their fair share of responsibility.

Women have frequently called for flexibility and for the adjustment of timetables for work, education, commerce and administrative services; co-ordination of the timing of these activities will make it possible for women to be more involved in employment opportunities and, of course, in political activities, since, with things as they are, there is seldom any sense of compatibility between private/family activities and employment/public activities.

At the present time no project claiming to have any impact can overlook the media, language and advertising as fundamental instruments for the creation of models of behaviour. Thus any strategy aimed at changing the role of women in society and in politics must include, as a key reference point, a portrayal of the image of women in accordance with the reality of today.

One of the advances with which we can feel most satisfied in our country, in terms of significant progress in the area of equal opportunities, is that achieved in the education system, and this may indeed be the key area for changing habits and both personal and social behaviour patterns, but above all for learning to live together in equality as a basic value in our corporate way of life. It is therefore important that these issues be addressed in school textbooks and that professionals encourage people to consider the importance for men and women of sharing tasks, both public and private.

Specific proposals:

It is clear that current power structures are of a closed male style which act against access to women, and it is the view that as we are able to introduce flexibility to procedures and move towards more open, transparent forms of decision making, women will find scope to participate, which will result in the reforming of structures so that they can play a more active role.

In order for these changes to be brought about there is need for a significant impetus; I therefore subscribe to the idea and proposal of the “new contract between the sexes”, referred to as a “pact” by others, as a way of moving forward from a basis of consensus, in order that men and women, working together, may produce a new model of equality
which is truly democratic, which values the special contribution which we as women are able to make. This innovative model is gaining strength in certain political environments in Spain, spurred on by women's organisations.

It is very important to encourage membership of political parties by women, since female membership is weak in our country, scarcely exceeding 25%. Facilities would have to be made for participation by women, but there must also be a stimulus for greater representation of women on the internal decision making bodies of parties and on the lists of candidates for elections, in addition to achieving a fairer division of political responsibilities, one not based on gender; it is still the norm for women to be the secretaries or councillors in areas such as social services, education and health.

We will have to pay attention to the political training of politically active women, not forgetting to encourage capacity for leadership by women; politics is very receptive to this type of initiative and they are regarded as being very effective, since competition in political environments is very strong and the level required of women is unfairly greater, which makes a concerted effort essential in this area.

The speaker is of the view that our towns and cities are the logical context for carrying out effective work with women and for encouraging their involvement in local politics, since it is precisely in this area that women experience the greatest motivation and commitment to transforming their circumstances. But statistics confirm that it is here that women may come up against more barriers against equality of participation.

Women continue to be invisible to local politicians, and it is they who select candidates; they respond by saying: “there aren’t any women”, “they aren’t interested”. The fact is that they do not listen to women and do not provide them with any information. Thus it is very difficult for them to become involved, especially when, in order to succeed, a woman has to get past male barriers. It must also be borne in mind that it is mostly men who put forward candidates.

For the above reasons, it is the speakers’ view that the disputed measures for establishing participation quotas for women, both in the internal representative bodies of parties, and on the lists of candidates put forward at elections, are a good method of breaking existing practices. The political parties in Spain which have approved this system have achieved very satisfactory results. At the present time they are engaged in approving internal guidelines which favour equality, by means of methods of representation based on the alternation of men and women, most commonly known as the “zip” model.

I would point out that “positive action” has been the driving force behind most of the successes achieved, and we feel that this will have to remain the guiding principle.

In closing I would point out two aspects which could have particular relevance in the successes achieved and which will no doubt set the pace for achieving future objectives:

Firstly, the organisational scope of women within the parties, and the capacity for creating networks with “social partners” (and for this the local environment is again the most suitable for work along these lines), will provide a power base for the promotion of demands and for claiming the right of truly democratic participation.

Secondly, Spain has adopted a more sensitive approach, in which the female electorate, and public opinion in general, are responding more positively to women mayors,
councillors and MPs. This is an implicit acceptance of women in politics, either because it is a novelty, or because it is a mechanism for compensating for the years of discrimination and exclusion. We must now move on from favourable public opinion in support of novelty, to normality, based on a positive approach to democratic equality and on a better understanding of the well-being of locally elected women, for which support from the media is very important.

Table 1: The role of women in local government

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>List of Autonomous Communities</th>
<th>Total number of mayors (men &amp; women)</th>
<th>Total number of women</th>
<th>Percentage of women</th>
<th>Percentage difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.991/95</td>
<td>1.995/99</td>
<td>1.991/95</td>
<td>1.995/99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andalucía</td>
<td>770</td>
<td>770</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aragón</td>
<td>729</td>
<td>729</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asturias</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baleares</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canarias</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cantabria</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Castilla León</td>
<td>2,248</td>
<td>2,247</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Castilla La Mancha</td>
<td>915</td>
<td>915</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cataluña</td>
<td>944</td>
<td>944</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ceuta</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extremadura</td>
<td>362</td>
<td>362</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Galicia</td>
<td>314</td>
<td>314</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madrid</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melilla</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Murcia</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Navarra</td>
<td>272</td>
<td>272</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basque Country</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>La Rioja</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valencia</td>
<td>540</td>
<td>540</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>8,098</td>
<td>8,097</td>
<td>407</td>
<td>548</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sintra, 20-21 April 1997
The presence of women in Portuguese municipalities

Isabel ROMAO

In Portugal, far-reaching political, economic and social changes that have taken place as a result of democracy becoming established have led the way to rapid changes in the law and the position of women who have been playing an increasingly important role in both social and economic life. Portuguese women have one of the highest rates of full-time employment within the European Union, the majority having been through higher education and strongly represented in the field of public administration. Their increased presence in the decision-making process has come about very gradually with only slow progress achieved over more than two decades of democracy. In terms of decision-making, women remain in the minority.

There is still a gulf between discourse and practice, and also between the effective contribution of women in the development of our society and the possibility of complying with decisions relating not only to them but to society as a whole. In addition, there are certain mechanisms that contribute to their political and social exclusion.

Egalitarian representation of men and women in decision-making should be approached as a basic human right and as a fundamental issue within any democracy. But we have been led to realise that parliamentary democracy does not in itself constitute a guarantee of equal participation. This is above all true in the case of local government.

The representation of women in local government has been minimal during the two decades of democratic construction in Portugal and it is at this level, contrary to what is seen in other members of the European Union and all expectations, that participation by women in decision-making bodies is at its lowest. This quota of female participation has been perpetuated down the years with very few changes. For example, women represented just 1.3% of Town Hall Chief Executives elected in December 1985 and this percentage increased to 1.6% in the 1989 elections, remaining at the same level in 1993.

Female representation is still at a very low level in all local authority departments and also in the various posts within those departments. The highest percentages are achieved amongst members of Town Councils which comprise 11.3% women in 1993 and 10.8% in 1989.
Women are less represented in the more executive positions. The representation of women in the posts of Municipal Council Chairman (1.6%), Municipal Assemblies (6.2%), District Councils (3.1%) and District Assemblies (6.5%) is always lower than in the positions of Councillors on the same councils (8.7%), or members of the Municipal Assemblies (11.3%), the District Assemblies (8.1%) or as Executive Members of District Councils (6.21%).

Women are more widely represented in the deliberative rather than the executive bodies — with greater representation on the Municipal Councils than Municipal Assemblies, and feature more widely in District Assemblies than on District Councils.

If we compare the results of the local authority elections in 1989 and 1993, we can see that with the exception of the post of Chairman of the Municipal Council, for which the number of women elected has remained unaltered, there has been a slight increase in the representation of women across the different local authority areas, although remaining very low overall.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Local authority areas</th>
<th>1989</th>
<th>1993</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Municipal Councils</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chairman</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Councillors</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>8.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Municipal Assemblies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chairman</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>6.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Members</td>
<td>10.8</td>
<td>11.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District Councils</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chairman</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive Members</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>6.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District Assemblies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chairman</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Members</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>8.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Therefore, major decisions in political, social, economic and cultural areas are taken by groups that are largely male, not only in political institutions but in all kinds of organizations. These decisions tend to reflect the values, points of view and personal experiences of their protagonists yet they nevertheless affect society as a whole.

As local authorities are the political level that is closest to the citizen, it is to be hoped that women can serve the community with their own talents, values, interests and every day experiences, drawing attention and seeking solutions to problems towards which they are traditionally most compassionate, such as housing, transport, violence in the family, child care and care of the elderly, problems connected with family life and with work, equality of opportunity, etc. The increase in the representation of women in decision-making departments will bring about results that go beyond the legitimising of democracy producing social changes that will benefit both men and women.

In a survey that was carried out about a year ago on political decisions and the media by the National Department of Socialist Party Women, the specific nature of the contri-
bution made by women to politics and their presence in positions of power brought together a high level of agreement within the female population. More then 60% of women questioned thought that the under-representation of women in the taking of decisions is not only harmful to society but also for women as a whole. Of the men questioned, 73% believed that women in politics contribute to bringing it closer to real lives.

The subordination of women in many areas of society, prevents equality that has been legislated for from becoming reflected in reality.

Various factors contribute to this state of affairs — historical, cultural, socio-economic factors, the image of women in the media, the use of sexist language — as well as political factors, such as the criteria and selection processes within the political parties that use male values, not to mention the electoral system itself.

The traditional division of roles between the sexes forms one of the main obstacles since the models put forward are not only internalised by people but are set within the framework of society.

In the survey previously referred to, family responsibilities that fall to women are viewed by around 70% of women questioned and by 64% of men questioned, as being one of the factors that tends to make it difficult for women to take positions where they are responsible for decision-making.

In relation to the criteria and selection procedures used by the political parties, we can see that in general, political leaders at national level show a greater degree of concern in achieving a balanced presence between men and women in decision-taking, than do leaders at local level. At local level, the existence of powerful pressure groups, combined with a lack of awareness or the non-existence of objective criteria governing the inclusion of candidates on the lists for the local authority elections, is contributing towards the under-representation of women on these lists or their presence in non-eligible positions.

On the other hand, if the proportional method of selecting deputies to the National Republican Assembly, has contributed towards favouring the rate of increasing female representation in the legislative elections, this same system could create obstacles to the election of positions such as in the election of the Chairmen of the Municipal Council.

We have encountered the despair felt by many women who, after long years of dedication to the cause of their communities without ever having managed to attain a decision-making post, would not consider declaring their interest and aspirations in this direction. On the other hand, there are also those who would argue that women are not interested in taking on decision-making jobs and that should there be a quota system, there would be a serious risk that the quotas would not be filled.

It is therefore important:

- to look at the local situation in order to ascertain the level of participation by women and make this visible, not only on the political plane but also on the civic and public planes. For example, to carry out comparative studies on participation by women in various areas of civic life, and their inclusion on electoral lists at local authority level.

- to examine the profile of women who take part in civic and political life at local level, in order to identify those women who want to, who have a vocation and who are
able to take up decision-making positions at local level. The existence of up to date databases containing this type of information would contribute not only to pin-pointing the many women who constitute a potential resource for local politics but also to helping demolish arguments which are often unfortunately used by women, that “women don’t want to take on executive jobs”, and “women don’t get involved”.  

- to promote initiatives aimed at increasing media awareness of the importance of this issue in order to give it the required prominence.

It is also important to create awareness amongst the political leaders and the general public of the dysfunction that leads to a lack of visibility in relation to potential candidates and to the fact that the origin of this lack of visibility contains elements that can compromise the political system itself, by showing up some of its most glaring weaknesses, since if a large part of the population is not participating it is because something in democracy is not working.

I would also like to point out that the statistics quoted above, in relation to the presence of women in the different areas of local government, are not normally published, except for the names of the Chairmen of the Municipal Councils and Councillors. The remaining data have only been made available, broken down by sex, some years after the local elections. Therefore, only now has it been possible to access the data relating to the 1993 elections. Access to the indicators for the presence of women in decision-making jobs is a condition for creating an awareness of the real situation of women. It would be useful if we could also have access to data covering not only those elected but also the candidates and posts where women are included in the candidacy lists.

In general, there have been very few initiatives in Portugal aimed at promoting equality of opportunity, even less the access by women to decision-making. Meanwhile, there are numerous initiatives by the Commission for Equality, on the rights of women that date back over more than a decade as well as some by certain NGOs promoting political participation by women and their access to decision-making. Some NGOs with interests in that direction, sprang up early in the 1990’s.

I will say no more about the initiatives and strategies used by them. I should just like to remind you here that the first National Meeting of Women in Local Government took place on April 20th, 1993 and was organised by the, “Equal Democracy” working party of the Consultative Committee of the CIDM within the context of the 1993 local elections. During this meeting, the Portuguese Women in Local Government Platform was adopted, the constitution of the “Portuguese Women in Local Government Network” was approved and a database of around 2,000 women in local government was compiled, which perhaps could be a good starting point for research into participation by women in local authority, enabling us to consider the strategies adopted and above all, the poor results achieved.

Like other countries in the European Union, Portugal has a growing number of qualified women who ought to play their part in decision-making. There is no automatic access to these jobs as it does not strictly depend on competence. It is more a matter of power. For this reason it has become necessary to adopt structural methods to enable this process to be accelerated that will contribute to ensuring access by men and women to all areas of society and to balance the power relationship between them.
In Portugal, it is only now that we are seeing the involvement of such a large number of bodies in the promotion of initiatives aimed at increasing the presence of women in decision-making; it has never before been such a topic for debate as it is nowadays. Yet, those efforts have never seemed to me to be so disjointed as they do now.

If we want to achieve progress, in addition to a formal statement of intent, it will be necessary to define strategies and act in a global and concerted fashion.

The various protagonists concerned with the consequences of the under-representation of women in the taking of decisions — NGOs, mechanisms for equality of opportunity, researchers, holders of political positions at local, regional and national level — must co-operate and develop an overall plan of action, aimed at the balanced representation of men and women on the lists of candidates at the next local elections to be held at the end of 1997. Together they can start a dialogue with the national, regional and district boards of the political parties, so as to draw their attention to the importance attached to the balanced presence of men and women in terms of those elected to the various areas of local authority.

Although Portugal does not have the legal means to approach the specific objective of stimulating the participation by women in decision-making, Clause 12 of the Portuguese Constitution states that “the direct and active participation by citizens in political life is a condition and a fundamental instrument in the consolidation of our democratic system”. Perhaps we have arrived at the moment of collectively demanding the adoption of rules of equality at the level of the different areas of decision-making.

The European Union, the Council of Europe and the United Nations consider that the promotion of participation by women is one of the priority fields of action in the last decade of the twentieth century and a condition for the confirmation of an effective equality of opportunity for men and women and for the progress of democracy.

In the European Union, the 4th Medium Term Community Programme for Equality of Opportunity between Men and Women (1996-2000), has the chief objective of contributing towards the integration of the dimension of equality in all policies and actions carried out by the member states, local and regional authorities, the media, the NGO’s and the Commission itself. One of the major areas of influence of this programme is the promotion of the balanced participation by men and women in decision-making.

On March 27th, 1996, the European Union Council approved a resolution on the balanced participation by men and women in the taking of decisions. At the end of this resolution, the Council invited the Commission to prepare a recommendation project in order to promote balanced participation by men and women in decision-making processes as an integral part of the Medium Term Community Programme, which was approved on December 2nd, 1996. In this, the Council recommended to the member states that they should adopt an integrated strategy and that they should develop or set up, with this aim in mind, the appropriate measures, whether legislative, regulatory or as stimulation. The strategy was intended to cover all aspects of society and be implemented in partnership with all the leading players at European, national, regional and local level.

At the Council of Europe the issue of equality of opportunity for men and women is a matter of fundamental human rights and genuine democracy.
The concept of Equal Democracy arises within the scope of the subject of participation by women in public and political life. The ensuing study and reflection are an integral part of the programme set up by the Council of Europe on human rights and genuine democracy, that seeks to clarify, deepen and define in a more concise manner, the values and principles of democracy. These studies are linked with the reality of the under-representation of women in public and political life.

The United Nations World Conference on Women (Peking) showed that achieving equality of opportunity is not just a women’s concern, rather it is a fundamental condition to achieve the social development that concerns society as a whole.

The Action Platform adopted within its framework indicates the need for governments to set out the undertakings assumed in that direction. In that respect, it seems to us important to highlight the areas concerned with economic participation, with access to decision-taking and the image of women.

There is recognition of the need to encourage full, non-discriminatory participation by women, promoting their autonomy and independence, removing segregation that exists in the world of work and making possible for women, access to jobs requiring the taking of economic decisions, finding ways for them to contribute to social growth and development in the economic sphere so that their contribution will become more visible.

In addition to these measures, the Platform is aiming at more besides, designed to promote a greater sharing of family responsibilities by men and society, a factor that has greatly contributed to the limiting of employment opportunities for women, but also their access to taking decisions. Also in relation to decision-making, the Platform obliges the signatory states to establishing equilibrium between men and women in governments and institutions, a necessary factor in social development and a means of strengthening the legitimacy of the institutions.

Governments are also encouraged to become aware of the role played by the media in promoting non-stereotyped images of men and women.

*Sintra, 20-21 April 1997*
Assessment: Women Elected Representatives in French Municipalities

Françoise GASPARD

In France, three levels of local administration exist which correspond to the assemblies elected by direct universal suffrage: the municipality, the department, and since 1982, the region. At this time, I shall only be addressing the municipalities and their municipal councils, but I shall bring up a fourth level of decision-making, the regrouping of local authorities in which elected representatives hold seats indirectly.

The place of women in the local assemblies — particularly municipal — deserves as much attention as that of women within the parliaments and governments. It is an indicator of the modernisation and democratisation of our societies. It is obvious that women are not willing to accept a political “work share” which would reserve them a place at local level, while national level would remain the exclusive territory of men. It is no less obvious that their marginalisation at this level carries consequences which we can measure empirically. The different experiences of women and men, a product of both history and culture, effectively lead both sexes to comprehend differently the two dimensions which are at the heart of local administration: time and space.

Over the course of recent years, studies have been developed on the place of women in political life at national level. However, those focusing on political life at local level are rare. This contribution is therefore principally descriptive and conceived as one part of CEMR’s contribution to the comparative analysis, within Europe, of the respective situations of women and men in the municipal councils.

THE FRENCH MUNICIPAL SYSTEM AND WOMEN ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES AT LOCAL LEVEL

With 36,545 municipalities, and thus an equivalent number of municipal assemblies, and more than half a million municipal councillors, France holds a European record in terms of the number of elected representatives elected universally. In each municipality, there
is a municipal Council. The number of elected representatives to the municipal council varies according to the size of the municipality: from nine representatives for the municipalities of less than 100 inhabitants up to 69 for the cities of more than 300,000 inhabitants. The municipal councils are reelected every six years.

The voting method is not uniform. It depends upon the size of the municipality. In the municipalities of less than 2,500 inhabitants, the members of the councils are elected by a majority vote in two rounds of voting. The candidates are presented on lists, which do not always contain as many names as seats available. Candidacies of only one applicant are authorised and the splitting of votes (preferential voting) allowed. In the municipalities of 2,500 to 3,500 inhabitants, the voting method used is the same but one-person candidacies are not permitted. The forms distributed to voters must include as many names as seats up for election. In the municipalities of more than 3,500 inhabitants, a runoff election is held using proportional voting without a preferential vote. Paris, Lyon and Marseille are subject to a special voting provision. The voting method is the same as the one used in cities of more than 3,500 inhabitants, but these three cities have one municipal council for the city and various municipal councils for the districts. In all the municipalities, the mayor is elected by the municipal council. The council also designates the deputies who, along with the mayor, constitute the municipal's executive body.

Women obtained the right to vote and stand for election not by means of a law voted upon by Parliament, but through an ordinance, in other words, a text decreed by the executive power. On the eve of the first world war, and between the two wars, numerous legal proposals intended to grant citizenship to French women were debated over by the Parliament. All were voted down in the Senate. Certain of these proposals had the objective of granting to women a local citizenship only. The idea, which continues to survive — as revealed in the speech given by Prime Minister Alain Juppé on 11 March 1997 before the National Assembly — was and remains focused on the premise that, for women, the municipality should be a privileged field for an apprenticeship on politics. On the other hand, this reasoning was never forwarded in regard to men.

For reasons which he never explained, General De Gaulle, in April 1944, granted citizens' rights to women. The provisional Assembly in Algiers, under its consultative capacity, decided in favour of universal suffrage. Among the representatives of the Resistance which held seats in the Assembly, it nevertheless could be observed that the issue did not enjoy universal support. Certain representatives still hoped to undermine it through the use of delay tactics. One of the fears expressed was that as long as all the prisoners of war were not yet returned from Germany, the status quo had to be maintained (in other words, suffrage only for men) with the risk that, otherwise, women voters would be more numerous than male voters, and consequently, the question would be decided by default. General De Gaulle therefore decided, unilaterally, to proceed with what was viewed by many male politicians as a leap into the unknown. French women exercised their right to vote for the first time in the Spring of 1945, on the occasion of the local elections the day after the Liberation, since the goal of these elections was to restore the municipal assemblies.
Statistics concerning elected representatives are provided by the Minister of the Interior. They are incomplete and unconfirmed. They do not allow the evolution of the presence of women in the Assemblies since 1945 to be studied with certitude. William Guéraîche, in one of the rare theses which addresses this topic, remarked that “the most significant example is that of the mayors. The first official figures date back to 1947. That year, according to the Ministry for political affairs, 250 women had been elected out of a total of 37,781 seats up for election. In the next elections, held in 1953, the same result occurred with 300 women candidates for 37,683 municipalities. It is rather astonishing that such round figures of 250 and then 300 women were elected mayors. The exactness of these figures render their validity rather suspect to the point where one could ask whether they are not simply made up”.¹

Are statistics found elsewhere any more reliable? Through information which the ministry disseminates to the public², in addition to those given to us and a series of statistics which we were able to compile, we notice that the evolution of the number of women elected representatives in the municipalities presents points of comparison with those of women elected representatives at national level. A considerable decline was also observed in regard to municipal councillors which lasted until 1965, at which time 2.3% of municipal councillors and 1.1% of mayors were women. A slight increase occurred beginning in 1971 (4.4% women elected representatives, 1.8% women mayors), and a large one in 1978 (8.3% and 2.8% respectively), which we can interpret as being one of the effects of the feminist movement of the 1970s. The transformation has continued ever since (see appendices).

THE SITUATION FOLLOWING THE MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS IN JUNE 1995

These latest elections took place at a time when demands for parity between women and men in political representation were being heard nation-wide. Following the conference organised in Athens in 1992 by the European Network “Women in decision-making” and the European Women’s Lobby, the idea of parity obtained widespread recognition and success in France. The political parties, particularly the Socialist and Communist Parties (the Greens had already promoted the idea of parity, but their influence was marginal) were compelled by their female supporters to give more attention to the representation of women. The opinion polls, which showed that voters were in favour of parity, also pressured them to act. For this reason in particular, their lists for the 1994 European elections had parity of representation. The situation is more complex for the local elections. The lists of candidates were not determined at national level, but within each

¹ William GUÉRAÎCHE, Women in French Political Life, from the Liberation to the 1970s : essay on the distribution of political power, Doctoral thesis under the guidance of Rolande Trempe, Université de Toulouse-Le-Mirail, 1992, p. 22

municipality. At this level and elsewhere, an "incumbent effect" exists: the representatives already in office held better odds of being reelected if they decided to run in the elections. Moreover, in 1995, the male incumbents represented 83% of local politicians. Furthermore, the female incumbents were more willing to step down than their male counterparts. The evidence which we possess demonstrates this fact: after a six or twelve year term, many women politicians were extenuated due to the fact that they had to conciliate their public, professional and family life, and they therefore wished to hand over their seats to other candidates. Men, on the other hand, as they have less tasks to juggle, are less willing to give up their position.

The increase in women elected representatives from 17.2% in 1989 to 21.2% in 1995 may appear to be slight. However, after taking into account the situation described above, it is nevertheless an important one. It had in fact been necessary to overcome the deficit of the outgoing women who did not run for reelection and find new women candidates willing to be included on the electoral lists. Altogether, more than 22,000 additional women were elected to the municipal councils. This transformation may be explained in particular by the mobilisation of the network of women's associations. In this regard, two types of actions should be mentioned which deserve to be categorised as examples of "best practices" in this area. The first is undertaken within a national context, and the second has a regional focus.

The day following the Conference in Athens in 1992, six national women's associations with access to a local network met under the theme "Elles aussi!" with the objective of encouraging women to present their candidacies in the 1995 municipal elections. During the two years preceding the elections, the network organised public meetings on this subject throughout France. These meetings mobilised many women who wished to devote their efforts to municipal life, and were also widely reported in the local and regional newspapers. Women thus were able to overcome their inhibitions in relation to standing for public office. For their part, the political leaders were compelled to take women's requests to be candidates into account due to the widespread impact of these events uniting women from all over France.

The other example was carried out in the region of Alsace. In this region, where there is a structural under-representation of women in politics, the initiative was taken by women from the parties of the right. It moved rapidly beyond partisan borders. In 1992, women from the UDF, furious about the lack of women candidates from their party running in the regional elections, convened all the women's associations in the département and decided to present an electoral list of women. While other experiments with women's lists or women's political parties were a failure, this one met with relative success since it was solidly backed by an associations' network. Liliane Gall recounts this initial event and its follow-up: "Our list passed the 5% barrier (we obtained 6.6% of the votes cast). I was therefore elected to the regional council. In the excitement, we created the Women of Alsace movement. There have been other elections since. Two women from this movement ran in the cantonal elections under this label. In the municipal elections, we adopted a different tactic. In the small rural municipalities, political parties are not the issue. Women from this Alsatian movement ran either on the incumbent list or on the list
of those running against. Two women, who were already municipal councillors, were elected as mayors. In Mulhouse and Colmar, as in all fairly large municipalities, the political parties are responsible for making up the lists. The Women of Alsace is not a political party, but a people’s movement. We decided that the women in the movement who wished to run for the municipal councils would propose their candidacy to the list of their choice along with two conditions: that they be presented under the banner of the Women of Alsace and that they be in positions favourably placed. In Mulhouse, a town of over 100,000 residents, two women went to see the socialist mayor. They proposed their candidacies, were accepted under the label of Women of Alsace, and were elected. In Colmar, three members of the movement wished to be listed under the RPR party. The negotiations were lengthy. The mayor proposed places which we could not accept as they were situated in a way that held few possibilities of ensuring their election. We therefore withdrew their names from the list.\(^3\)

Several conclusions drawn from the 1995 elections merit a closer look. The first is that the increase in the number of women elected at municipal level is mainly due to small municipalities. Out of the 22,000 newly elected women, almost 19,000 were from municipalities of less than 3,500 inhabitants. It may appear paradoxical that the increase of elected women in these municipalities (+21%) is greater than the one observed in the large towns and cities (+14.5% in the municipalities of more than 9,000 inhabitants). Feminisation is in fact related to modernisation, which is in turn identified with urbanisation. It appears that the rural areas are catching up in regard to its female representation and that urban areas are undergoing difficulties in passing the 20% ceiling of women elected representatives.

The second conclusion is that in the areas where there has been a strong mobilisation of women’s associations, we have noticed a significant increase in the number of elected women. Two cases can be cited. In the Bas-Rhin département, part of the Alsatian region, where there exists an organised movement, the number of elected women increased 61% in the municipalities with less than 3,500 inhabitants and 18% in the municipalities with more than 3,500 inhabitants. On the other hand, in the Rhone département, it is the municipalities of more than 30,000 inhabitants which have shown a spectacular increase of women elected representatives (more than 60%) which is the result of a series of particularly strong actions taken by women militants from both the left and the right in Greater Lyon.

The final conclusion is that if the number of women elected representatives increases, the number of women elected mayors does not necessarily undergo a growth of the same proportions. Admittedly, there was an increase from 5.4% in 1989 to 7.5% in 1995. Yet here as well, we notice that it is within the small municipalities that a higher percentage of women are mayors. Catherine Trautmann, Mayor of Strasbourg, is thus the only woman mayor to head a municipality of more than 100,000 inhabitants.

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WOMEN'S ROLE IN COMMUNITY ACTIONS IN FRANCE, SOME QUESTIONS FOR DEBATE

We have spent some time discussing these statistics. The Nordic countries have taught us that showing the disparity is a means of moving towards parity. It is obvious that we still have much work to do in France in order to obtain reliable, complete and regularly published statistics on gender from the public authorities concerning the level of representation at municipal level, as well as on the other elected assemblies.

The comparison which we can make between France and the other European Union countries in regard to the percentage of women municipal representatives is that France is slightly above the European average. This can be explained in large part by the large number of municipalities. Henceforth, those in charge of the lists can no longer present lists of only men without encountering opposition. Moreover, the involvement of women in associations presents an advantage for the municipal players. On the other hand, the number of women mayors is almost as small as within the Parliament. The gender gap within the municipal executive bodies is not widely known. However, we do know that even if a revolution is taking place, women deputy mayors remain mostly confined to social, educational and cultural affairs, while their presence is rare in the technical positions like finance or transport.

We mentioned the existence of a new level of local administration. To rationalise local administration, which is overloaded due to the large number of municipalities, regroupings have been encouraged over the last 30 years. The municipalities have thus organised themselves under the framework of inter-municipal unions to ensure such services as school buses or the collecting of garbage. More formal groupings (districts, urban communities, unions of new urban areas and their outlying suburbs) are also authorised by law. These unions and groups are managed by assemblies with the right to speak and vote, whose members are elected by municipal councils who choose representatives from among their members. These representatives, through municipal delegations, hold important powers, particularly in regard to raising taxes.

There are no statistics relating to gender on these groups, of which there are many (more than 18,000 inter-municipal unions in 1994). However, two cases appear significant: the urban Community of Lyon (Courly) and that of the New Urban Centres Union (SAN, a structure specifically for new towns) of Saint-Quentin-en Yvelines in the Parisian suburbs. Even though women made significant advances in the municipalities of Greater Lyon following the 1995 municipal elections, and today represent approximately 30% of elected representatives, the Council of Courly includes only 12% women, and among the 38 Vice Presidents of this assembly, there is not a single woman. The situation of SAN in Saint-Quentin-en Yvelines is similar. 28.3% of the seven municipal councils which delegate representatives to this body are women. Not a single woman was designated. It can therefore be observed that at decision-making level, the higher up the authority, particularly when an appointment is given wide coverage by the media, the more men tend to predominate. It should be noted that the gender issue is not yet considered a part of French problematics. In spite of the success of the concept of parity, it is conspicuously absent from the
political debate. The latter addresses solely the number of women elected representatives, but not (yet) the question of what women can introduce to the decision-making process. The French debate on specific details and the universal prevents the development of a discussion on the subject. Electoral programmes satisfy themselves with possibly recommending more equipment for child care, and categorise this as a measure which benefits women, and only women. The associations of local elected representatives have not initiated an overall discussion on equality between women and men in the city. Moreover, academic studies concerning gender and its role in local administration are rare. The survey carried out by a weekly on the way in which women judge their city constituted, in spite of its limitations, a landmark event. For the first time, the national press had shown that women can experience their city life through an event, which is not, overall or statistically, one undergone by men. The fact that, for example, in regard to public transportation, decisions are made by men, appears to be far from neutral. They do not generally take into account the fact that women, who are the principal users of public transport, are often accompanied by small children.

To our knowledge, only one major French town, the city of Rennes, has initiated a profound discussion which takes women into account. It is also one of the rare French cities which has designated, within its municipal council, a woman delegate on “women’s rights and equality” provided with significant means. The work currently in progress focuses on time management within the city and its municipal services. It was made possible by a meeting between a municipal volunteer (a position resulting from the existence of a significant number of women elected representatives and a mayor aware of women’s issues) and the presence, at the University of Rennes, of the holder of one of the few chairs on feminist studies. Other towns have undertaken actions aimed at women. For example, we can mention the City of Nantes, which has provided a particularly well equipped facility — the Simone de Beauvoir Centre — financed by the Mayor’s office. This centre allows feminists and women’s associations to meet and work in order to co-ordinate activities. Nevertheless, integration of gender into political life has not been observed in the city itself.

After examining the French situation, the creation of a network of women elected representatives of local and regional authorities appears to be of great interest. In fact, this network can act as a catalyst to make people aware of the importance in introducing the question of equal opportunities between women and men at all levels of public administration and how the local level can play a strategic role in the structural transformation of our societies. In this regard, the comparisons made with other European countries are very important. European construction can only be realised if women feel that they are full partners. The founders of CEMR understood that Europe would not only be constructed from “above”, that is the States, but also from “below”, that is society. The basic authorities of the municipalities are therefore a fundamental part of the integration of European awareness. In this regard, CEMR’s project is of great importance to Europe and for equality in each of our countries.
The number of mayors according to the population of the municipality

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<th>inhabitants</th>
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<th>% of women mayors</th>
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<td>2.90%</td>
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<td>7.50%</td>
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Women elected representatives at municipal level in France since 1947

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<th>%</th>
<th>Mayors</th>
<th>%</th>
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Sintra, 20-21 April 1997
Advantages and Obstacles: the Swedish Experience

Elisabeth ELGAN

Swedish women, like all women from the Nordic countries, participate today in a much more important way in political life than in the past. The relative number of women elected representatives at all levels is somewhere between 40% and 50% on average. It is interesting to try to remove some of the factors, particular to Sweden, which facilitated the participation of women in political life, and which can therefore lead us to believe that they could play a similar role in other countries. It is also interesting to note the obstacles encountered by Swedish women. The discussion of these obstacles is always a timely subject.

The advantages held by Swedish women to solidify their will to commit themselves to politics are, in my view, about the same as at local and regional level as at national level. The obstacles, on the other hand, are in part specific and dependent upon the nature of local and regional political life.

THE ESSENTIAL UTOPIA

Among the factors which helped the introduction of Swedish women into political life over the past 25 years, we must first mention the importance of political visions. This factor, which is not limited to Sweden, is too often forgotten. Yet, without the vision of a better society, many women would never have become committed to political action. Contrary to men, a political commitment on the part of women does not flow in abundance. Until recently, as they were often excluded, an additional dose of motivation was needed to incite women to confront an area which they knew to be traditionally hostile to women.

Many Swedish women, independent of their political affiliation, found this additional motivation in the vision of more equality between men and women as promoted by the feminist movements of the 1960s and 1970s. The feminist utopia, in the positive sense of the term, acted as a breath of fresh air for women. Some feminist demands were first addressed during this time. In 1970, the notion of a “fiscal home” was abolished and
replaced with an individual prescription, marking the end of a fiscal punishment of married women who worked outside of the home. Several years later, maternal leave was replaced with a long parental leave, which was remunerated by practically full pay and which could be allotted between the father and mother. The impression that it was possible to obtain satisfaction on concrete claims strengthened the call of the feminist movement.

The 1970s were also rich in political visions in a more general manner. The debate between socialism and liberalism was once more given a new impetus, and this probably also lead in turn to a new generation of women entering into political life. Today, the visions are lacking in many of the political debates in many European countries. The visions have been replaced with demagogues whose programmes are founded on the principle of looking for a scapegoat and xenophobia. It is therefore urgent that it be recalled that there is no politics without utopia and that feminism carries a positive utopia which can play an important role of mobilisation.

WOMEN'S FEDERATIONS WITHIN THE POLITICAL PARTIES

In politics however, the commitment to promoting certain ideals does not suffice, especially for women who generally encounter more obstacles in their path than do men. In a hierarchical structure, men in power have the tendency to favour those colleagues who resemble them, usually at a disadvantage to women. Moreover, every day from infancy, we all undergo the experience that power, outside of the family, is associated with men. Faced with this power structure, women and men tend to model themselves on the men who have the power and seek to enter into a privileged relation with them, thereby neglecting women. All of these behaviours have been termed by researchers as homosocialisation and are part of the phenomenon which makes it difficult for the majority of women whom desire it, to attain positions of powers. The result is that women need a specific support in politics in order to confront the structures already in place. Swedish women politicians have been able to find this support in the feminist federations within the political parties. These federations are part of an old tradition in Sweden. They can be found at all levels in the political parties. They are mass organisations, composed of thousands, even tens of thousands of women. They are partly autonomous and have their own budget, which allows them to act efficiently. Money is at the heart of war, as they say. These women’s federations also present their own candidates to the nominations of their parties.

The women’s federations within the political parties have played an essential role in the promotion of women in Swedish political life. They have trained candidates, supported them, provided them with ideas and reasons; and once elected, they have ensured a continuing training and a standing forum for discussion. This does not mean that all women have chosen the path provided by women’s federations to enter into political life. My personal approximation is that about half of the women in politics at local level are active members of a women’s federation. But this approximation needs to be verified.
Among those who did not receive support from a women’s federation when entering into political life, certain used a similar path by going through a youth federation of the political parties, part of another old tradition in Swedish political life. Youth increasingly represents a period of relative equality between the sexes. The youth federations, which enjoy a large degree of autonomy, train their members in politics and present them as candidates. It can be said that young women meet with less resistance in the youth federations than within the main party structures.

TRAINING

The training given in women’s federations is inseparable from their fundamental role of encouraging women to enter political life. It is a training for and by women where the elders knowingly transmit the wealth of their experience, thus creating a true solidarity between women. It is not because women are any less capable than men which makes this training so important. The Swedish political parties also organise training of their militants, at all ranks. The training provided for by the women’s federations represents a complement, one that is essential. Certain training schools of the women’s federations date back to the 1920s when Swedish women had first obtained the right to vote. The training proposed takes into account all aspects of political life, and one is given instruction on public speaking (sometimes with the help of an actress), to hold the chair of a meeting through role playing, and one acquires the capacity to respond to the perpetual issue of economic feasibility of such and such a proportion. This training is generally open to all the women in the party, whether they are members or not of the women’s federation, and an exchange with their female colleagues who have shared the same experiences is also a good training tool.

RELATIONS WITH THE MEDIA

A part of the training mentioned is devoted to relations with the media, and the results show that Swedish women have succeeded in using this to their advantage. The recent political history in Sweden demonstrates the importance of the media in promoting women in political life. A feminist network, found mainly within the national media, succeeded in producing a widespread echo of the wrath felt by women politicians in the early 1990s when their rightful place in politics seemed to undergo a setback. This network helped to put the issue of women’s roles in politics back into the spotlight and relaunched the debate on inequalities between the sexes.

At local and regional level, women politicians show themselves very willing to use the media to advance their cause. This is an important point as the press, with its critical point of view, can be daunting to the women who succeed in attaining a political position of responsibility for the first time. It becomes necessary to learn to issue a press release, to make one known to the local journalists, to remember to send one’s photo to the local newspapers, to be familiar with the flow charts used by the local media and to create specific ties with the journalists who specialise in their areas of interest. The exis-
tence of various local and regional media, representing the full spectrum of political parties, constitutes an additional advantage. The local and regional media are fond of all that is new at local level; for example, the novelty of women in high positions of responsibility in the municipalities and in the regional councils.

QUALITATIVE STUDIES ON INEQUALITY BETWEEN THE SEXES

University research on the inequality between the sexes was begun in the 1960s in the Nordic countries, following the first feminist movement which took place during that period. Moreover, women politicians, working beyond the borders of their parties, ensured that research in this area received the information crucial to its development.

The results of this research allowed for the contents of the public debate on gender inequality to be continuously enriched as well as on the ways in which to remedy this. Scientific data also helped women in their reasoning during public debates. It was much more beneficial, especially when confronting men politicians, if one could demonstrate with hard statistics the factual existence of that which one wants to denounce. Thanks to the results of the qualitative research, the leading figures in politics, women and men, were able to better comprehend the workings which led to the exclusion of women in politics or which made any integration problematic. The research carried out on the different idioms used by men and women provides an excellent example. It demonstrated that women and men do not express themselves in the same manner. Since the positions of power have, until recently, been the exclusive territory of men, it is their manner of expression which has served as a model. In relation to this model, the different speech used by women seems, wrongfully, as a sign of lesser competence. Even if women adopted the speech of men, it has been shown that an unfavourable prejudice in regard to the competence of women results in the fact that the same speech would be judged differently according to whether it is attributed to a man or a woman. The distribution of these results on women and men’s speech allowed Swedish female politicians to be recognised as being just as competent as their male counterparts in spite of the fact that they express themselves differently.

Other results which were very significant for women in politics was the exposing of tactics used by a group, in this case, male politicians, to exclude other groups, i.e. women. These tactics, often used unconsciously, were qualified as power techniques and can be summarised in five points: to ignore, to ridicule, to distance, to accuse, and to provoke feelings of culpability. The sole fact of being able to put a name to the opposition which they encountered helped many women to become more confident and allowed certain men to become aware of their own sexist habits. Certain women even made use of a sign language to circumvent these power techniques. For example, if during the course of a meeting, a woman felt that the men were ignoring the woman who was speaking, she would signal the other women present by using a prearranged signal. (The systematisation of power techniques and the idea of a counterattack came from the Norwegian Berit Ås. Her work deserves to be more widely distributed outside of the Nordic countries.)
THE "TECHNICAL" TOOLS

It is not due to a policy of quotas or any other legal or technical tool that Swedish women have managed to enlarge their place in politics. But the parties have also turned to these kind of practices at internal level and in order to designate candidates. However, in addition to quotas, it is obvious that on certain occasions, the parties and the women elected representatives were distinctly in favour of a feminization of politics and equipped themselves with concrete means to achieve this: programmes promoting women, decisions based on principle, pressure on the appropriate people, etc. It was the struggle of those involved which allowed for the balance of force to be applied in this direction. Those concerned would have liked to use a tool such as quotas, but were never able to impose them, as the opposition of the structures already in place was too substantial.

However, what can be concluded from the Swedish experience is not that these techniques or legal tools are useless in increasing the feminine presence in politics, but that the primordial importance is the political will. If the will to promote women in politics does not exist, there is no ideal tool which would allow everyone to agree. The discussions for or against quotas generally serves only to hide deeper disagreements in regard to the need to feminize politics. On the other hand, if the political will is genuine, one always ends up finding solutions.

The feminization of politics certainly carries the consequence that certain men must forgo their hopes of a political career. Therefore, it should not be astonishing if their opposition to this idea is strong. This opposition can only be overcome if at the top or with the militants, the conviction exists that this feminist movement in politics is urgent and essential. Thanks to the various factors mentioned, Swedish women have been able to build the balance of force in favour of the feminization of politics. Henceforth, the methods used to arrive at this goal could vary. The methods used by the two biggest Swedish political parties, the Social Democrats and the Conservatives, illustrate this. The openly feminist struggle of many women Social Democrats and their federation led to the decision, at the highest level of their party, to place as many women as men, by rotation, on their electoral lists. In the last elections held three years ago, a large number of women social-democrats were thus able to accede to the elected bodies. On the other hand, women from the Conservative party and federation favoured a policy of smaller steps. Granting an important emphasis to training, they consistently moved forward their people little by little. The result sometimes was just as spectacular. Following the electoral victory of their party six years ago, several Conservative women were called upon to ensure the presidency of a municipal council. More than half of the women occupying this type of position came from the Conservative party. But as the following election proved a loss to the Conservative party, many of these women lost their posts. It was particularly in those municipalities which were recently won, and those that were held by women which fell first, as these had long been traditional strongholds held by men in the past. However, these elections benefited the Social Democrats, which had the consequence that with the application of their new line on parity, the number of women social-democrats presiding over the municipal councils increased. Relatively speaking, the
Conservative party nevertheless maintained its lead through sheer numbers, but it was clear that the Social Democrats’ policies of voluntarism generally allowed women and a larger number of the officers and elected members of this party to enter politics more rapidly. This feminization now needs to be consolidated. Certain young women rapidly abandoned their electoral mandate, disappointed at not having been understood and supported. The Social Democrats’ women’s federation is now attacking this problem.

LOCAL POTENTATES

It would be wrong to assume that the political commitment at local level would be easier to achieve than at national level. Most local issues are as much of a technical nature as elsewhere and the cases need just as much preparation. The local bodies, and therefore the elected representatives, are targeted from all sides: by the voters and the people involved in local politics on one side, and by political decisions and administrators at upper levels on the other. The injunction to act is often very strong while the possibility of action is limited, especially in times of economic crisis.

Another difficulty comes from the fact that the administration of local and regional affairs is mainly assumed by those who are benevolent. For the women who become involved in these activities, this implies a new increase in their workload of professional and family responsibilities.

In addition, local politics is often the realm of local potentates. Decisions made elsewhere often encounter problems in being implemented. This seems to be the case with the Social Democrats’ policy of advancing women. Women represent in fact less than 20% of the Social Democratic Presidents in the municipal councils at a time when the Social Democrats had been aiming for parity. Cities and regions can remain types of feudal strongholds. Power there is informal and thus manages to avoid democratic regulations. It is particularly difficult for new groups, in this case women, to create a niche for themselves in this type of structure, unless they choose to be co-opted by facts. Political rotation and transparency, on the other hand, seem favourable to the integration of the newcomers.

THE OPPOSITION OF THE EXISTING STRUCTURES

Women who enter into politics find themselves faced with a defensive reaction of a system which was forced to make a place for them. It is important to make the distinction here between individuals and the systems to which they belong. One can be completely convinced of the need for women to be allowed to enter into politics, but be just as sure that in the case of one’s own municipality or region, this is not yet possible: either because we think that all the men present are essential, or because we feel that the women who run in the elections are not competent enough. A certain number of tactics were revealed in Sweden to counter the advance of women. The system seemed to favour young, inexperienced women at the cost of the more mature, militant women. This is the old tactic of divide and conquer. This added to the difficulties of the young women who
were complete beginners in politics. Women already in place did not exactly welcome
the newcomers wholeheartedly either. As a minority group in an environment which is
hostile to them, certain female politicians adopted survival tactics. The arrival of a signifi-
cant number of new women could therefore seem to pose a threat to their seniors in
view of the fragility of their position.

Women also had to confront the reaction of the political arena which already had their
own ideas of what women should be like in politics. When women decided to cross over
the party lines and collaborate between women on issues in which they held a common
interest, this was perceived negatively. Worse yet, a certain antagonism was also felt
with the realisation that women did not form a homogeneous group that spoke with one
voice, but rather that they were comprised of individual women with many different
views, sometimes in opposition with one another. Constantly, the criteria of competen-
ce as the only factor of choice of the political groups entered into the debate and was
opposed to the advancement of women. That is to say that the manner of dealing with
women was not yet accepted and recognised, and that in terms of competence, it was
meant the manner in which men dealt with matters.

**WOMEN’S MULTIPLE RESPONSIBILITIES**

In our societies, in Sweden as well as elsewhere, women and men do not lead the
same lives. Women generally have multiple responsibilities. This is why we speak of
two full-time jobs. Today, the majority of women have exercised their choice of trying
to work for a salary. Moreover, they still have the principal responsibility for the home
and family. According to a recent survey, this is the case of almost all Swedish families
with children. Swedish women are not alone, they share the same conditions as women
in other countries. Women ensure the education and care of the children much more
often than men, both in qualitative and quantitative terms. This is the reason why
Swedish women between 30 and 45 years of age often disappear from politics. But it
would be wrong to characterise the familial responsibilities of women as being reduced
to just the education of the children. Women also take care, in the broad sense of the
term, of the affairs of their relatives and their entourage. They help their elderly parents,
their grandchildren, they take care of their sick husbands or companions, they care for
neighbours and friends who are alone. They keep in touch by telephone and by mail, they
remember birthdays, they organise vacations and parties; in short, they are the essential
motor of family and social life. To have to fulfil this role proves a handicap for women
in politics; therefore, a women who is active in politics does not have two full-time jobs,
but three. But this is a handicap only in the sense where we believe that male behaviour
in public life is the only example to be followed. One can just as well say that women
are right in trying to conciliate everything. What would the world be like where no one
took care of others, but each of us was completely preoccupied by our paid work or by
politics? The crisis currently faced by our societies shows that instead, women’s way of
life could be the model for tomorrow. The multiple responsibilities of women give them
multiple skills, the capacity for invention and a large capacity for resilience. The pro-
blem of women’s multiple full-time jobs is due in part to the fact that men do not fulfil their share of responsibilities in family and social life. It is therefore up to men to change. Thus, one can resume the current state of Swedish feminist ideas.

Sintra, 20-21 April 1997
I am particularly glad that we can be here in Portugal this year, two decades after local government was democratized in this country. To add to the significance of the jubilee year, local elections are being held here in December.

Last year Finnish women celebrated the 90th anniversary of being enfranchised in national elections. In 1906, Finland became the first country in the world to give women full political rights in parliamentary elections; which meant that they had the same right as men to vote and stand as candidates.

From the very beginning they were successful in capturing seats. When the first parliamentary election was held under the new system in 1907, women gained 10% of the 200 seats.

The success of women in parliamentary elections ever since 1907 is impressive. In 1970 they gained 21.5% of the seats and 31% in 1983.

At the local level, women were granted the right to vote and to stand as candidates in 1917. As late as 1968, they won 10.7% of local seats (i.e. the same percentage as had been achieved in parliamentary elections 60 years earlier). By 1980 the percentage had risen to 22.2% and it passed the 30% mark in 1992.

The municipal elections last autumn saw women gain a slightly larger number of seats (31.4%) than four years earlier, but still clearly less than in the 1995 general election (33.5%).

Women candidates received a substantially larger share of the votes than they gained seats. Their 36.8% of the poll gave them only 31.4% of the seats. That demonstrates the power of women as vote-catchers. Some candidates receive very large numbers of votes, but under the Finnish system of proportional representation those stars help elect other candidates, often men, thanks to transfers of surplus votes.

That women are less successful in local elections than at the national level is actually quite an interesting phenomenon. In other countries women usually become interested in local political questions first. Then, once they have gained experience at that level, they are willing to go on to parliamentary politics. Why the situation in Finland is the other way round has not been studied. One explanation might be that political rights were granted to women at parliamentary level first.
A feature that must, however, be borne in mind is that there are considerable regional variations in the results of local elections. In the Helsinki metropolitan area, women hold nearly half — between 45 and 48%, of the seats on the councils of what are the country’s largest population centres. The more affluent the population and the better-educated, the more women are elected to municipal councils. Women do well in modern, well-off areas. That can, of course, also be presented the other way round: a prominent role for women in administration guarantees that a municipality thrives and is attractive.

Voters trust women candidates, as the poll figures that I have quoted show. Problems arise when elected bodies appoint committees or working parties. Then women are not given representation commensurate with their share of the poll. In the seventies and eighties, women typically held only 15-20% of the seats on state committees. That proportion was either static or increasing very slowly.

QUOTAS

In 1994 the Government introduced a bill to amend legislation on equality that had been in force since 1986. The amendment was necessary because Finland was about to join the European Union. Women members of Parliament have traditionally co-operated through their own network. They organise seminars and discuss bills. All political parties participate in the network, the chair of which rotates on an annual basis. The network was not satisfied with the Government bill and drafted a proposal to insert a quota provision into the equality legislation. As it happens, I held the chair of the network at the time and the first signature on the proposal was mine.

The proposal was approved by Parliament. Now the quota principle is applied in all public bodies, such as government committees and advisory boards. It is also applied at local level. The principle is that neither gender may hold less than 40% of the seats on any body. Unfortunately quotas cannot be implemented in trade unions, employers’ organisations or private companies.

If an agency, institution or a company, in which a majority of the shares are municipally — or state — owned, has an administrative board, a board of directors or any other executive or administrative body composed of elected or appointed representatives, men and women must be represented in equitable proportions unless there are special reasons to the contrary.

It is precisely this legislation that has brought about the biggest change. Until it came into effect, women were almost entirely absent from the governing bodies of companies in which municipalities or the state had majority stakes. Now the law requires a gender balance that, at least according to the wording, should be 50-50.

The Equality Ombudsman has conducted two surveys to examine how the implementation of quotas has succeeded. I was very pleased indeed to see that the proportion of women had increased to 47% in state-level bodies. An outstanding example is the Ministry of Transport and Communications, which has fulfilled its quota obligations in all committees and working parties.

As I have already mentioned, we had municipal elections last autumn. Now all of our
452 municipalities have to implement quotas in all of their bodies. This really means a
dramatic change. More women will be involved in decision making. The proportion of
men on education and social affairs boards will increase, whilst there will be more
women on the boards that deal with technical and taxation matters as well as on the ex-
cutive boards of municipalities and cities.

The Association of Finnish Local Authorities has compiled data on the gender balan-
ce of all municipal committees elected at the beginning of this year. The data also shows
how many of the chairpersons of executive municipal boards and councils are women
and how many are men.

The provisions of the Equality Act with regard to the allocation of executive positions
have been implemented in nearly all municipalities. In the majority of executive munici-
pal boards, however, men have one seat more than women (the proportion of women
is now around 45%, compared with 25% earlier). About 16% of municipal councils are
chaired by women, which is about the same as before the legislation was amended.
Women's share of vice-chairpersonships has declined by more than 10 percentage points,
from 26.6 to 15%. The explanation is certainly a simple one: men are striking back.
Whereas the law requires 40% of the seats around the municipal board table to be assi-
gned to women, it says nothing about who holds the chair. Vice-chairmen of the coun-
cils are allowed to sit at the table, but without power of decision. Obviously, men
wanted to capture the chairs as a counterweight to the increased influence of women.

About 13% of municipal boards are chaired by women, who also hold about 20% of
the deputy-chairpersonships. Those percentages are about the same as earlier.

What impact have women had in politics?

To mark the 90th anniversary of the enfranchisement of women, a book about the
country's first women parliamentarians has been published. It describes the themes that
interested women politicians in those days almost a century ago.

These included:

- women's rights in marriage
- family legislation, single mothers and their children
- educational questions
- social security
- how to combat prostitution

These are more or less the same questions that women parliamentarians are facing
today. A deep recession has forced us to cut back on social benefits. Today prostitution
and violence against women are still being discussed.

In the equality programme adopted by the Government last January, countering vio-
ence against women is one of the central areas of emphasis. The Office of the Equality
Ombudsman has begun a study of women victims of violence and the results are expec-
ted in the first half of next year.

Despite all the positive things that the Nordic welfare states offer their citizens, we should
still keep in mind that people have had equality of opportunity for less than a century.

I am convinced that we can thank women in politics for the fact that we in Finland
now have guaranteed day care for all children under school age. We take it for granted
as a basic right that women have their own individual social security and their own pensions. We are also pleased to note that especially young men are exercising their right to paternity leave. They want to take responsibility for their children. Yet, there are still very few men who take half of the total parental leave to which they would be entitled, and which would mean being with their children for two or three months.

Education has been quite a central factor in promoting equality between the sexes in Finland. Women’s educational level has been rising faster than men’s, and women under 50 are already slightly better-educated than men. On the other hand, there is still a clear division between sectors of education with respect to having a majority of one gender or the other in them.

In 1995, 55% of the students admitted to universities were women. The sector in which women are most dominant is veterinary medicine; in the case of men it is technology.

Finnish women’s participation in the workforce is at almost as high a level as that of men. In 1996 women represented 48. 6% of the workforce and half of all wage-earners. Both women and men work full-time, but women’s jobs are more often for limited periods and part-time than is the case with men. Ten per cent of women work part-time, compared with only four per cent of men.

Regrettably, wage-differentials between the sexes have only grown in recent years. Women’s high educational level has not helped them to achieve wage equality, because the gap in men’s favour remains about 25% in all levels of education.

Finally, I would like to take the opportunity to mention some of the challenges that we must face in the future. Even though women in Finland have a rather good status, we have not achieved real equality — yet. We still have to:

— get more women into top positions in both private-sector companies and the public sector;

— abolish wage discrimination in the labour market. Differentials between women and men vary from 75 to 85%.

— develop gender impact analyses or mainstreaming in all decision making.

A theme much discussed in local government at the moment is how to give citizens greater opportunities to participate and influence matters. Nordic studies concerning the exercise of power have highlighted clear differences between men and women in the way they wield influence. Men are still in the majority when it comes to the ways in which influence is wielded in representative democracy: through political parties, in contacts with officials, elected officials and leading appointed public servants. It has been customary to categorise these as expressions of so-called big democracy. By contrast, small democracy is defined as citizens’ direct influence on their environment. Typical examples are the opportunities that people are given to influence the running of schools and day-care centres in their capacity as parents, as students in institutions of learning, as patients or relatives in care institutions or as residents of particular districts. In all of these forms of small democracy, women are central actors.

The main emphasis to date has been on developing representative democracy, on the big democracy side. At the beginning of this year, the Ministry of the Interior, together
with the Association of Finnish Local Authorities, launched a project intended to create, with the aid of experiments in municipalities, new examples and means of improving citizens' opportunities to influence matters.

With those new opportunities to wield influence, municipal self-government will hopefully come closer also in practice to its original definition: a typical feature of municipal power is that it is wielded by the people for whose benefit services are arranged. In Finland, most of the people who use municipal services are women.

Sintra, 20-21 April 1997
THE PRESENCE OF WOMEN IN MUNICIPAL ADMINISTRATIONS

This short analysis of the Italian situation starts at local level, not just because this is the specific theme of today's meeting, but also because it is a fact that women have often had an opportunity to experiment and to express their potential as decision-makers at this level. It is as if, at local level, where there is more immediate contact with reality, and political involvement often has effects on the actual organisation of the daily life of citizens, it is less difficult for women to use the abilities and power which they are more used to expressing informally.

There were administrative elections in 1995 to which the data reported here refers, it includes updates for subsequent partial elections. The next elections are scheduled for the year 2000. However, there have been a number of important exceptions. For example, back in April (1997) elections were held in 1,125 municipalities, amongst them large cities such as Milan, Turin and Trieste. Further elections will be held in different municipalities in the Autumn, amongst them Rome, Naples and Palermo.

As Table A shows, the presence of women is more understated than the average for women's participation in Italian political institutions : 18.6% of elected town councillors, and 15.6% of alderwomen. It is interesting to note that the numbers have almost doubled compared to the previous elections in 1990. This also applies to mayors, even though the percentage, 6.2%, is still quite low. The lack of equality between men's and women's presence in local political decision-making roles becomes even more critical when shifting from quantitative comparisons to a focus on quality: out of 102 provincial towns, there are only 4 women mayors (Alessandria, Reggio Emilia, Sassari and Verona), that is 3.9%, while there are no women mayors in large cities, or metropolitan areas, such as Rome, Florence, Milan or Naples etc.

It is worth recalling that Law No. 81 of 25 March 1993 was applied when drawing up the 1995 lists. Its provisions are as follows:

- Article 5, section 2, for municipalities with a population under 15,000 inhabitants “neither sex may be represented by more than 3/4 of councillors appointed to the lists of candidates”;
- Article 7, section 1, for municipalities with a population of more than 15,000 inhabitants that “neither sex may be represented by more than 2/3 of councillors appointed to the lists of candidates”.

This rule, which only affects the way the lists are drawn up, has had a positive effect on the overall presence of women in municipal administrations. Their numbers have almost doubled
over those of the previous elections. In future, however, and starting with the lists submitted for the municipal elections in April, there is no longer any need to use these criteria to draw up the lists (save for pressure on individual parties to put a consistent number of candidates forward) since the articles mentioned above were overruled by Judgement No. 422/1995 issued by the Constitutional Court in Italy. This ruling declared Article 5, section 2 to Law No. 81/1993 unconstitutional and as a result disqualified other similar legislation. The ruling was grounded in conflicts with the principle of equality sanctioned under Article 3, section 1 of the Italian Constitution.

This matter has opened a debate between both men and women jurists in Italy. In this regard, I would like to mention a study by the jurist Vittoria Ballestrero which, drawing a parallel between the judgement by the Italian Constitutional Court and the judgement by the European Court of Justice (the Kalanke judgement) implies a risk above and beyond the specific case in my own country. The judgement by the Constitutional Court, in fact, touches on an abstract debate over equality. The actual message is that affirmative action in favour of disadvantaged groups is not legitimate. In this specific case, the rule which reserved a minimum quota on the electoral lists to candidates of both genders did not guarantee election; it merely allowed the under-represented sex to participate in the electoral competition, recouping a disadvantage at the starting point. Ballestrero in fact states: “Guaranteeing the candidate access, means nothing more than ‘promoting’ equal opportunity for accessing elected office”.

Table A. Municipal administrations
(Situation on 17 May 1996)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mayors</th>
<th>Assessors</th>
<th>Councillors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>7 425</td>
<td>21 804</td>
<td>67 605</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>493</td>
<td>4 064</td>
<td>15 422</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>7 928</td>
<td>25 868</td>
<td>83 027</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of Women</td>
<td>6.2%</td>
<td>15.7%</td>
<td>18.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Data covers 7 918 municipalities out of 8 102.

A LOOK AT THE PROVINCES AND REGIONS

At the regional level, the 1995 elections also showed some increase in the presence of women. Results (based on data for Italy, gathered in 1992 by The European Network “Women and Decision-making Processes”, including the results of the 1990 regional elections and the 1991 elections in Sicily) show an increase from 6.7% to 11.4% in Regional Councils, and from 3.5% to 7.1% on Councils. Increased presence as councillors can in part be linked to the safety rule, applied in drawing up the lists, for the elections of 23 April 1995. This brought the percentage of women candidates to 35.4%.

2. This refers to Law No. 43 dated 23 February 1995. One-fifth of the seats are appointed using a majority system (for regional lists); 4/5 using a proportional system (for provincial lists).
However, in 1995 not only did the number of women councillors increase, but so did the number of alderwomen in “regional governments”. For chairmanships, however, things have not improved much since 1992. At present there are no women chairing Councils, whilst there are 4 women (out of 20), or 20% chairing Regional Councils (in the Veneto, Emilia Romagna, the Marche and Campania).

As for the provinces, looking first at top decision-makers, we find 5 chairmen out of 101 (Turin, Biella, Gorizia, Genoa and Ancona), that is 4.9%, whilst councillors increased from 7.1% in 1992 to 10.3% in 1995 (this figure is only indicative as it is calculated from partial data).

A LOOK AT WOMEN IN NATIONAL POLITICS

Given that the lack of balance in representation is a matter of concern at all political levels, though they differ in form and content, it would seem justified and necessary to mention the presence of women in Parliament and the Government. Especially as, if we wish to move from analysis to strategy, it would be unwise to propose solutions which may work best at the local level, but which may not fit into any overall strategic framework.

If we compare the last two legislatures, we see a drop in the presence of women already on electoral lists (cf. Tab. B). The number of women elected to the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate decreased from 1994 to 1996 by around three percentage points, from 13.1% to 10.1%. This drop is most in evidence in data relating to women elected to the Chamber of Deputies (in whose favour the anti-discrimination ruling of 1993 affected the lists). The decrease was around four points, from 15.1% to 11.3%.

Article 1, section 6 states: “In no regional and provincial list may either sex be represented by more than 2/3 of candidates”.

We are talking about the past, since the judgement by the Constitutional Court also affected this clause.

By contrast, the presence of women in the government now in place has increased by around 10 points, from 7.8% in 1994 to 17.1% in 1996. In fact, while there were 5 women out of 64 members in Berlusconi’s government, Prodi’s government has 12 women among its 70 members. Even if we only consider ministers (excluding under-secretaries), the presence of three women (Ministries of Health, Social Solidarity and Equal Opportunity) out of a total 21 members remains quite significant — at around 14.3%.

However, figures on the make-up of the Romano Prodi government may not be read either as a certain or definitive achievement of a better balance between women and men in political decision-making. Unfortunately, on other occasions in Italy it has already been made clear that the route toward equality between men and women in areas of power is replete with obstacles, on-ramps and turnoffs. To illustrate this statement, I would like to mention two facts:

— Ministerial positions held by women still focus on areas traditionally considered as women’s issues, whilst no woman has, as has been requested, been given a ministry of greater

3. The reference is to Law No. 277 of 4 August 1993, which, in Article 4, section 1, stated the proportional quota (appointment to seats using a mixed system: 75% majority, 25% proportional), “lists containing more than one name shall be made up of men and women candidates alternatively”. This rule has also been abolished, as have other similar ones in the aforementioned judgement by the Constitutional Court.
importance to the political life of the country, for example the Ministry of Finance or Labour.

— On the “Parliamentary Commission for constitutional reforms” (set up in early 1997), women’s presence is even less than in parliament: there are six women among 70 members, that is 8.6%. This Commission which is to decide on the rules of democracy for all citizens is, once again, essentially male.

Table B

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total candidates</th>
<th>women</th>
<th>% of women</th>
<th>women elected rep.</th>
<th>women elected rep. %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chamber/Deputies</td>
<td>2,899</td>
<td>594</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>95 / 630</td>
<td>15.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Senate</td>
<td>1,475</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>29 / 315</td>
<td>9.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4,374</td>
<td>772</td>
<td>17.6</td>
<td>124 / 945</td>
<td>13.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Government (ministers &amp; secret./state)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secret./state</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5 (tot. 464) 7.8</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total candidates</th>
<th>women</th>
<th>% of women</th>
<th>women elected rep.</th>
<th>women elected rep. %</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chamber/Deputies</td>
<td>2,191</td>
<td>215</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>71 / 630</td>
<td>11.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senate</td>
<td>1,007</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>26 / 315</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>3,201</td>
<td>359</td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>97 / 945</td>
<td>10.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government (ministers &amp; secret./state)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>12 (tot. 70) 17.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* This table was drawn up on the basis of data provided by the Election Council in the Chamber of Deputies after those elected had been declared; the data was recorded by the National Commission for Equal Opportunity's research and documentation service.

CONCLUSION

Once again we are faced with a contradiction between the quality of the contribution to democracy which women have made at the theoretical and practical level in Italy and the degree to which they are appointed to decision-making institutional roles.

I would like to conclude my report on an optimistic note, by emphasising the positive and “good practices” — which are also being implemented in Italy.

At national level, the most significant event in recent months, as far as women-politics-power is concerned, is the Directive approved by the Council of Ministers on 7 March 1997, entitled “Action intended to promote the assignment of power and responsibilities to women and to recognise and guarantee freedom of choice and roles in society to women and men”. The Directive was proposed by the Minister for Equal Opportunity, Anna Finocchiaro, who opened the meeting of the Council of Ministers with an introductory report covering many issues touched upon in the research carried out by the European Network “Women and Decision-making Processes” in recent years. The Directive is intended to apply suggestions from the World Conference in Peking regarding mainstreaming and empowerment, and commits all Ministers “to exercising their respective powers” to implement locally necessary initiatives. The aim is “to promote the acquisition of powers and responsibilities by women, integrating gender issues in all policies, both general and sectorial, to promote new employment policies, lifestyles and labour organisation...”.

It is the first time a government in Italy has made such explicit commitments, particularly concerning women and power. The government has admitted that the “women’s issues” do not concern sectors — which only concern women — but is something which could cut through politics in general. This is important news. Even the way in which the Directive has been prepared
over these past months, through meetings by the Ministry for Equal Opportunities and its team along with women's associations and groups, both within and outside of institutions, has marked out new avenues for making politics less disconnected with the culture and practices of many women. It will now be important to see to what extent the Government can actualise the principles approved in the Directive of 7 March, in everyday activities.

To conclude, and returning to our point of departure — that of local politics — I would like to remind you that over and above the figures and quantities which our analysis started from, the acts of women have made their mark and produced various positive elements which cannot be recorded in figures alone. I would simply like to cite several examples. The first is the ability women have shown in some municipal administrations to act with a strong feminine ties cutting through political differences. I am referring to the Commission of the Elect which, since the start of the '90s, has been operating in Rome or the Council of Women in Florence which does not just include councillors but also representatives from women's associations and groups in the city. From the point of view of valuing and increasing women's empowerment, actual training courses for women administrators have been created in some regions, and not only elected women but also potential future candidates have attended them.

Without referring to other experiences of good practice in which female representatives from Italy here present can speak, from their practical experience, I would like to conclude by recalling that the attention which Italian municipalities have, for several years, been focusing on the problem of service hours in the city (Regulating Plan for Schedules), sanctioned by Law No. 142/90 (in particular by Articles 6 and 19) is the result of the care and acts of women. Once again, a problem highlighted by women — the need to reconcile professional working life with family life — has opened up a general issue. In fact, a more “user-friendly” city, where the pace of life is less wearisome, will improve the quality of life to the advantage of all citizens, both women and men.

Sintra, 20-21 April 1997
Local Government in Ireland

Frances GARDINER

THE IRISH POLITICAL SYSTEM: A BRIEF INTRODUCTION

Ireland is a unitary state, a parliamentary democracy with a written constitution. Parliament consists of two political chambers: an upper house or Senate (Seanad Eireann) comprising 60 members, and a lower house (Dáil) with 166 deputies, elected every five years. The head of state is the President of Ireland, an elected office with a seven-year term (may be returned for a second term only). There are twenty-one women deputies in the Dáil and nine women senators, representing 13 percent and 18 percent of the lower and upper houses respectively.

WOMEN IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN IRELAND

If the guiding principle of democratic self-governance involves merging the doctrine of subsidiarity (that decisions should be taken at the most appropriate level and as close to the people as possible) with participatory theory (that citizens should participate as fully as possible in those decisions), Irish local government must be seen as a deviant case. With one of the most highly centralised political systems in Europe, few powers and functions are delegated to local governing structures. One might therefore expect that local office, lacking real power, would be less desirable compared with systems with more substantial local powers, and present a more open opportunity structure for women wishing to enter political life.

This paper examines the participation of women in the structures of local government in Ireland; first, the framework within which local government and administration operate is outlined; second, local office-holding as a form of political capital is shown to possess both positive and negative effects for women’s political integration; third, it is argued that increasing Europeanisation enhances the desirability of local office and increases the obstacles encountered by women candidates; on the other hand, the multiplicity of local bodies associated with local development in Ireland expands the pool of quasi-decision-makers and facilitates women’s inclusion; finally, strategies for women’s promotion within local administration structures contrasts with the neglect of such opportunities in the electoral channel.
I. Local Administration in Ireland

Local authorities in Ireland lack a firmly defined constitutional role, traditionally operating under ultra vires provisions in the absence of any general right of competence. The ultra vires principle, whereby a local authority has to act within specific powers, has been substantially relaxed and replaced with powers of general competence. Local authorities now have a broad power of general competence to take action in the community interest and to represent the interests of the local community in such manner as they think fit (Interim Report of the Devolution Committee, 1996 : 34). There is, however, no positive provision for local government in Bunreacht na hÉireann, the 1937 Irish Constitution (Roche, 1982 : 3). Local institutions are mentioned, but only incidentally.¹

The present structure of local government in the Republic of Ireland is largely a legacy of nineteenth century British administration. One of the most important innovations since the foundation of the state was to reduce the power of grassroots authorities and transfer their functions to county councils. From town commissions to urban district councils, a rationalisation trend resulted in many either ceasing to exist, being suspended or having their powers curtailed or relegated to a higher tier; parish councils were never set up, in contrast to the UK (Chubb, 1982 : 295). Local government is primarily county council government, and with so few small district authorities, the total number of local councils is small; compared with other small European states, Ireland has very few directly elected councils (Barrington, 1980 : 43).

The system of local government thus differs from the European norm, structurally and substantively. The European model of local government has typically been two-tiered: an upper level consisting of a small number of counties or provinces, modelled on the French départements and acting largely as agents of central government, and a lower level consisting of a very large number of communes or municipalities of greatly varying size, each one with a local council and considerable administrative powers; the latter level remains undeveloped in Ireland, with local representative government largely taking place at county level (Coakley and Gallagher, 1993 : 22,23).

The basic structure of local government is effectively a unitary single tier system. Some changes have been implemented during the 1990s, following the Barrington report on Local Government Reorganisation and Reform (1991). Three new county councils in Dublin and eight Regional Authorities were established in 1994 to promote the coordination of public services in each region and monitor and advise on the implementation of Structural Funds and Cohesion Fund (Interim Report of the Devolution Commission, 1996 : 33).

While the local government system, in the strict sense of the bodies governed by the Local Government Acts, includes the local and regional authorities only, several other bodies of various kinds are closely allied to the local government system. These include Regional Health

¹ Article 12.4.2, dealing with the Presidency, stipulates that a candidate for Presidential office should be nominated by twenty or more Dail Deputies (MPs) or Senators or by the Councils of not less than four administrative Counties (including County Boroughs) as defined by law. Up until 1997, the provision for county council nomination had never been successfully invoked, and sought only once. In the 1997 Presidential election, for the first time, a female candidate sought and obtained nomination by this means, winning the support of four county councils, and setting an example immediately pursued (again successfully) by a male candidate in that election. Media comment at the time pointed to a groundswell of support among county councillors to exert what limited powers they possess and challenge the might of the large political parties who normally control the nomination process.
Boards, County Enterprise Boards, Vocational Education Committees, and Harbour Boards. Although not directly elected, like the Regional Authorities they have all or part of their membership nominated or appointed by the elected local authorities. The formal local and regional authorities operate under the supervision of the Minister for the Environment. At present there is no regional tier of government and only a patchy and partial sub-county tier, confined to urban areas (Committee of the Regions, 1995: 146). The older conception of local government as a separate governmental system was displaced by the idea of local authorities as agents of central government (Chubb, op. cit.: 297).

Irish local government comprises 114 directly elected authorities in five legal classes. The principal local authorities are the twenty-nine Counties and the five County Borough Councils. In addition, there are a smaller set of urbanised Borough Corporations (5) and Urban District Councils (49). They are often regarded as the lower tier of Irish local government. County councils and county borough councils typically embrace a much larger population than the borough and urban district councils. There are, in addition, 26 Town Commissioners. There is a total of 1627 elected local government members. Apart from the establishment of Galway City as a County Borough, the creation of Regional Authorities and other less important adjustments, there has been no fundamental change to the basic structure for almost 100 years.

Following the example of American local administration, the creation of a managerial system was intended to replace committee administration. Chubb observes, however,

Whereas central control has diminished the discretion of both local councillors and local officials, the creation of a managerial system has increased the local official’s role at the local councillor’s expense (1982: 301).

Under the management system, the functions of local authorities are divided into reserved functions (councils) and executive functions (managers). The reserved functions, performed directly by elected local government members, comprise mainly decisions on major matters of policy and principle and include the adoption of annual estimates, borrowing of money, making of development plans, making, amending or revoking of bye-laws, bringing enactments into force and nominating persons to act on other public bodies. Every function which is not a reserved function is an executive function, performed directly by the manager, as appointed head of the administration. The manager has the right to attend meetings and take part in discussions but is not entitled to vote.

Local authorities in Ireland have, by international comparison, a relatively narrow range of functions. It is common to find local authorities elsewhere in Europe involved in police, public transport, primary and secondary-level education, health, social welfare, public utilities and municipal undertakings of various kinds. Irish local government services tend to be largely regulatory (planning control, building control, pollution control, motor tax, various forms of licen-

2. In 1970, the administration of health services generally was removed from the direct control of local government.
3. By the late 1960s, the array of other bodies at local level were reporting to the Departments of Health, Agriculture and Fisheries, Education, Justice, Social Welfare, Transport and Power, and Defence, fragmenting local authority and consolidating the power of central government.
4. County councillors at first resented the manager system, seeing it as encroaching upon their authority, but gradually a balance between the two has been effected. Chubb depicts the elected member as a consumer representative and more of a factor in the administration of services than as a policy maker or legislator. The manager, on the other hand, is depicted as the architect of community services. Overall, however, he claims that most councillors are far more frustrated by some action or lack of action in a central government department than by the manager or managerial system.
sing, for example) or infrastructural or technical/engineering (roads, public lighting, water supply, sewerage treatment, waste disposal, major emergency planning, recreation).

In Ireland, these services are formally divided amongst eight programme headings:

1. Housing and Building
2. Road transportation and safety
3. Water supply and sewerage
4. Development incentives and control
5. Environmental protection: refuse collection/disposal, street cleaning, pollution control; fire brigade service
6. Recreation and amenities: provision of swimming pools, parks, open spaces, community services, libraries
7. Agriculture, education, health and welfare (appointing committees and administering grants; the latter two are no longer major local functions)
8. Miscellaneous services e.g. preparation of lists of voters and jurors, provision of courthouses

A senior specialist on Irish local government contends we have the most highly centralised system of government in Western Europe with the most restricted range of functions of any western developed democracy, precisely the opposite to the model favoured for continental European democratic organisation.

The basic problem in this country is with what appears to be our underlying theory of democracy. We seem to see democracy as a model in which power somehow magically resides in a small, highly-centralised core. This power and discretion is then somehow delegated downwards, away from the centre, so that what arrives at the locality is what is leftover, that which the centre does not want, or could not do (Ryan, 1990: 16).

It should not come as a surprise that public interest in the affairs of local government has lagged, reflected in lack of expressed concern or outcry at its gradual disempowerment. On the other hand, turnout for local elections, although lower in Ireland than for general elections, is high by European comparison. From 67 percent in 1967, it has, however, fallen to 55 percent in 1991. Turnout is traditionally lower in Dublin, with a low of 36.3 percent in the Dublin Rathmines area contrasting with a high of 75 percent in Leitrim in the 1991 election.

II Women in local government. Cinderella in a Cinderella institution?

Contrary to the pattern in many other European democracies, Irish women’s representation in local assemblies is low in absolute terms and differs little from national parliamentary representation, which is also low; in county councils and in the Dail, women hold around 12 percent of seats. Women won the vote at local level in Ireland under the Local Government (Ireland) Act of 1898 and the right to hold district council office, but were debarred from holding county or borough seats until 1911, when they were admitted by the Local Authorities (Ireland) (Qualification of Women) Act of that year.5

Thirty years ago, women held just 2.9 percent of county council seats, gradually increasing in small increments to 11.4 percent at the 1991 elections (see Table 1). In the event of casual vacancies through retirement or death of a member, local councils coopt replacements. This

5. Married women over thirty years of age were fully enfranchised under the Representation of the People Act of 1918; in 1928, all women were entitled to vote.
practice has facilitated the entry to local office of many women, usually to fill the seat of a deceased father or uncle. What is notable from these figures is the law of increasing disproportions which governs women’s representation at different levels of local government. More women win borough council than county council seats. The higher the rank, the fewer women; yet the percentage of borough council seats held by women from 1974 to 1991 shows a decrease. Dublin County Borough (city as opposed to county council) elected 21.2 percent women councillors in 1991 compared with 13.5 percent in 1985; Waterford City Council failed, however, to elect a single woman in either 1985 or 1991, reducing the overall total. Women won over 26 percent of seats in Dublin county and city.

Table 1. Women elected to Irish local government 1967-1991

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>County Councils</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>11.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Borough Councils</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>13.8</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>13.1</td>
<td>13.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>11.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source*: Barnes, 1975: 80 (1967, 1974); Tansey, 1984 (1979); Brennan and Murphy, 1986; Donnelly, 1992

Election is generally easier for women in cities, where ease of mobility and density of population facilitate the door-to-door canvassing which is a characteristic of Irish elections, both local and national. Dublin electoral districts returned most women councillors; Dublin South recorded the highest number of women, 31 percent, followed by North Dublin and Dun Laoghaire (Dublin county suburb) with 29 percent each. In general, urban areas return more women than rural; an east-west gradient operates: the further west, the fewer women elected.

Table 2. Women elected members of Irish local government 1995

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authorities</th>
<th>No. of Authorities</th>
<th>Members</th>
<th>No. of Wm</th>
<th>Wm as % of total</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>County Councils</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>753</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>County Borough Councils</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>13.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Borough Corporation</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>15.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Urban District Councils</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>450</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>15.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Town Commissioners</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>234</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>20.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>114</td>
<td>1627</td>
<td>241</td>
<td>14.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


In 1994, elections to borough corporations, urban district councils and town commissions took place. Table 2 confirms that as the power of local office increases, women’s visibility decreases. Local elections are dominated by political parties. Failure on the part of the large par-
ties to select women candidates means that few women break through to local office. The advent of several smaller parties with a high percentage of women candidates has pressured the large parties to include more women on their election tickets in recent elections. Women have also taken the initiative to stand as Independent candidates, demonstrating their interest in political participation despite party unwillingness to champion them, and have won 14 percent of Independent seats.

Obstacles to women's entry in local government: Economic

Women's participation in local government is thwarted due to a combination of political, economic and social impediments. The composition of local assemblies and perception of the role of councillor ensured that women's participation was marginal up until the 1990s. Certain occupational groups — farmers, shopkeepers, publicans, auctioneers — have tended to dominate local councils; women have traditionally been absent from these commercial sectors, except as 'relatives assisting'. Well-known proprietors, whether in agriculture or trading, capitalise on their 'customer-oriented' business contacts. Since Irish political culture values personalism and localism, the capacity to create networks of contacts has been of prime importance for people wishing to embark on political careers. But, as Randall and Smyth point out, women are largely excluded from the kinds of meeting-places — pubs, sporting, business and other clubs, marts and markets, auctions — where these important networks have traditionally been cemented (1987: 207). In the 1991 local elections, farming was by far the most popular occupation of local authority members (Donnelly, 1992: 34).

Lack of confidence in dealing with the state bureaucracy encourages constituents to view their politicians as consumer representatives concerned with complaints, grievances, and pleas to mediate on their behalf. There is an abundant literature on the pressures brought to bear on members of the national parliament (Dail) to fulfill this brokerage role for constituents, resulting in a thriving clientelist relationship, which relegates the elected member to the role of 'messenger-boy or girl' rather than national legislator (Chubb, 1963; Farrell, 1981; Roche, 1980; Komito, 1985, for example).

The role of local councillor falls into the same mould, with research conducted in one Irish county confirming that only a small minority of councillors saw their role as policymakers; rather, the predominant perception was that of representing the interests of constituents in questions relating to pensions, social welfare rights, planning permission (Carey, 1986). The fact that local government itself is marginalised from the policymaking process, with few powers due to the highly centralised nature of Irish politics, accentuates and facilitates this tendency, but also generates considerable frustration among councillors interested in shaping policy. The fact that local government in Ireland does not include responsibility for education (apart from administering grants), health, welfare or policing/security policy, means that councillors are denied experience in studying and formulating policy options in these areas. Women councillors, therefore, suffer an added disadvantage in that portfolios of interest to them are not the domain of local government. In Britain and Scandinavia, women councillors have been able to develop expertise and serve on committees specialising in such policy areas, which can also be seen as an extension of their concerns as mothers and homemakers (Randall and Smyth, 1987: 207).

Winning local office represents a form of political capital at grassroots level, a step on the ladder towards winning a Dail seat. In 1982 nearly two-thirds of Dail deputies and senators were also councillors (Roche, 1982: 98). In the 1992 election, nearly three-quarters of deputies were members of a county council or county borough councils before election to the Dail, and most
of the rest reversed the sequence, leaving fewer than 10 percent who have never served on a local council (Gallagher, 1993 : 73). Holding both local authority and Dail seats has, therefore, been a common political career-path for politicians. To try to ensure reelection, politicians continue to hold on to local authority membership as a strategy to consolidate ties with constituents. This necessity to pursue a dual mandate has obvious consequences for women wishing to enter national politics. The feminist literature has identified the dual burden for women encumbered with domestic work and responsibilities as well as paid employment. The dual mandate obligation not only places a triple burden on women aspiring to national parliamentary office in Ireland, but also obstructs the channels to political office because several offices can be concentrated in one person, preventing others from getting a foothold on the political ladder. It has not been unusual for members of the European Parliament to also hold national parliamentary seats, creating further bottlenecks for new political aspirants.

Initial steps by government in 1991 to eliminate the dual mandate focused on excluding Ministers and Ministers of State (junior ministers) from local government membership. This is to be extended to include a further number of office holders who will be barred from dual mandates. From 1998, chairpersons of Oireachtas (Parliamentary) Select Committees, Ceann Comhairle (Speaker of the Lower House), Cathaoirleach of the Seanad (Speaker of the Upper House) and Members of the EU Commission will not be permitted to also hold local government office. In addition, members of both lower and upper houses of parliament (members of the Oireachtas) will be disqualified from being the Chairman or Deputy Chairman (sic) of a local authority from the 1998 elections (Local Government Acts, 1001 and 1994). These elections have, however, been postponed until 1999. The 1991 Act sought to emphasise the role of the local councillor as the community’s representative and the policymaker within the local government system (Interim Report of the Devolution Commission, 1996 : 34).

The Electoral System

Maintenance of a brokerage relationship with constituents has also been necessitated by the exigencies of the Irish electoral system. Proportional representation in multimember constituencies using the single-transferable-vote exposes prospective candidates to the vagaries of preference voting. At county level, the number of council seats varies from 15 to 52, subdivided between electoral districts; at sub-county level, there are 177 electoral districts with the number of seats ranging from 3 to 7. Thus, as at national level, the district magnitude or number of seats per constituency is small (between 3 and 5 seats per Dail constituency). Rivalry is, therefore, intense between local candidates who compete for votes on the basis of their constituency service. Competition can be more intense between candidates of the same party than between candidates of different parties; incumbents are often defeated by party colleagues rather than by opposition candidates.

Voters are permitted as many votes as there are candidates, ranking candidates 1, 2, 3 etc. in order of preference. Election is achieved by reaching the quota, which is calculated by dividing the total number of valid votes in an electoral area by the number of seats plus one. If an elected candidate wins more than a quota, his/her surplus is distributed among the candidates whose names appear as second preferences on those ballots, and the counting continues until all the seats are filled. The candidates with the fewest votes are eliminated and their votes distributed in the same way. Therefore, the second (or higher) preferences are extremely important, as candidates still in the race can predict which candidates’ votes may come their way; the agonies of the counting procedure is seen when the order of ‘elimination’ appears more favourable to one candidate due to the predicted direction of his or her second or higher preferences.
It is quite common to find that a candidate who has been languishing in terms of vote count can leap ahead because they receive a large tranche of votes from an eliminated candidate. It also means, of course, that a candidate who has been leading for several counts, getting nearer and nearer the quota, finds his or her ranking subverted by a lower placed candidate suddenly favoured by transfers from an eliminated contender. Elections under PR with the single-transferable vote are unpredictable contests, seats often won by a handful of votes by one candidate over another.

The 1991 local elections brought forth a woman's vote, more visible in Dublin than provincial constituencies. This can be ascertained from examining the vote transfer patterns; in some instances, transfers went from female candidates who were eliminated to other female candidates still in the race. This was particularly evident in the number of Green Party candidates elected in the Dublin area in 1991.

Following the 1992 general election, five women were appointed to government ministries, two senior and three junior. Three of the women ministers belonged to the Labour party, which participated in a coalition government with Fianna Fail. After a government reshuffle in 1994, five women were appointed ministers, three Labour, one Democratic Left and one Fine Gael. All these women had been elected local councillors in 1991, but following the exclusion of ministers from local office, replacement party personnel were coopted to fill their local seats.

In the 1997 election, a swing against the Labour party resulted in all three Labour women ministers losing their Dail seats; a Fine Gael junior minister also lost her Dail seat. Having been removed from their local bailiwicks, renegotiating political entry poses difficulties for women who came to political office through grassroots politics. Thus, while a local government seat is a strong foundation from which to contest a seat at national level, it can become problematic should the holder gain promotion to a ministerial portfolio and lose touch with local contacts and constituents. Party leaders are often less loyal, it would appear, to female party candidates, too. None of the three Labour women former ministers were selected by their party to contest the Senate elections which follow the Irish lower house elections.

III. Horizontal and Vertical expansion of local institutions

The evolution of a labyrinth of networks around local government institutions has taken place during the 1990s, some at European level, others at local level. The term 'Glocalisation' has been coined to describe this increasingly transnational yet simultaneously sub-national development with a double movement involving globalisation on the one hand and devolution or decentralisation on the other (Swyngedouw, 1992 : 40). Previously, the peak organisations relevant to local government were the General Council of County Councils and the Association of Municipal Authorities, both national representative organisations.

With the establishment of eight Regional Authorities, councillors participate in the coordination of industrial development within their regions. Continuing the vertical profile, the introduction, post-Maastricht Treaty, of the Committee of the Regions has facilitated the Europeanisation of Irish local government, and engagement around transnational networks. With a total of 222 members, Irish councillors have 9 seats on the COR. Participation by Irish members in this forum has opened up opportunities to shape public policy in sectors denied to them at national level.

The division of the work of the COR among the various Commissions offers councillors the scope to research, study and report on each Green Paper issued by the European Commission. In turn, the Opinions prepared by councillors taking responsibility as rapporteurs for the various
Commissions are presented in plenary session, debated and amended following appraisal by the forum, and taken into consideration by the EU Commission in preparing subsequent White Papers. Such experience in preparing working documents on issues ranging from educational mobility to environment or transport policy, and the cross-fertilisation of ideas through discussion with members from other cultures and political systems represents a rich training ground for future participation in national parliament and government. Many schemes and projects supported by the EU Commission through Regional Policy involves close cooperation with local elected personnel. At national level, participation by council members on Health Boards, Vocational Education Committees, Forestry, Fishery and Harbour Boards affords more limited scope for innovative thinking, policy formulation in the final analysis retained by central government.

It is in the area of Irish industrial development that decentralisation has occurred most notably during the 1990s. Regional Authorities, County Enterprise Boards, Partnership Companies and Local Authorities are the main engines, coordinating development plans, monitoring the provision of services and supervising the implementation of the Local Development Programme laid down by government. Women’s representation in County Enterprise Boards became controversial during the inception of the Boards. Having invited the nominating authorities to include women among their candidates, the Minister for Enterprise and Employment (1992-97) reacted when only a few women’s names were forwarded to him for approval. Eventually, the Minister was forced to initiate action himself to engineer women’s inclusion — the composition of the Boards was enlarged and the Minister himself nominated women to the Boards. The defence offered by the nominating bodies was the difficulty encountered in finding ‘suitable women’. It is ironic that the women who ultimately were nominated to the County Enterprise Boards are reputed to be among the best contributors to policy and administration.

The Minister for Equality and Law Reform also initiated measures for women’s inclusion on public boards, with the result that more women serve on the various state bodies and public boards than are elected to local government. The Minister recommended gender quotas to the nominating bodies under his remit. The female Minister for Education during the 1992-97 administration introduced legislation for gender quotas on the Boards of Regional Technical Colleges.

IV. Administrative versus Electoral Equality Initiatives at Local Level

Women’s meagre level of representation in local elected councils is matched by equally slim participation at senior levels in local administration. The career paths differ considerably, yet the end result is remarkably similar: the higher up the ladder, the fewer women are present. Within any organisation, professional and job-related qualifications and a series of successive promotions are required in order to gain access to the most senior positions. Successive promotions to hierarchically ordered positions are important. ‘Property in positions’, as such promotions are called, may be regarded as a resource independent of property in skills and credentials, not least because access to positions does not depend on formal credentials alone. This is especially true of organisations such as Local Authorities which have bureaucratic structures, and a hierarchical organisational structure, like a pyramid (JOCR, 1996 : 5). Women, it is argued, are at a disadvantage in procuring ‘property of position’ with the result that men tend to dominate the administrative hierarchies. Furthermore, it has been argued that the extent to which getting to the top of one’s career is dependent on formal qualifications rather than ‘property in position’ the more successful women are likely to be.

One author alleges that success in getting to the administrative top in Local Authorities resides in the sharply focused, organisational politician, concerned exclusively with informal
ties, manoeuvring towards the crucial gatekeepers, avoiding the organisational contingencies that trap the less wary (Collins, 1979, quoted in JOCR, 1996). The parallels between getting to the top in public administration at local level and to elected political office are strikingly similar. An evaluation of local government administration called for change to broaden the route to top management posts, claiming that ‘local authority work’ is not attracting people of a sufficiently high calibre for either management or technical jobs. It was recommended that Local Authorities should be able to appoint people from outside the service ‘to fill any post from clerical officer to County Manager’.

**Table 3. Women’s representation among senior personnel in local administration (%)**

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<tr>
<td>City/County Manager</td>
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<td>Asst. City/County Manager</td>
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<tr>
<td>County Secretary</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Finance Officer</td>
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From Table 3 we note the absence of women from the upper echelons of administration in local government. There are no women in the most senior grades of City and County Managers and Assistant City and County Managers. At the next level, there are only two women County Secretaries and one woman Finance Officer. The County Manager is appointed following open competition for the post conducted by an independent agency called the Local Appointments Commission. One of the recommendations of the Report of the Second Commission on the Status of Women 1993 was the appointment of a woman to the body, which had been all-male. This has been effected.

The commissioning of a report on the position of women in local administration by the Joint Oireachtas (Parliamentary) Committee on Women’s Rights has highlighted the gross imbalance in women’s representation at higher levels in senior posts. Although variations were detectable, county level representation was particularly feeble for women in senior management. The Parliamentary Committee have brought forward a list of recommendations to promote equality, aware that women simply do not put themselves forward for interview at the same frequency as men and lack confidence in their own ability.

Many of the characteristics governing women’s representation in local government, in elective and appointive office, are similar in that female candidates are a scarce species for both contests. Irish women seem reluctant to put themselves forward for election or interview, and when they do, they seem to fare less well than male counterparts. This was evident in the percentage of vote shares attracted by women contesting local elections, and also in the appointive channel. In the domain of nominations to state boards and public bodies, particularly where ministerial decision-making governs the final choice, women seem to record more success, particularly where quotas have been recommended or instituted.

Little attention is paid to women’s political integration at local level. Quotas tend to evince strong reactions from parties and elected female deputies and councillors. No woman wants to be
seen as a token selection choice; yet in countries where quotas are used, women often unashamedly declare ‘I’m a QUOTA’, well aware that it is performance in office that will create the lasting record of political achievements long after the election hubbub is over. In Ireland, parties claim they do seek out women candidates; this is true to a limited extent, in that parties are no longer as impervious to women’s skills and abilities as formerly. With the largest parties selecting between 12-16 percent women candidates in the 1997 general election, much work remains to be done to try to ensure that women candidates for the 1999 local elections are more numerous.

In the final analysis, however, reform of local governing structures and powers must be undertaken in order for local democracy to develop, and to attract politicians of calibre to serve at community level. With increasing lip service to the concept of subsidiarity, particularly at EU level, it is ironic that Irish local authorities remain mere puppets of a centralised grand master, compared with most other European local systems.

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Amfissa, 4-5 May 1998
Twenty-seven years ago, I performed the same duties as many of today’s participants as a municipal councillor, in charge of economic affairs in the smallest city in the world, Madurodam. My main activity consisted of guiding VIPs around our minuscule city. I can assure you that this occupation was particularly pleasant and I hope that you appreciate your work as much as I appreciated mine during that time. Thus, I did not hesitate one second in coming to speak to you today, in Madurodam, about women’s participation in local public affairs. My speech will not be very long, as it seems that I have about nine minutes remaining. As the majority of the people present here are Dutch speakers and as we have excellent interpreters available, I shall continue my presentation in Dutch.

Given the limited amount of time, I should like to confine myself to discussing a phenomenon which, unfortunately, is typically Dutch: the representation of women in municipal councils which lags behind the representation of women in other bodies. Why unfortunately? The assumption is that a great diversity in the composition of municipal councils leads to an improvement in the quality of democracy. This quality of democracy has to do mainly with the relationship between citizens and those elected. A good reflection of society in terms of the participation of women results in a greater legitimacy of the decision-making process (acceptance of the decisions made); greater responsiveness (women will generally have a better eye and ear for the specific issues of their own group. For instance, as long as women mainly fulfil their tasks of looking after children’s education, female councillors will in general devote more attention to the issue of day care centres). A final argument is that women usually form part of other networks. Thus, many women participate in school administrations, while many men are active in sporting clubs. The greater the diversity in the council, the greater the variety of people who get involved in local politics. These are just a few arguments in favour of a greater participation by women in local politics. Voters in the Netherlands appear to be sensitive to these arguments: in the latest municipal council elections, 37 percent of the preference votes cast (which means those not given to the top candidate on the list) went to female candidates.
In the Netherlands, one third of all members of the Lower Chamber are women, 35 percent of the delegates to the European Parliament are women, as are almost 30 percent of the members of the Provincial Council. How many women do you think there are in the municipal councils? Twenty-two percent. Now what is so typical of the local level which leads to a deficiency in the presence of women there?

First let me discuss three institutional developments:

• emergence of local lists
• redefinition of municipal boundaries
• fragmentation.

Since 1990, we have seen a strengthening of the local element in local politics in the Netherlands. The interest in local politics is growing. Whereas in 1990, 43 percent of the electorate indicated that they were interested in local politics, this figure had increased to 47 percent in 1994. The percentage of voters who find that the decisions of the municipal council have a great impact on their daily lives is also increasing. And of course there is the increase in the percentage of voters voting for independent parties, on local lists, that is. There is another typically Dutch phenomenon which should be explained for our foreign guests. Lists and parties apply only to the municipality where the elections are being held, without any connection whatsoever to a nationally organised party. In 1994, there were almost 800 local lists used, and these received more than 20 percent of the votes. In 1990, it was only 13 per cent.

It is also important to see that local lists of candidates no longer occur chiefly in Limburg and Brabant. Thus, in 1994 the local lists in North Holland occupy 17 percent of the seats and in Drente 23 per cent. Indeed, in 27 percent of the municipalities, local parties are the leading parties.

How do we explain this preference for local lists? Mainly from social developments such as individualisation and the breaking down of traditional religious and socio-political barriers. Today, people no longer, or rarely, belong to national parties solely for reasons based on ideology; voters are focused more on specific local issues; voting for a local list is also an expression of dissatisfaction with national party politics; and, finally, people can vote on the basis of involvement with and attachment to their own community.

Why does this phenomenon have an adverse effect on the representation of women? Only 15 percent of all representatives on local lists are women. Local lists have nothing to do with positive action programmes imposed by central administrators. Usually local lists are almost blind to the need for a balanced composition of the parliamentary group.

The second institutional development is the redefinition of municipal boundaries, a phenomenon with which most European countries are quite familiar. By this I mean the merging of municipalities to one big municipality with one municipal council and one administration. While in 1960 the Netherlands consisted of some 1,200 municipalities, today, there are barely 600 left.

What happens in the event of a redefinition of municipal boundaries? This entails the merging of local party sections and the redrawing of lists of candidates to include local chairs (usually men) in the eligible places, while there is only room for women candidates in lower places, which are often ineligible.
The third item I should like to mention is the fragmentation that occurs. An increasing number of parties are taking part in the elections, more parties are winning seats, so that the formation of local coalitions is becoming ever more complicated. Thus, the number of municipal executives featuring four parties rose from 2 to 31 and there are 7 municipalities with an executive consisting of no less than 5 parties. In the municipality of Echt, for example, we find nine different parties for 17 seats. In addition to the splitting of power, fragmentation is also detrimental to women: there are many small parties with short lists of candidates featuring one or two representatives, and on which women are often lacking. Indeed, research has shown that women occupy only a very limited number of first places on the lists of candidates (van der Kooij, 1997).

With the exception of these structural reasons, we can find the cause for the continuous under-representation of women in local politics in the selection procedures of the political parties. In the Netherlands, the parties largely determine who will feature on the lists. What criteria determine the chances of ending up on a list of candidates? I shall distinguish between the general characteristics and the characteristics related to the political party of potential candidates. General characteristics would be: a certain educational level, social experience, availability, openness, ability to express oneself, etc. Criteria related to party politics are: membership of the party, duration of that membership, extent of activity for the party, administrative experience, wide range of expertise, being well-known in the local community, etc. Do women satisfy all these criteria to a lesser extent than men? In the Netherlands, and in most surrounding countries, the gender differences in education have decreased. Many women participate in voluntary organisations and research shows that women usually devote more attention to their compatriots, which includes the voter. The biggest problem still remains availability, child care and care for the elderly which are obviously priorities, but in that area, too, solutions can be found more easily today, at a time when it has become slightly more acceptable that husbands take upon themselves an equal share of this burden. Consequently, the problem lies rather in the selection criteria related to the functioning within the party. Women are members less often, and for shorter periods, have less administrative experience, especially in respect to previous experience as councillors or as chairpersons of a party division.

The only criterion where women are equal to men is that of being well-known in the local community. In general, women participate in local committees, but which does not necessarily change their reputation.

In short, it is these traditional selection criteria which work against women in a rather indirect manner. Moreover, it is often male party members who select the candidates to be elected for the new councils. And we are all familiar with the phenomenon that those who do the selecting would prefer to nominate themselves. However, that being impossible, they prefer to choose people who show the greatest possible resemblance to them. This is the syndrome of choosing the familiar.

Finally, I should mention the barrier of women are usually less inclined than men to step forward as candidates. A lot of women need to be asked.

So far the main reasons behind the fact that women remain a minority, a situation which should no longer be the case in a modern democracy in the year 1997. Fortunately,
however, the selection procedures are also undergoing change. Forced by the decreasing number of members of parties and low turnout percentages, a wave of innovation is surging through the political parties, which also affects the selection procedure. The tendency is that the "windows must be opened" and that 'representatives are needed with an open and accessible style of pursuing politics". The head start of incumbent representatives is no longer so self-evident, and nowadays candidates are sought from outside the circle of well-known senior party members as well. Parties are now also actively seeking women candidates. So far, most innovations have occurred at national level, and they have mainly influenced the nominations for the Lower Chamber. Thus, 71 out of the 150 parliamentary members that were elected in 1994 are newcomers. Until today, these innovations have not yet sufficiently reached local party officials.

Nevertheless, it is certain that local politics are in need of innovation and that parties, if they are to succeed in attracting the votes of a sufficient number of citizens, will have to focus more attention to the local scene. At any rate, placing women high on the lists of candidates is one way of giving a new, more modern face to local politics and of strengthening local democracy.

The Hague, 20-21 November 1997
The presence of women in local politics in Luxembourg

Monique LAROCHE-REEFF

In Luxembourg, 1999 is to be an election year: European, national, and municipal. It could therefore be a decisive one in obtaining an increase in women's participation at all levels of political life.

There are major stakes involved, as the current political situation is characterised by glaring imbalances:
— Three-fourths of the members of government are men.
— The composition of the Chamber of Deputies is made up of 82% men, and several Parliamentary Committees do not have a single woman member, for example, on the very important Committee on Work and Employment.
— Worse yet, within the municipal councils, 90% of the members are men. Similar statistics are applicable to the country's mayoral situation. More than one-third of the municipalities — out of a total of 118 — do not have any women representatives on their councils. These figures reflect the situation which resulted following the 1993 elections, and which have not fundamentally changed since.
In Luxembourg, women are therefore badly represented in political decision-making and this fact is particularly accentuated at municipal level.

The same inequalities are reflected in the economical situation.
— The presence of women on the job market is among the weakest in Europe. Hardly any women can be found in high-level executive positions. On the other hand, women are largely over-represented among those working in jobs with no security, among workers paid the minimum wage and those seeking employment.

Within this context, it should be noted:
• that Luxembourg remains one of the few countries in Europe where securing an employment following a leave of absence to receive training is not a legal guarantee for all paid workers;
• that the structures of childcare are under-developed;
that there does not yet exist positive plans of action in the collective working agreements;
and that women are underrepresented in the decision-making bodies of the social partners.

It may be generally said that the organisation of public life and the working world reflects the traditional distribution of roles between women and men and continues to reproduce existing inequalities.

Within the political parties, the situation is more ambiguous.
— It is only in recent years that all the parties represented within the Chamber of Deputies have appointed women to high-level, visible positions: the Social Christian Party has a woman president and a woman vice president; the Democratic Party has a woman president; the Greens (who do not have a presidency) have a female and a male party spokesperson and the ADR has a woman secretary general.
— Yet unfortunately, these are merely token signs in dealing with a much submerged problem. With the exception of the Greens, whose composition is almost one of parity, women only make up one-third of the members of different parties and their representation on the decision-making bodies is often even lower.

This brief view is understandably very general in nature, as there are very few qualitative studies on women’s participation in Luxembourg politics. In fact, Luxembourg has neither a Centre of Feminist Studies, nor any other academic structures in charge of carrying out research in this field. Even the compilation of basic statistical data is not yet ensured. It is mainly thanks to the old “Women in Decision-making” European network that we at least have access to the main quantitative data. Moreover, it is only thanks to a European project co-ordinated by the Frauen Computer Zentrum Berlin that this data continues to be updated.

Let us now focus on the next elections. Can we reasonably hope that the situation will change?

I would say yes. Indicators in fact exist which allow for a certain optimism to be maintained. They concern innovative recent developments, likely to work in favour of women during the next elections, regardless of whether it is at municipal, national or European level, these different levels being closely linked in a country as small as Luxembourg.
— At government and State level, I would mention:
  • first of all, the creation of a Ministry for the Promotion of Women in early 1995;
  • followed by the creation of other structures such as the “Inter-ministerial Committee for equality between women and men” which in turn, has begun to bring forth results, for example, the appointment of a woman as director of the National Education Ministry; the creation of a “Delegate for women’s employment” by the Administration of Employment; and the deposition of a draft law in view of creating the post of a “Delegate (male/female) for equality” in businesses.
— The Chamber of Deputies set up a special “equal opportunities between women and men” committee, and it has begun to invite women’s associations to public preparatory hearings in view of debates on parliamentary aims.
— Two years ago, the political parties were invited by the National Council of Luxembourg Women to participate in a round table with the theme of “A balance of women and men in political decision-making”. This novel event attracted nearly 400 persons, an extraordinary outcome which certainly played in favour of a motion — just as novel — being adopted shortly after by the Chamber of Deputies. In this motion, the parliament invited the government to take advantage of the imminent Constitutional revision to inscribe the principle of equal opportunities and to allow for the “introduction of positive temporary actions to remain in effect until the representation of both sexes is higher than 40%”.

Such positive actions should not be considered an indulgence, particularly since up till now, the political parties have only implemented a few measures to promote a balance between women and men within their own structures:

• the Social Christian Party adopted a resolution that the percentage of women within the party’s different bodies and on the electoral lists should at least be equal to that of women party members;
• the Socialist Worker’s Party introduced certain quotas for decision-making positions within the party and it adopted a recommendation that the electoral lists should include at least 30% women;
• the Democratic Party and ADR have no explicit strategy;
• the Greens implemented a parity quota of 50/50 for all its internal structures and for its electoral lists.

— I would now like to talk about the women’s associations in Luxembourg.
• As I speak, the “Women’s Summit for employment” is being organised in Luxembourg along with the European Summit for employment. This alternative summit was organised by a broad range of Luxembourg women’s associations — a first. For your information, I have brought along translations of the summit’s platform including women’s claims in all of the EU languages. The “Women’s Summit for employment” is a good example of the growing political force of women being exercised in a particularly sensitive area, given the fact that access to economic power and political power are closely linked.
• Another action taken by women’s associations addresses a subject closely related to that of our seminar today. Following the national and European elections in 1994 — therefore prior to the creation of the Ministry for the promotion of women and other public structures mentioned above — the National Council of Luxembourg Women began the preparation of an action entitled “Promotion of a municipal policy of equal opportunities between women and men”. I initiated it as part of my duties as both expert of the European Network “Women in Decision-making” and as a member of the National Council of Luxembourg Women. From the start, the initiative was supported by SYVICOL, our Association of Luxembourg towns and municipalities, a CEMR member. I do not want to go into the details of this action at this time, but you can find additional information in the documents which I have brought, as well as on the Internet site: “http://www.cnfl.lu” which focuses on the theme of “Women in decision-making”.

The action was officially launched in the municipalities on 8 March 1995. Since that day:

- around half of the municipalities appointed a delegate to equal opportunities from among the members of their municipal council;
- around 10% of the municipalities have set up a consultative committee or working group on equal opportunities;
- however, with the exception of one municipality several years ago, the general decision has not yet been taken of creating a department with paid staff to focus on this issue.

The National Council of Luxembourg Women convenes its municipal bodies on equal opportunities once a year, sends them documentation and suggests ideas to them for activities at local level. As of two months ago, the Council has been able to maintain a part-time position for a young political scientist in charge of monitoring this action that I will be co-ordinating on a voluntary basis. The creation of this position was made possible through an agreement with the Ministry for the Promotion of Women. The first task of this new staff member will be to conduct a survey on the presence of women on the consultative committees which exist at municipal level. The results of this survey will be published and widely disseminated.

— Certain municipal bodies on equal opportunities have already begun to compile statistics covering more than the composition of consultative committees. Thus, the delegate of Differdange revealed the fact that within this municipality, there are no women members among the representatives of its member associations; the municipality of Dudelange’s committee on equal opportunities is in the process of examining women’s participation in the decision-making bodies of numerous associations which are subsidised by the municipality, the “Service à la Condition Féminine” of Bettembourg is today presenting an analytical report to its municipal council on the situation of women and men as regards the municipality’s staff.

The compilation of statistics only constitutes one example of activities being carried out by the new municipal bodies on equal opportunities. These activities are generally still very modest in nature, but it can be expected that they will be expanding soon.

The synergy resulting from all these recent innovative developments in Luxembourg has encouraged a fertile situation capable of leading to notable advances for women in the next elections. This situation is all the more worthwhile as we have a voting system which is relatively in favour of women being elected.

Yet these recent developments, as encouraging as they are, ought not to make us forget that a large part of the population continues to accommodate — more or less — the existence of a masculine predominance in the different spheres of public and private life, the fact that there is no defined political programme to promote a balance in political life, that the women’s associations likely to exercise pressure do not have much human or financial resources, and the fact that they were not able to benefit more from the actions of the European Network “Women in Decision-making”, whose activities ended with the 3rd Community programme on equal opportunities.

Yet, we are in need of new impulses, information on good practices which exist in
other countries, and cross-border exchanges between municipalities. For this reason, we especially appreciate the initiatives of CEMR’s Committee of Women Elected Representatives of Local and Regional Authorities and I would like to express my sincere thanks for having been invited to participate in today’s seminar.

*The Hague, 20-21 November 1997*
Second part

Current topics and best practice regarding women's participation in decision-making
Women with Local Decision Making Power in Germany

Ulrike LOHR

1. STATISTICS ON WOMEN IN MANAGERIAL POSITIONS

The proportion of working women has increased in the last few decades. In 1970, out of 100 persons between 15 and 65 years of age who were either employed or unemployed but looking for a job, 46% were women, but the figure is now just under 60%. However, one thing has not changed: statistically, women’s average earnings are only about 74% of men’s.

In the spring of 1992, the Confederation of German Employers’ Associations conducted a survey among companies on the development of the employment of women, particularly those in professional and managerial positions. The companies were also asked about the proportion of male and female professional and managerial staff. In all the companies surveyed the average figure as a proportion of the total labour force was 11.4%, with women accounting for about 7%. With 15% women, the proportion in the service sector was significantly higher. The magazine Capital reached comparable conclusions in December 1991 when it examined the situation of women in management. In the last few years hardly any change has taken place: the proportion of women among top managers is now said to be only about 20%.2

On the survey date, 30 June 1995, about 5.37 million persons worked in the public service, with 1.73 million alone employed by the towns, counties and unions of smaller local authorities. The proportion of women staff in the public service as a whole was 55.3%. The public service of the local authorities presents a significantly better picture: on the same survey date they employed 1.1 million women, so that the proportion of women working for the local authorities was 62%.3

1. Diergarten/Graf Pöckler, IFG 1994, p. 8 (10)
3. Statistisches Jahrbuch 1996 für die Bundesrepublik Deutschland, pp. 516 ff.
A survey carried out among its member towns by the German Association of Municipal Authorities (Deutscher Städtetag) on 1 July 1991 produced for the first time a concrete picture of the filling of managerial positions in town administrations. The figures were updated in 1995. As already mentioned, the proportion of women employed by local authority administrations is significantly higher than in the rest of the public service. On the survey date of 30 June 1995, 88,784 persons, of whom 24,121 — i.e., 27.2% — were women, were employed by the local authorities in the higher public service grades. However, this impression, which seems to be positive at first glance, must be seen in relative terms when the proportion of women in managerial and decision-making positions is considered. The following have been described as holding managerial positions:

— the chief officers of a local authority's central administration
— the deputy chief officers (Beigeordnete) or professional town councillors
— the heads of department.

Compared with 1991, when only three towns were run by a woman, women held top administrative positions in 1995 in 9 of the 139 towns involved in the survey. Here a clear difference becomes apparent between Western and Eastern Germany. In the latter, more than every tenth town administration was headed by a woman in 1991, with an increase to 13.7% being established between 1991 and 1995.

Women have more opportunities at the next level of the hierarchy of local authority administration, namely that run by the professional town councillors and deputy chief officers. While 7% of these decision-making posts were held by women in 1991, the proportion rose to 9.2% in 1995.

In 1991, it was revealed that there were two large main areas of responsibility that, taken together, comprised two-thirds of the local administrative functions for which women were responsible: social services, youth work and health, with approximately 36%, and education and culture, with 31%. In 1995, this picture changed, with more women being appointed to posts in departments responsible for building matters and finance. It is also noticeable here that there are more women heads of specialised departments in Eastern Germany than in Western Germany.

In 1991, the proportion of women heads of department was only 6%. By contrast, the comparative study produced in 1995 revealed that the measures carried out by the towns to provide equal opportunities at all levels of the hierarchy had led to an increase in the proportion of women. In particular, the figure for women heads of department had risen to 10.5%.

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4. Führungspositionen in den Stadtverwaltungen, DST-Beiträge zur Kommunalpolitik, Reihe A, Heft 20
6. Author's own calculations based on the Statistisches Jahrbuch für die Bundesrepublik Deutschland 1996, p. 517
7. Führungspositionen in den Stadtverwaltungen, p. 24
In 1994, the Land of North Rhine-Westphalia introduced a new local authority system. The most important element of the reform was the abolition of the dual head of the administration consisting of an unpaid mayor and a city director (Gemeindedirektor) in favour of a full-time mayor. As part of a scientific study accompanying the reform, the different social profile was also examined. According to this study, too, women are still under-represented. However, women are 10.9% of the unpaid mayors working in an honorary capacity, but only 0.6% of city directors, compared with 6.8% of full-time mayors already in office.

In the last few years the proportion of women holding elective local political office has risen steadily. While the figure was only 15.5% in 1987, it had already risen to 21.4% in 1992 and reached 25.2% in 1996. Thus, every fourth seat on the town council went to a woman.

2. PROMOTING THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN AS PART OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES FOR MANAGERIAL POSITIONS

In view of the manifest under-representation of women in managerial positions, it is evident that measures are necessary to promote women as part of human resource development. These measures are not only necessary because of the constitutional requirement to provide women and men with the same living and working conditions but also because the general change in values taking place in society concerns lifestyles and family patterns as well. The traditional family has changed considerably in the last twenty years. Younger couples in particular, as well as the increasing number of single parents, are trying to combine a successful career with looking after a family. They are striving to bring about more role flexibility and greater self-determination.

The requirements of the job market no longer permit one to dispense with the potential talent of women and the qualities of leadership they are said to possess. Demographic developments are a point in their favour since they are already resulting in significantly fewer young people coming on to the labour market. This is now, towards the end of the Nineties, becoming particularly noticeable as far as potential recruits for managerial positions are concerned.

Finally, it is also necessary to promote the advancement of women more than at present because the local authority administrations are currently undergoing a process of fundamental change that is, in particular, also having a considerable impact on administrative culture and leadership models. Staff must be rendered capable of working in the new administrative structures. Less tiered hierarchies mean more responsibility, but they

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9. Ibid., p. 190
10. Deutscher Stadetag, 1997
also mean that the managers themselves will have to tackle the new demands made upon them with regard to the ability to lead others.

What is to be understood by "human resource development", especially for town administrations? The term\(^{11}\) generally refers to a policy of planned improvements in the employees’ professional, methodological, social and personal qualifications, with both the future aims of the organisation and the employees’ own needs in mind. The policy serves both to ensure that employers and staff meet long-term operational requirements and that the latter acquire the necessary qualifications. It fits in with the aims of the town by guaranteeing the supply of personnel and their ability to solve problems. In order for it to be effective in the long term, it is necessary to constantly co-ordinate human resource development both with the strategy pursued with regard to staff care, in the narrow sense, and the broader strategy pursued with regard to municipal policies.

2.1 What is leadership?

In principle, managers are understood to be those employees of an organisation who, owing to their position in the hierarchy, can give instructions to others, possess decision-making powers and therefore (co-) determine the direction in which the organisation is going. It is generally held\(^{12}\) that they play various roles that can be divided into three main groups:

- They represent the organisation both internally and externally and exercise their authority as leaders within the organisation (inter-staff role).
- They record and store information and pass it on to those who need it (informational role).
- They initiate developments in order to safeguard the future of the organisation. This not only takes place on the basis of a long-term strategy but also involves short-term decisions rendered necessary by current developments. Managers decide on the use of human and financial resources (decision-making role).

The idea that leadership requires male characteristics and behaviour is widespread. It is clear that the male stereotype possesses precisely those characteristics ascribed to the typical leader, whilst the female is said to have attributes characteristic of the person led, i.e. a subordinate. The creation of stereotypes has frequently been examined and confirmed.\(^{13}\)

Companies formulate requirements for managerial staff that it is difficult to reconcile with family needs and private commitments. They are more often than not based on the

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11. In its report on general principles No. 13/1994, the Kommunale Gemeindestelle für Verwaltungsvereinfachung (KGSt) attempted the following definition of the term human resource development: « Human resource development means the systematic processes that make it possible to recognise and maintain the performance and learning potential of employees and, by co-ordinating it with administrative requirements, to promote it by reference to its practical application and development. »

12. Cf., for example, Welge, Führungsstafte, in HdBW des Personalwesens, Stuttgart 1992, column 937 (942 f.)

professional role assigned to and expected of men rather than women, as well as on the attitudes and behaviour linked to it. It is, of course, questionable whether characteristics generally ascribed to managers are actually relevant to the needs of management and whether a manager’s behaviour is consistent with his or her self-image.

The studies of the characteristics of female and male top managers have revealed that there is essentially no difference between them. However, this permits one to doubt the myth of the so-called female style of management, which is supposed to be characterised by a willingness to co-operate and listen to staff and subordinates, by team spirit, etc.15

First of all, the particular socialisation process that women undergo is cited as an explanation for the female style of management. Conclusions are drawn from the socialisation of female managers to explain their ability to co-operate, their temperament and their willingness to listen to others. A further aspect is their responsibility for carrying out their family commitments, the consequence of which is that — unlike men — they are less rigorous in separating their private from their professional lives.

In the end it will probably be the case that the double burden borne by women characterises their specific ability to do their work. Female managers with both a professional and private life find it necessary to reconcile the two. They must do this effectively both in terms of time elements and the organisation of their work. Women must therefore work faster, more efficiently and more dispassionately, and they have less time for the power rituals of male managers. The resolution of this conflict is accompanied by other ways of performing work, namely the delegation of responsibility and providing employees with the support they need.

2.2 Organisation prevents women from gaining access to managerial positions

There are various obstacles to women gaining greater access to managerial positions. Hadler/Domsch have classified the various ways of explaining this. They distinguish between:

--- social factors,
--- organisational obstacles based on operational structures and strategies and
--- explanations in which reference is made to “typically female characteristics”18.

In the following, the social factors will be left out of account and the two latter factors will be discussed in some detail.

15. For criticism see Nerge, Weiblicher Fuhrungsstil und die doppelte Vergesellschaftung von Frauen, IFG 1992, p. 79
16. Nerge, p. 83
17. Nerge, p. 85; SpieB, p. 9
18. Hadler/Domsch, p. 17 f
2.2.1 Appointments

Specific measures, such as plans to promote women, are taken in many, but not in all, towns and cities. While in the USA, for example, quotas — not only in favour of women but also ethnic minorities and the handicapped — are quite common, in Germany they still appear to meet with too little acceptance. According to a recent survey, 70% of German men are against quotas in favour of women.\textsuperscript{19}

Selection procedures must be designed in such a way that those who are appointed meet the future requirements for town administration staff. If there are several candidates for the vacancies to be filled, a selection must be made from among the applicants. In view of the high costs that a wrong decision on an appointment may cause, it becomes clear how important this choice is. It may be reached on the basis of formal criteria, such as school leaving certificate, age, examination marks and professional experience.\textsuperscript{20} Moreover, it is possible to employ psychological test procedures, personality or aptitude tests. However, they must be examined to see whether they ensure an unbiased selection procedure. Interviews continue to be a central source of information for the selection of candidates, but the demands made on the interviewer must not be underestimated. The appointment of the selection panel should also take into account the demands that will be made on the administration of the future. In most cases, these panels are composed exclusively of men, with the result that the bulk of them choose men. This phenomenon arises because the way human beings perceive others is influenced by their mutual similarity — people give preference to those who appear similar to them.\textsuperscript{21} A mixed panel of men and women is therefore necessary in order to be able to take decisions that are as objective as possible.\textsuperscript{22}

2.2.2 Working hours

Women still account for 90% of all part-time employees in Germany, so that there are usually hardly enough offers of managerial jobs. As long ago as 1991, the magazine Wirtschaftswoche published an article containing a variety of examples of how flexible working hours can also be implemented in the case of top jobs in industry.\textsuperscript{23}

\textsuperscript{20} Leutner, in Personalpolitik unter Einbeziehung von Frauen (unpublished manuscript, Cologne, year not mentioned), rightly points out that a definition of many years’ professional experience can indirectly exclude, and therefore discriminate against women
\textsuperscript{22} See the organisation of selection procedures KGSi repen 15/1922 : Personalauswahl : Besetzung einzelner Stellen
\textsuperscript{23} Die besten Jahre, in Wirtschaftswoche of 22 November 1991, p. 62
A change in policy with regard to working hours is urgently necessary. Rigid working hour models are based on male employees, who are relieved at the same time of some of their family and private commitments. Such a change in policy therefore does not mean a change in the number of hours worked a day or a week but different models of annual or lifetime working hours. These models must both take account of social changes and changes in individual needs. They must also take into consideration the increasingly evident model of the two-income family. \(^{24}\) Up to now, this has not been discussed in the literature and research pertaining to the employment market. However, in the future unlimited flexibility can no longer be expected from male managers if they have a partner who works outside of the home as well.

2.2.3 “Networks”

The tradition of the purely male society, as far as managerial positions is concerned, results in “rules” that were made by men for men and exclude women. This has been confirmed by empirical studies. \(^{25}\) Women remain excluded from the “old boys’ network”.

Men in managerial positions build networks in order to support one another, to gain advantages over their competitors from an informal flow of information and to enhance the quality of their professional life. \(^{26}\) Female managers are frequently excluded from these informal meetings. There may be different reasons for this. On the one hand, the meetings are closely connected to the leisure activities that men prefer to engage in; on the other hand, owing to the double burden they bear, women only have limited possibilities of taking part in informal meetings outside working hours. \(^{27}\)

However, women’s refusal to demonstrate solidarity by failing to participate excludes them from the group of male managers, and therefore from access to important information or even being able to participate in decision-making. This strengthens discrimination mechanisms and has, at the same time, the effect that women in managerial positions are, and remain, a minority.

While men find it quite normal to ask old college friends or new tennis partners to do them a favour, women invest the bulk of their labour in achieving performance. However, according to an American study, performance only accounts for 10% of a person’s professional advancement.

2.3 Women and leadership

The ability to handle power may also be an obstacle to women assuming managerial responsibility. Power is an opportunity to assert one’s own will in a social context —

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24. Only 37% of two-person households in Western Germany live on the man’s income alone. In Eastern Germany, the figure is only 12%.
26. Enquetekommission, p. 96
27. Veith, p. 108
even if others put up resistance. It enables the person concerned to shape the administration, influence its policies and push through objectives.

In our society, women are usually perceived as powerless. For this reason, they find it difficult to handle power exercised by women. Female superiors appear threatening — for men, because they have fundamental problems when confronted by a strong female figure, and for women, because they are reminded of an overbearing mother figure. Women in managerial positions tend to make use of maternal control mechanisms, although a purely functional approach would be more appropriate to the situation. Women therefore appear more cautious than men, as studies have shown. This caution is interpreted as female insecurity, and a continuous loop is set in motion: resistance on the part of the subordinate, lack of willingness to co-operate, sloppy work, more checks carried out by superiors, greater resistance on the part of the subordinate...

This cannot be due to the lack of formal qualifications of women in managerial positions. In the last few years, women have often achieved the same professional qualifications as men. However, it remains an open question as to whether they may lack the motivation to acquire power. It is conceivable that they are also fundamentally afraid of success because it contradicts the traditional role model of a woman that they have internalised in the course of their education and socialisation.

As just intimated, the assumption of managerial responsibility may also manifest itself as a role conflict. It is much more likely to be the female politicians who, more often than businesswomen and female managers, have to handle conflicting role expectations. A female politician, especially one who would like to be re-elected, is constantly confronted with the voters' expectations and prejudices.

Dealing with role conflicts or the contradictory role expectations of their environment is a crucial task that career women or those who want to make a career for themselves have to master. It takes a great deal of energy to cope with feelings of guilt and self-doubt, as well as attacks and criticism — and it means more stress.

2.4 Providing opportunities to obtain qualifications

As managerial staff assume a key role in the modernisation of an administration they are one of the target groups for human resource development. The creation of a pool of future managers is particularly important. For promotion to managerial positions, women need to participate in training courses. A survey of in-service training carried out in western German local authority administrations

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28. Stern 23397, p. 44
29. Cf. Veith, pp. 111 ff; on the question of handling power, see also Spiess, p. 10 f.
30. Veith, pp 116 ff; most recently also Schwertfeger, Mit der schützenden Maske der Schwachen schnurstracks in die Karrierefalle, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung of 10 May p. 47
31. Enquetekommission, pp. 56 ff.
32. «Every woman manager destabilises the traditional system of sexual hierarchy» (Spiess, 5)
as a proportion of the total number of persons employed in local authority administrations — take part in training programmes than men, accounting for just 37.1% of participants. The lowest rate of participation among women is in training courses leading to possible promotion, where the figure is only 23.2%.

A major barrier for women is their family commitments. Thirty-six percent of women, compared with 14% of men, who have taken part in professional training courses in the last five years, cite this as a reason.34 There are hardly any special training courses for female managers, and in industry and commerce, the figure is only 4%.35

The modernisation of an administration has a significant effect on the style of management. It means less tiered hierarchies with responsibility delegated from above. In the future, female staff must therefore also demonstrate so-called social skills in local authority administrations more than they have up to now. These abilities are, for example, leadership, team orientation, the ability to handle project work, the ability to communicate and so on. On the one hand, more accountability can, of course, be taken of these qualities in the selection of staff. Moreover, these skills should be practised in seminars and courses. In the future, the local authority administrations will have to offer more behavioural training courses and training for managerial staff and potential new recruits.

Few women are involved at the moment in the important area of career planning, which, among other things, enables measures to be carried out for the selection and individual development of managers within the organisation, taking account of their own wishes and ideas, and establishes the criteria for promotions and reaching decisions on transferring employees to other posts. In most cases, the courses and seminars offered only relate to a specific subject, i.e. they deal with such measures as job rotation, project work and trainee programmes. They are supplemented by very few measures aimed at the personal development of employees. Opinions differ as to the quality and effectiveness of management training courses for women. Such courses have the advantage that they make it possible for the participants to establish contacts with other women in similar positions. In addition, more open discussions may perhaps take place in groups composed exclusively of women. However, a disadvantage of these courses and seminars is that it is more difficult for women to apply the knowledge gained to their everyday work, with the confrontation with male colleagues that it involves, because they have no possibility of practising in advance.

2.4.1 Women go into management — the City of Essen

The under-representation of women in managerial positions was also a reason for the City of Essen to institute specific measures to promote the status of women who were already working in different managerial positions in the administration.36 A mixture of

34. Enquetekommission, pp. 56 ff.
35. Schultz-Gambard/Glunk/GuldenschuhHelfert, IFG 1994, p. 25
women working at different levels of the hierarchy was consciously chosen as the target group. In particular, their different experiences were to be incorporated in the development and testing of the seminar programme drawn up jointly by the city administration and the Centre for Higher Education (Hochschuldidaktisches Zentrum) at Essen University (Universität Gesamthochschule Essen).

The aim of the management training courses specially tailored to meet women's needs is to offer women the possibility of considering their own position and getting to know and thinking about the use of important instruments of management. At the same time, the city administration is able to establish and exhaust the existing potential of trained and motivated women for appointment to managerial positions.

The seminar series "Frauen gehen in Führung" (a play on words: "Women go into the lead"/"Women go into management") focuses on the "female personality in a managerial role in the administration". It also gives new emphasis to individual subjects and develops them further. As a result of its being developed and tested on women in managerial positions, this measure aimed at providing higher qualifications is designed to meet both the individual needs of those interested in participating and the requirements of the Essen city administration. An entirely new seminar is, for example, devoted to the specific promotion of "co-ordination skills", where, among other things, they work towards finding satisfactory solutions to the question of reconciling work with having a family and towards ensuring the support of partners and the social network. A methodological-educational mixture of lectures, small-groups and case work, role play, discussions, work-outs and relaxation exercises guarantees a lively learning atmosphere that not only makes it possible to acquire knowledge but also the ability to take practical action. The conduct of the seminars has shown that the entire measure is assuming greater importance for the participants, for many of whom the possibility has opened up for the first time of identifying with other women managers and of establishing professional and institutional support networks.

The training colloquy consists of three parts with a total of approximately 90 lessons.

- **Phase 1:** "Successful in the administration: defining the position of women"

  The intention is for participants to become aware of their own role as female managers and of their position within the administration, with the emphasis on their own wishes and ideas, a discussion of management ideals, management style and career wishes, as well as specific problems relating to communication and conflict resolution.

- **Phase 2:** "Use of management techniques against the background of personal weaknesses and strengths"

  This phase is mainly devoted to the teaching and acquisition of management techniques with respect to the woman's personal situation within the changing structures of the administration.

36. Preliminary report to the 103rd sitting of the Human Resource and Organisation Committee of the German Association of Municipal Authorities (Deutscher Stadetag), held on 9/10 May 1995 (L 6742-1); second report on the plan for the advancement of women (Frauenförderplan) of the Essen city administration, April 1997, p. 96
• Phase 3: "Time management and professional and private support through the social network"

Here, women's professional activities are placed in the overall context of their lives. Such questions are discussed as the organisation of their time at work, their personal lifestyle, ways of relieving their burdens and reducing stress, etc.

These seminars have been continuously available to female staff of the Essen city administration since October 1993. They have proved themselves in many respects. From the participants' point of view, the management training course has contributed to their being able to add to their knowledge, abilities and skills, to their acquiring new abilities in the area of "management", to their feeling more strongly motivated and to their considering and identifying with the process of restructuring the administration. For the administration it has proved worthwhile because it has been possible to find competent women for senior positions, because economic thinking has assumed greater importance and because a network supporting the restructuring of the administration has been established not only with the participants but also local female politicians.

2.4.2 Women in managerial and decision-making positions — the cities of Augsburg, Nuremberg and Wurzburg

In collaboration with the administrations of the cities of Augsburg, Nuremberg and Wurzburg, the Educational Research Department of the Vocational Research Centres of the Bavarian Employers' Associations is conducting the project known as "fife" (Frauen in Führungs- und Entscheidungstätigkeiten — "women in managerial and decision-making positions").\(^{37}\) It receives a grant from the European Union's New Opportunities for Women (NOW) initiative. The aim of the project to draw up and test a human resource development strategy oriented towards the advancement and promotion of women as part of the reform of local administration. In contrast to the series of seminars held in Essen, this project does not primarily stress managerial functions but lays the emphasis more on managerial activities, i.e. on management support as well. It is an excellent example of how female municipal employees can be prepared for the new demands made on them by the administrative reform and assume future tasks involving greater responsibility, including managerial functions, in the municipal administrations. The idea thus links the promotion of the professional development of women with the restructuring of local administrations.

The course programme provides for seminar blocks of 15 to 20 days in nine months, linked to periods of learning close to the workplace and learning at the workplace under the guidance of a superior. It has met with a good response from the target group. Thus, 135 women in groups of fifteen to thirty are currently participating. Their superiors have been informed about the programme, its aims and content in intensive discussions by

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those responsible for the project. They have thus been able to have their suggestions, wishes and misgivings taken into account and have made a not insignificant contribution to ensuring its acceptance.

As part of the project, model strategies for human resource development and providing staff with qualifications have been evolved in seven different fields. These strategies incorporate the promotion of women’s professional development in local authority thinking with regard to the introduction of a new system of control. Five steps were involved:

1. The specific qualification needs of female administrative staff in the three participating cities were analysed.
2. As a result, model strategies to help staff obtain qualifications aimed at promoting the professional development of women were evolved for seven different fields.
3. Following from this, modules were developed that make it possible to acquire qualifications in public administration close to the workplace.
4. These modules were subsequently tested and evaluated in the administrations of the participating local authorities.
5. A guide and a seminar programme are to be developed for persons with responsibility for staff matters. Here the focus will be on establishing a concrete plan.

The introduction in the municipal administrations of a new system of control requires that the staff should not only possess new qualifications but also extensive methodological and social skills. A period of learning at the workplace supplemented by short periods attending seminars is better than further education in the form of a course and can help those concerned acquire the relevant qualifications. Learning in actual job situations is related not only to the professional but also the organisational and social context of the work involved. This takes particular account of women’s needs. In close co-operation with the participating cities, the project has developed a transferable programme for integrating the principle of learning by doing into the administrative process. As a result of the reforms, new questions and areas of responsibility, which also offer interesting professional prospects, are being developed in the various local authority departments. Women could play an active part in organising these areas of work and thus gradually assume greater responsibility. In this way, it is possible to achieve a close link between human resource development and the development of the organisation. Not only were the women participating in the project able to make use of their newly acquired knowledge in the process of change but the practical phases in particular resulted in the active participation of their departments.

3. Future prospects

What remains to be done? Here it is possible to refer to three essential fields of action. As part of human resource development, planned improvements in the female employees’ professional, methodological, social and personal qualifications are necessary. The policy serves both to ensure that employers and staff meet long-term operatio-
nal requirements and that staff acquire the necessary qualifications. A necessary component of modern human resource development in local authority administrations is positive discrimination in favour of women. It is not only necessary to consider programmes for the advancement of women (either with or without quotas), the participation of women in initial and in-service training courses, the establishment of family-friendly working hours, etc., but also to examine the daily work of our administrations to see if there is any hidden discrimination against women.38

It is also necessary for the women who already have managerial positions to become aware of their function as examples for others to model themselves on: women who have jobs that require high qualifications and are in an exposed position function as role models. Their increasing visibility — in public life too — can bring about the further integration into women's life patterns of forms of employment requiring special qualifications.

Women should recognise the benefit of their own professional networks for the strengthening of their position within the power structure and the promotion of their own career. Within networks and professional associations, information, knowledge and insights can be concentrated and made available to other women. In the future too, professional qualifications will not necessarily result in women's professional advancement. Only the formation of groups of women working together as teams can help bring this about.

The Hague, 20-21 November 1997
Women in local and national politics in Central and Eastern Europe

Jacqueline HEINEN

“Half of the world — half of the power” was a slogan used at the 4th UN Conference in Beijing in 1995: we are still far from obtaining this goal, both in the East and in the West (or as much in the West as in the East). Both at political and economic level, women, even as the majority, continue to play a role of “second priority”.1 Yet, in Eastern Europe in particular, the presence of women in the bodies of power appear to be particularly problematic during this transition phase. Even while the Parliaments were drafting new constitutions and dramatically changing the legislation which will largely determine the status of social relations in the future, the current state of affairs will only lead the way to the construction of a masculine political world. The absence of women from the political scene results in practices which ignores their needs, the heavy domestic workload which traditionally weighs on them, or scepticism which takes hold of them — more so than in the case of men — regarding the effectiveness of political activism in changing the state of affairs: the phenomenon itself limits their possibilities of contributing to the decisions having a voice concerning their particular interests as well as the interests of the entire community.

Few voices are raised against the fact that, in the post-communist societies, the reorder of the public sector and participation in decision-making bodies (both economic and political) has been implemented to the almost exclusive benefit of men. The apparent acceptance of the traditional polarisation between the sexes is particularly striking, as it comes from those principally affected. While the configuration of the public sphere is being redrawn and political actions have taken a new turn — either through the means

1. This report will not stress the continuing practice of sexual segregation in employment, nor the pay differences between men and women nor the percentage of women in executive positions (which rarely exceeds 6-8%). These are universal realities, regardless of the differences from one country to the next.
of representation in the State bodies, through political party activities or through the independent organisations which act as intermediaries between individuals and the State — the large majority of women seem locked in a mode of thinking which leads them to accept that their main priorities remain in the home.  

The constraints of daily life (which have not disappeared although they have changed — there are less lines in stores but one is obliged to run all over to find products at reasonable prices) partly explain this situation. Undoubtedly, a more important consideration has been the weight of experience and representations relating to the recent past and less recent past — the more or less generalised anti-feminism which was dominant under communism.

The low presence of women in the democratically elected bodies of representation since 1989 cannot be solely addressed in terms of discrimination nor analysed as the result of exclusive practices of a political microcosm mainly composed of men (even if this is an important aspect of the issue). It is also a result of the ambivalent attitude of women in Eastern Europe regarding politics — a phenomenon which is part of the past context, where more so than in the West, their family duties have been cited as a reason for distancing themselves from the corridors of power. This is the main reason why there has been no recent questioning of the social roles as defined according to gender, as has been shown in several recent surveys on unemployment. While listing bigger problems encountered by women in finding jobs, women workers who have been questioned did not mention any problems in terms of hiring discrimination relating to men being given priority over women.

If we add in the fact that the political parties, which emerged after the wave of democracy brought down the communist regimes in 1989, seem to have inherited the same faults as their Western counterparts (even while most of them are still fairly unstable and not yet anchored in society), we can better understand that women’s commitment to what we may term politics with a capital “P” is hardly an attractive prospect. On the other hand, the distance which women keep between themselves and politics does not have a specific basis to it as compared to political parties in other areas of the world, and particularly the situation in Western Europe.

**THE FIGURES SPEAK FOR THEMSELVES**

When addressing the issue with statistics, one notes that the figures do not differ radically between the East and West, at least when studying the data regarding the ten coun-

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2. Specifications must be made here, as the situation is not the same everywhere, but the overall assessment is close. This has been the finding of numerous articles and interviews by sociologists and political scientists (sometimes feminists, sometimes not) who have analysed the situation in their country, in addition to exchanges held at international scientific colloquia. See in particular *Social Politics — International Studies in Gender, State and Society* vol. 2, n° 1, 1995; and *Cahiers du GEDISST*: “Transitions en Europe de l’Est : main-d’œuvre et citoyennes de seconde zone?” (n° 12, 1995).

3 Regarding politics both with a capital “P” and a little “p”, and on the perception of women themselves, see Lister 1994, p. 8.
tries in the East, which have applied for membership in the European Union, and those concerning the countries in the West — with the exception of the Nordic countries, which are often a case apart in view of the large percentage of women represented at all levels of decision-making and within the elected political bodies.\(^4\)

In 1997, within the national parliaments, women made up from 7\% (Romania) to 17.5\% (Lithuania) of elected representatives in Eastern Europe, compared to 6\% (Greece) and up to 28\% (Netherlands) of elected representatives in the West — the average being respectively around 12\% and 16\% in each of the country groups (excluding the Nordic countries). At local level during the same period, the percentage of women ranges from 8.7\% (Czech Republic) to 20\% (Bulgaria) in the municipal councils in Eastern Europe, compared to 3.6\% (Greece) and up to 22.4\% (Germany and the Netherlands) in the West. With regard to women mayors, they do not exceed 14\% in the East and 13\% in the West (even in Sweden, where there are no more than 16\%).\(^5\)

Therefore, if we focus on the differences from one country to another, this applies to both Eastern and Western Europe. On the other hand, what can be seen overall, with the exception of the Nordic countries, is the secondary place held by women in politics. Such a phenomenon reflects an undeniable democratic deficit, as a genuine democracy can only exist with the full and complete participation of women.

In spite of this, it must be stressed that many changes have taken place in Eastern Europe since 1989 concerning the place of women in politics. Following an initial phase, during which time the percentage of women elected representatives underwent a steep drop due to the end of the quota system, with figures often lower than 10\% in the local or national elected bodies (compared to 25\% or 30\% previously), a certain improvement has been seen over the last two or three years in more than one country, and particularly in Poland. As in the West, the voters have shown their trust in the women candidates standing for election, which has lead the parties to assign more importance to the position of women and to give them eligible places on the list of candidacies.

Both in the East as in the West, the statistical data available is incomplete in many cases: statistics remain general in nature and their breakdown by gender is only used regarding the national parliaments. At local and regional level, dispersed and disparate sources must be used to attempt to present an overall table.\(^6\) These figures must therefore be interpreted with great care. This difficulty in determining the exact place of women in politics is proof itself that this issue is not dealt with as a serious problem by the govern-

\(^4\) It should be noted that this conclusion, applicable to the political sphere, does not apply to economics: in Norway, Sweden and Denmark, the gender differences in employment and in economics are just as prominent, perhaps even more prominent than in other Western countries.

\(^5\) It is only if we look at the figures for the presidencies of the Parliaments that there is a certain difference between East and West — the Western countries having had some women presidents in the last decade, while there has been none in the East since 1989. For more detailed statistics regarding Eastern Europe, see Table I in the annex. For statistics comparing East-West, see the Interparliamentary Union 1997, p 100, and the Council of Europe 1997, p. 49-55.

\(^6\) For the other Eastern European countries which have not officially applied for membership in the European Union, statistics are lacking, as shown in Table II in the annex.
ments, which most often give it only the slightest attention. We know that in the West, the women’s movement had to lead a long fight before the national statisticians began to break down data by gender — and much still remains to be done in this area. In Central and Eastern Europe where such pressure is unknown, the situation is much worse, which proves to be revealing with regard to gender and social relations. Thus, this proves to be a very important sign that statistics, concerning the existing disparities at all levels between men and women, are vital for information. They often are used as an incentive to open a debate and give way to analyses on the social and political reality with all its multiple contradictions.

SPECIFIC OBSTACLES IN EASTERN EUROPE

In spite of the similarities between statistics on the status of women both economically and politically, there are many aspects in Eastern Europe which differ from those in Western Europe — which is reflected in the participation of women in politics. First of all, as we know, the standard of living is much lower in Eastern Europe. The steep rise in unemployment and the movement for social security which has risen since 1989, at the same time as the introduction of a market economy, are related to the fact that in most of these countries, 30 to 40% of the population lives under the poverty line, according to figures from UNICEF (Heinen 1995 and 1996). Yet, women constitute the majority of those who are the most deprived. If we add to this the feeling of disillusion caused by the slowness of the process of change, as well as the opacity of the decision-making system and the impact of undesirable phenomenon, this feminisation of poverty tends to strengthen the tendency by women to think of politics as something “dirty” or as a “men’s game”, thus having a negative influence on their possible commitment to public life. Consequently, more so than in the West, the temptation for women to stay away from politics is very strong.

Secondly, it has been harder in the East than in the West to tackle head-on the issue of inequality between the sexes, in that the concept of equality remains locked within the context of past debates and sits on the laurels of the proclamations made by the communist authorities who presented the emancipation of women as an accomplishment of “genuine socialism”. This explains the rejection by the majority in the East of all ideas linked to feminism; this term is closely linked to the “egalitarian” discourse of a political regime which went bankrupt. As for quotas, the system applied under communism in the “elected” political bodies tends to discredit all measures intended to ensure an increased participation of women in politics, as it is linked to a caricatured and humiliating view of democracy (Einhorn 1998).

Lastly, the private/public relationship which prevailed under communism and which continues to prevail today does not motivate women to become involved in public life, far from it. In the past, resistance to authority was carried out from within the family, perceived as the unit of solidarity between individuals and the only place in which the development of the individuality of the person was permissible. Today, material difficulties most often lead to the enhancement, often the idealisation of the role of the family unit
— even if, at the same time, the market economy tends to exalt the individual, and in spite of the fact that the divorce rate and the percentage of single women have risen in most of these countries. Such a tendency, strengthened by the rhetoric of nationalistic trends which encourage women to prioritise their role as mothers above everything, contributes to the masking of sexual inequality and paves the way for sexist attitudes, whether in politics or the economy (Heinen 1997). With calls from members of parliament interrupting their female colleagues with the saying “Speak less and make more children” and growing incidents of sexual harassment at work and in their social life (Corrin 1997), along with the challenges to the right to an abortion, and with hiring contracts which include a firing clause in the case where a woman becomes pregnant, we have more than enough evidence of the ideas which would prefer that women be banned from public/political life and which believe that their “destiny” is elsewhere. The discourse put forward by the women’s movement in the 1970s which, in the West, contributed to the highlighting of the role of the family as not only one of solidarity, but also of dependency and the oppression of women, has not marked public opinion in Eastern Europe. Moreover, the traditional dichotomy between the public sphere and the private sphere, along with the attribution of a secondary role to women, has largely not been addressed.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF DEBATES

Nevertheless, the debates which have been held at international events organised upon the initiative of the Council of Europe or the European Union, and particularly CEMR’s Committee of women elected representatives of local and regional authorities (debates involving limited circles however), have shown slight developments in the manner in which the question of the place of women in politics has been addressed.7 Very different from the rather general descriptions in the past on inequalities between men and women, the reports from meetings held since 1989 in different countries (Poland, Bulgaria, Slovenia, Hungary, Czech Republic and Estonia among others) have shown the depth of certain recent discussions, and resulted in new perspectives, on certain points, concerning the participants’ thinking — who of course represent a minority of the women involved in politics or in non-governmental actions, but who nevertheless echo the concerns shared by a number of women in their respective countries.

First of all, the infatuation with part-time work shown by women in Eastern Europe, who until recently, have only worked full-time with their schedules being completely filled, has lead to critical discussions on the risks relating to the promotion of this type of work when only applied to women, in that it increases the factors of professional marginalisation, and leads to stumbling blocks in their career and strengthens work segregation. It has been stressed that the notion of flexibility may become suspect when it concerns only the female workforce.

7. For more information on this topic, see the various documents from the Council of Europe cited in the bibliography, as well as from CEMR.
Protective legislation developed under communism forms a second point for debate. Certain legislation, such as the protection of single mothers, are appreciated as achievements to be kept (often, it is already too late). However, many others, which privilege the role of the mother at the expense of the father, are seen as factors of discriminatory practice which strengthen sexual inequalities. Looking at the criticisms put forward by East Germany in 1989 with regard to family policies, ironically entitled Mutti-Politik (mother policies), numerous arguments highlight the sexist nature of the measures adopted in the 1970s and 1980s — a leave from education that was maternal rather than parental; a leave of absence to look after a sick child which was only applied to the mother; a monthly day’s leave granted to women in East Germany for domestic work, etc. These policies have been challenged when they involve unequal treatment of the rights and duties of individuals of both sexes with regard to child care and housework.

Consequently, as a third point for reflection, the question of the role of men within the family, of their relations with their children and with regard to domestic work, needs to be addressed. Not only the stress given to the fact that parental leave must be viewed as applicable to men as well, but it has been forwarded that the legislation and practices in terms of child care in the case of divorce give responsibility to both parents (for example, encouragement of the system of alternate care rather than the systematic assigning of care to the mother). For this argument, importance has been given to the question of people’s mentalities which need to be changed, given that the difference in gender status largely relies on ideas inherited from the traditional public/private dichotomy.

The discussion thus underlines the investment of women in the public sphere. On the one hand, concern is repeatedly given to avoiding the errors of the women’s movements in the West in the 1970s which often refused to take part in institutions. On the other hand, the weak presence of women in the political bodies leads to a return to the discussion on quotas, the principle of which was initially rejected almost unanimously, based on past experiences. The approach to this issue has nevertheless been modified recently, as a result of difficulties faced by women in getting their voices heard in the parliaments. The idea of parity thresholds being applicable as much to men as to women has particularly attracted attention, since such a solution, viewed as provisory until fixed objectives have been reached, appears to be less discriminatory and humiliating with regard to women.

The reasons forwarded on this subject often remain very general in nature. The local aspect in particular is rarely addressed, which is not very surprising given that activities relating to the place of women in local politics are still very few, even in the West where much literature on women in national politics can be found.

DEMOCRACY AT LOCAL LEVEL

When asking questions regarding the obstacles which have hindered women from gaining access to positions of responsibility, as well as on the consequences of such a marginalisation, not only for women themselves, but from the point of view of types of decisions and priorities adopted in politics and in the social and cultural spheres, it is crucial to focus attention on the situation at local level.
As underlined in a research project on this issue (Heinen et alii 1998), the municipality is not only the learning venue for citizens, it is also where a number of social issues are addressed. Within the current context, local power has a strategic role to play in such areas as education, culture, employment, social action, urbanism, housing, security, etc. The process of state decentralisation, as seen from the outside, is demonstrated by the central State’s willingness to attribute certain powers to the regions and municipalities. Both in the East and West, the increase in financial costs of social aid has incited the State to give more independence to local authorities. In addition, the responsibility given to local authorities in terms of social services such as the care of young children, aid for the elderly, etc. has been growing in importance, even while budgetary cuts are foreseen in most sectors.

The question of women’s participation in local decision-making bodies thus appears to be essential, as their contributions are helpful, if not vital to the administration of public affairs. Not because they are by “nature” better administrators than men; but their experience, for historical reasons, is different from that of men. Partial studies on the effects of the presence of women in political decision-making demonstrates that women elected representatives in municipal councils and their executive bodies, especially when in large numbers, provoke the inclusion of certain questions on the political agenda which are usually not included or are addressed with less effectiveness. It may be observed in particular that such a presence promotes another way of defining the common good and the organisation of daily affairs in the municipality — whether with regard to the administration methods of services or the hours used to taken into account the interests (often contradictory) of city employees; the concern for hiring women in male-dominated services in order to ensure a balance of personnel within the police force and fire department, which results in a different way of handling problems; of the way of viewing the distribution of services and stores, or of using different architectural conceptions in terms of social housing.

Moreover, it has been noted that the presence of women in the management of municipal affairs has also resulted in increased attention to the particular needs of women: centres for battered women; training initiatives by police services on the theme of violence against women; creation of “women counters” (information centres on women’s rights, employment problems...); increased attention given to social services for young children, particularly regarding their quality and the use of innovative teaching methods; more consideration for the needs of elderly or dependent persons, with the development of services delivered to the home; creation of medical services, and particularly family planning services, etc.

Nevertheless, the stakes for women are complex from the point of view of many different aspects. On the one hand, it is true that the local level is the best venue for finding solutions to daily problems, even contributing to changes in one’s daily existence, which can encourage women to become involved in political activities, while taking into account the tasks women she traditionally perform in the social and family sphere. Furthermore, the fact itself that the concerns of male politicians are often more focused on national policies leaves open a wide field for the intervention of women at local level,
which can be used as a trampoline for a more representative presence of women at national and governmental level. Nevertheless, at the same time, the tendency to attribute to women the responsibility for “social issues”, to the detriment of other areas judged to be more prestigious, can be a trap which prevents them from fully taking part in all areas of the decision-making process. Lastly, it must not be a question of having a uniform vision of women at solely the local level. Certain research carried out in the East (Graham, Regulska 1997) has begun to demonstrate the importance of taking into account local traditional cultures as a factor explaining the gaps in terms of the representation of women, as much as the weight of social factors, gender inequality being more accentuated in certain rural zones or in certain religious communities.

In any case, the work to be done to have a clearer picture of the implication of the presence of women in local democracy is enormous. It involves certain non-negligible questions: as we know, the administration of local affairs has major repercussions on the political behaviour and even the functioning of democracy, as the solutions proposed tend to promote the active participation of individuals in collective debates on the future of the municipality, or in certain cases, to cause scepticism and disillusion with all matter of politics.

THE ROLE OF NGOs

Another decisive factor within this context is the intervention of NGOs which have strongly developed since 1989 (particularly in Hungary) and which have been strongly feminised in most cases — around two-thirds of members. Given the absence of intermediary structures in civil society under the communist regime, the NGOs have a primary role to play as bodies which tackle the questions that have been neglected or not well-handled by the governments and local authorities. The initiatives taken by independent organisations on themes of immediate interest (employment, aid to persons strongly in need) are frequently welcomed as useful, yet are too few in number. It is a path which offers a particularly favourable perspective on the investment of women in politics — which, far from relying on State institutions or political parties with some standing, covers the diversity of citizens’ initiatives. In fact, these initiatives, which contribute to overcoming the deficiencies of public authorities and which constitute diverse ways of exercising one’s civic responsibilities, facilitates the access of women to public/political life.

For example, associations which intervene in the area of family planning, by training specialists, by distributing contraceptives, by teaching sex education in schools, at the same time as they work directly to influence the policy debate on abortion legislation, by confronting parties which are often hostile, or which are mute on women’s rights, help women to decide for themselves on this issue. It would be absurd to refuse the label of political with regard to such initiatives under the pretext that they do not belong to an established political structure or that they do not have direct contacts in the circles of power; or because they risk being categorised as defenders of only certain social groups. Rather, the focus and much deserved attention must be given to the initiatives of local

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8 In a country like the Czech Republic, 85% of them are directed by women.
associations which are emerging and which aim to defend the collective interests and/or the individual autonomy of certain categories of citizens, as they act as a source for civic rights. No matter what the nature of their actions are, they help to achieve progress regarding the defence of groups which they represent, while participating in public debate, indispensable to the future of society, and strengthening the concept that citizenship can only be political if based on social action as well.

The involvement of women in these types of initiatives contributes to fostering the conditions necessary to challenge the dominant relations between the sexes, and the approach of these associations seems to me decisive for several reasons. They hold the merit of breaking with the tendency of passivity inherited under communism; they present themselves as independent entities while establishing a relation with the State through their role as active protagonists in negotiations with the latter; their actions respond to the concept of an active population with democratic practices; they integrate the dimension of pluralism in the sense that they unite women of very different social backgrounds which also results in a venue of confrontations and exchanges of points of view and very diverse experiences; lastly, their actions lead to a challenge by women of the public/private dichotomy in which they have too often accepted to remain locked up to the present.

Yet, in more than one country, these organisations provide a source of female candidates at local, regional and national level. Such a phenomenon can only contribute to making the voice of women heard in the elected bodies, at a time when constitutional or legislative decisions are being taken, which is of vital importance during this economic, social and political transition.

REFERENCES


Sofia, 19-20 March 1998
Why it is important to share local decision-making powers between women and men

Françoise GASPARD

We have received the response to this question, in part, since our arrival in Amfissa — through a thousand small signs. It is not to denigrate men in general, and elected representatives in particular, to say that women elected representatives manage municipalities using different ways. Men themselves, when questioned, recognise this voluntarily. The welcome which we have received in this town, whose mayor is a woman, is an example of this: everything, down to the smallest detail, shows careful attention and a meticulous follow-up. This is not to say that women and men are, by nature, different. It is to recall that, in our culture, the history of women and men has been different and so shall remain. What women contribute to public administration in particular is their private experiences from working in the home.

The claim put forward for parity in public decision-making has emerged since the end of the 1980s and has been further developed since the beginning of this decade. The European Community has contributed to the popularisation of this demand. Using local authorities as an example, I would like to briefly say that the municipality is certainly the strategic venue for developing equality and stress that the equality of women and men in decision-making is not an end in itself but a means.

THE PLACE OF WOMEN IN LOCAL DECISION-MAKING

When the European Commission, as part of its Third Community Action Programme for equal opportunities between women and men (1990-1995), made equality in decision-making a major theme, we did not have much information on the place of women in elected bodies — except for the fact that they were a very small minority. The work of the European group of experts first provided statistical data which allowed for the European reality of this situation to be assessed. For example, the statistics showed that the European countries which were the birthplaces of democracy (Greece, France and the United Kingdom) were also the ones whose Parliaments and governments had the least women.

In 1994, the total percentage of women in local assemblies was 40% in Sweden but barely 4% in Greece. The statistics which we possess show a strong correlation between the proportion
of women elected representatives at national and local level. Nearly the same percentages can be
found in all the countries (with the exception of France and Spain) with regard to the number of
women elected representatives in the municipal assemblies and in the parliaments. This percen-
tage is sometimes even lower at local level (Denmark, Germany, Finland, Greece and especially
in Spain). The fact that it is higher in France (more than 22% of local women elected represen-
tatives compared to 11% of MPs) is undoubtedly linked to the high number of municipalities
(more than 36,000). Both at national and local level, the higher the hierarchy of responsibilities,
the less there are of women. Everywhere, the proportion of women mayors is lower than the pro-
portion of women in the elected councils. Everywhere, the proportion of women presidents of
regional or sub-regional executive bodies is lower than the proportion of elected women in the
assemblies of these authorities. It also seems that within the countries which recognise groupings
of municipalities managed by assemblies elected indirectly, the proportion of women is smaller
than in the general assembly elected by a direct vote.

This situation may seem strange in that one of the explanations commonly given to explain
the rarity of women elected representatives at national level is that women hesitate to get invol-
ved in political office which would take them away from the home. Therefore, local level would
seem a priori to be more favourable to a political commitment. Another obstacle which would
seem to present as great a barrier to women in entering politics — the selection procedure used
by the parties — plays a minor role: in numerous European countries, particularly those which
have a large number of municipalities, the weight of partisan apparatuses in the selection of can-
didates is minimal. How to explain that women do not form part of the municipal councils? This
question is one of the focuses of the study carried out by CEMR under the 4th European
Community Action Programme for equality. An answer would still be a bit premature at this
stage in spite of several hypotheses which have been formed and enriched at seminars like
today’s where women elected representatives — and women interested in becoming the former
— come to share their views. We shall cite several of these views below. Men, much more than
women, do not hesitate to run for a political office. The latter still do not dare, and in particular,
they still have too many domestic responsibilities, including child care and often care for their
elderly relatives. Women often question their abilities as being insufficient or unsuitable for poli-
tical office while men do not question their expertise in this area. Public office therefore remains
masculine in nature. Men have access to networks which they form, for example in cafés and
sports clubs, while women often remain isolated due to their many responsibilities which keeps
them running around all day.

The rarity of women local elected representatives should be shown as an anomaly in our
democracies, and in such a way as to be a concern to our governments. How can one speak of
democracy when 80 or 95% of decisions in the municipalities of concern to both female and male
citizens are taken by men? A first step in increasing the citizen’s awareness consists of the com-
piation of statistics. Secondly, steps must be taken to change this situation. CEMR’s Standing
Committee of women elected representatives not only intends to lobby the European Institutions
but to enlarge its network of local women elected representatives and to mobilise the parties to
present women candidates in greater numbers. It also intends to encourage women, through
seminars like the present one, to stand for election by demonstrating how the political situation
has evolved in the various European Union countries. These developments have not been “natu-
ral”. They have always been the results of the work and actions of NGOs, political organisations,
and sometimes, new legislation.
MORE WOMEN FOR AN ADMINISTRATION CLOSER TO THE NEEDS OF CITIZENS

More women, but why? While conducting research in France on women in decision-making posts, I have often heard this question. It is true that France holds a concept of the universal which ignores (or pretends to ignore) the specifics of sex, age, ethnic origins and only considers the abstract individual. When I ask, "How many women are there in such and such an institution?", I usually receive the reply, "Sex does not matter, only ability"... Does this mean that there are so few women in the said institutions because they are lacking in ability? If we take into consideration the level of study achieved in all the EU countries, there are more women than men who have completed their secondary studies. Therefore, the rarity of women elected representatives should be analysed as the result of a process of exclusion (and self-exclusion). It must be stressed, if only to convince women and men of the importance of having councils with a balanced composition of women and men, to demonstrate that this balance concerns not only numbers but a more balanced administration. The question to which we must respond is therefore the following: does the presence of more women in local elected assemblies result in changes (of what kind) in their administration?

The answer is not a simple one for several reasons. The first is that the minimum limit at which changes are detectable is uncertain. The second is that we do not yet have systematic surveys in the areas where women elected representatives are relatively numerous, which would give us an overall view of changed induced by "more women". We only have partial studies, which however are interesting.

In the first place, it appears that the presence of women only leads to changes in the "governing" of the city (the same applies at State level) if the "critical limit" of 30% is reached. Below this level, women have the tendency, in order to be accepted and recognised as partners, to act as men, to forget that they are women and even go so far as discouraging other women from joining them. A political scientist from Quebec, Evelyne Tardy, who carried out a study on women mayors in her region, speaks of these "exceptions" as "queen bees". On the other hand, beyond the limit of 30%, it appears that a solidarity is created and that these women elected representatives are in a position to forward their own political agenda on questions which were previously ignored. Yet, with the exception of the Nordic countries, this phenomenon remains an exception.

What are the questions that women, as soon as they form large numbers, include on the agenda? Contrary to popular belief, what we know shows that they are not limited to social issues. Certainly, these are given greater consideration. However, women in the Nordic countries, tell us that schedules, i.e. meeting hours, are addressed first by women who are elected to municipal councils. Women elected representatives first ask for different working hours in order to reconcile their public life with their private life. They also change the length of meetings by ensuring that they do not run on indefinitely but conclude on schedule. A French university researcher, Annie Junter-Loiseau, who works with women elected representatives from the French city of Rennes (around 100 000 inhabitants), should have been present today. She was unable to attend due to prior commitments. She would have told you, better than myself, about the results of a local experience carried out in Rennes where 30% of elected representatives are women who work closely with the female municipal staff members and the associative sector. Her work demonstrates that women elected representatives change not only provoke meeting hours, but change in thinking with regard to the city's working hours. In addition, women elected representatives, now that they are working together on the local administration, modify, in an unprecedented manner, the relationship between the elected representative and the municipal staff
members, as well as between the elected representative and the citizen. The examples which we have compiled, from all over Europe, also show that, in all areas, the presence of women in local and regional assemblies constitute a fundamental contribution to an administration which takes into better account the expectations of more citizens. This applies to the areas of security, urbanism, public transport... Our objective is to show this with concrete examples, and to disseminate these examples.

To conclude, I would like to tell you that the surveys which we carry out, with the support of the European Union, on equality — and in particular at local level, presumes the mobilisation of all those concerned. The NGOs (primarily those involving women), the political parties, the trade unions and the governments must contribute to these actions. There is certainly no “magical recipe” for increasing the participation of women in decision-making. Yet, there exists a variety of means which deserve to be recognised, disseminated, analysed and adapted to the particular political situation and culture of each European country. We are on the eve of a new millennium. The equality of women and men is a fundamental element of our common future, the foundation of the construction for a better world. The municipalities which are, after the family unit, the place of socialisation of individuals and learning with regard to democracy, is the key to this process.

Amfissa, 4-5 May 1998
Women Socialist Candidates in the 1997 French Legislative Elections

Françoise GASPARD

It is a well-known fact that elected women are rare in France. In recent years, their small number has been the focus of a movement aimed at establishing parity between men and women in elected assemblies.

A study of the 1993 general elections (in which only 6% of all deputies elected were women) showed that the greater the chances for a party to win seats in the election, the fewer women it would allow to run. According to this study, the first of its kind ever conducted in France, the political parties appear to be mainly responsible for the fact that there are so few women in French elected bodies.

I will summarize the first results of a recent study focusing on the general elections of 1997, which were held using a two-round, majority voting system. For the first time, one of the leading French political parties, the Socialist Party, adopted an internal measure which fixed the objective of 30% women candidates in view of the elections initially planned to be held in March 1998. As soon as this decision was announced, we decided to monitor its application, to send a questionnaire to the women candidates, and to conduct a significant number of interviews.

Because of the dissolution of the French National Assembly in April 1997, general elections were held six weeks later. The dissolution did not alter the purpose of our survey but did require a change of its timetable. I will be addressing the method adopted by the SP and the results obtained from the written questionnaire, as the analysis of the interviews has not yet been completed.

THE METHOD AND ITS APPLICATION

Socialist candidates are chosen by the local party members in each constituency. This procedure is carried out by secret vote. In other parties, the national leadership plays a more
direct role. One of the arguments put forth in the past by the socialist leadership to explain
the rarity of women candidates was the democratic nature of the nomination process within
its ranks. François Mitterrand had the habit of saying, I quote, “I would have liked more
women candidates, but I cannot impose them on the party members who do not want this”,
end of quote. But due to the movement against the exclusion of women in political deci-
sion-making, which has become quite influential, the successors of François Mitterrand at
the head of the SP decided to control the democratic process during the coming general
election in order to have 30% women among the party’s candidates.

In November 1996, a list of 167 “reserved” constituencies (out of a total of 555 consti-
tuencies in France) was set up. In these constituencies, only women were allowed to run
as candidates. At the beginning of 1997, agreements were made between the SP and three
smaller parties. This explains in part the decrease in the number of constituencies reserved
for women. Nevertheless, it can be said that nearly half of the constituencies given away
to another party had, several months earlier, been reserved for a woman. This leads one to
think that these constituencies, and therefore the women who were to run in them, were
used in the bargain as a means to lessen the “sacrifice” demanded of socialist candidates.

On the eve of the first round of voting, 130 women ran for the SP party, representing
27% of all socialist candidates. This figure is a significant increase compared to the 1993
election, in which women only represented 8.7% of SP candidates. However, the fixed
quota of 30% was not respected. In fact, it worked as a ceiling. One could be led to believe
that women had been given constituencies which had not been reserved. This was not the
case. All the women who ran did so within the framework of the reserved constituencies.

The renewal of socialist candidates was made easier by the small number of incumbent
candidates following the collapse of the left in 1993. However, with few exceptions, women
found themselves running in difficult constituencies. Polling institutes had studied the
“reserved” constituencies. In only 18 constituencies did the candidate for the left get the
majority of the vote and with this small number, the left managed to survive the first round

RESULTS OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

We sent out a questionnaire to all 130 women candidates. We received 113 replies
which equals a response rate of nearly 90%. These women could reply anonymously but
the majority did not choose to do so. Eighty two percent provided addresses and tele-
phone numbers and agreed to meet with a researcher. The women candidates proved to
be very interested in the study. On the other hand, the SP officials appeared to be fright-
tened when faced with such a survey, and did not fully cooperate with us.

It should first be noted that, in spite of expectations that many party bosses, both at
the national and local level, would be hostile to the measure, women were not afraid to
run. In 38% of the “reserved” constituencies, there were two or more women running to
become candidates.

The questionnaire enabled us to draw a political and sociological profile of the women
candidates which counters many of the old stereotypes. For example, it has shown that
women with families to care for were quite willing to run for office, although it is often
said by party bosses that domestic responsibilities refrain women from wanting to run.
Nearly 90% of women candidates were married, lived as part of a couple, were divorced
or widows. Eighty four percent had children, with 74% having two or more. The majority
of them had children over 15 years old, yet 40 had children under 15.

Our survey has also shown that women do not lack the necessary experience,
although party officials often say that they do.

In France, since 1971, there are more young women than men in universities, and
many of these women are enrolled in those universities (law and humanities) which have
traditionally educated the country's political elite. The answers to our questionnaire have
shown that more than 80% of the women socialist candidates have had their baccalaureat
plus 2 years of higher education, and 62% have had their bac + three years.

More than 80% have or have held jobs, and 70% work or have worked in manage-
rial positions. Their political experience is also quite high, since many have already held
public office. But it is true that their experience is often not the same as that of men. In
France, only 7% of mayors are women and the district (département) assemblies have
less than 6% of women members. These mandates are strategic to help one win a na-
tional seat. The majority of women socialist candidates have had some political experi-
cence, but, compared to their male counterparts, they are more often deputy-mayors than
mayors.

Another interesting observation made was that “reserving” a constituency tended to
promote the interest of possible women candidates.

In reply to the question: Would you have become a candidate if the constituency had
not been reserved for a woman? 50% replied “yes” while 30% replied “no” and 20%
“perhaps”.

One woman candidate out of three would therefore have not run if the decision to
reserve constituencies had not been made.

Another response to our questionnaire led us to form one of the hypotheses which hel-
ped us to better understand this hesitation to run in the election.

In reply to the question “Had there been one or several possible men running for elec-
tion prior to your constituency being reserved for a woman?” 73% of the women can-
didates replied “yes”.

This raises the question of whether or not running for office plays out equally between
a man and a woman. Our interviews have shown that women wish to become candidates
but that this is not their main motivation for being involved in politics. Men, on the
contrary, make their personal political success a priority and will fight to the finish in
order to run.

CONCLUSIONS

The dissolution of the National Assembly, which, as you know, came as a surprise,
was not considered to be favourable to women. The day after the dissolution, party offi-
cials were heard to say in the corridors of the SP that, I quote, this “stupid” decision
would make them lose the elections. Still, the left won. On the average, women candidates achieved better results than their male counterparts. At the outset, only 18 socialist women socialist candidates were given good chances of winning. Yet, 42 won seats in the National Assembly (compared with only four women in the previous election). This total of 42 amounted to 17% of the socialist deputies.

The government today includes 30% women. The concept of affirmative action, previously very criticised in France, is now considered a legitimate strategy. In fact, the Prime Minister has announced, for the future, the inclusion of the principle of parity between men and women in the Constitution. This commitment has yet to be fulfilled. But the success of women in these elections and the fact that, in spite of the progress made, the French National Assembly still includes only 10% women leads us to foresee that the mobilisation to promote women in politics shall continue.

Sofia, 19-20 March 1998
Annexes
THE MEMBERS OF THE CEMR COMMITTEE OF

WOMEN ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES

OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES
## MEMBRES DE LA COMMISSION PERMANENTE DES ELUES LOCALES ET REGIONALES DU CCRE

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3.9.1998
THE CHARTERS OF ATHENS AND ROME
DECLARATION

We, the undersigned women with experience of high political office, gathered in Athens on 3 November 1992 at the invitation of the Commission of the European Communities for the first European Summit "Women in Power" have together adopted the following Declaration.

WE NOTE A DEMOCRATIC DEFICIT

We note that the current position of women in the Member States of the European Communities as in other European countries is still characterised by profound inequality in all political and public decision-making authorities and bodies at every level, regional, national and European.

We note with concern that women's participation in political decision-making has not improved in a number of European countries since the mid-seventies and in the recent political developments in various countries which may result in significant decreases in the proportion of women in decision-making positions in the legislative assemblies in some of these countries.

We conclude that women's access to the same formal rights as men, such as the right to vote, stand for election and apply for senior posts in public administration, has not produced equality in practice. Therefore we deplore the lack of strategic political practice and the practical realization of the principles proclaimed.

WE PROCLAIM THE NEED TO ACHIEVE A BALANCED DISTRIBUTION OF PUBLIC AND POLITICAL POWER BETWEEN WOMEN AND MEN

A democratic system should entail equal participation in public and political life by its citizens. We demand equality of participation by women and men in public and political decision-making.

We underline the need for changes to the structure of decision-making procedures in order to ensure such equality in practice.

WE UPHOLD THE FOLLOWING PRINCIPLES AND ARGUMENTS

Formal and informal equality between women and men is the basis of a democratic society.

Women's participation more than half the population. Equality ensures parity in the representation and administration of National and European Communities. Women represent the potential talent and skills of humanity and their under-representation in decision-making is a loss for society as a whole.

The under-representation of women in decision-making prevents full account being taken of the interests and needs of the population as a whole.

A balanced participation in political decision-making would produce different ideas, values and styles needed to suit a fairer and more balanced world for all, both women and men.

WE CALL UPON ALL MEMBERS OF SOCIETY CONCERNED

We call upon the Commission of the European Communities and all European and international organisations to adopt a programme and measures to ensure the full participation of women in decision-making in these organisations.

We call upon the Member States of the European Communities and their European Institutions to integrate fully the dimension of equal opportunities for women and men in their political, economic, social and cultural policies and promote the measures necessary to implement these objectives, in order to achieve equal sharing of decision-making posts for women and men.

We call upon all political leaders at European and national level to accept the full consequences of the democratic idea, on which their parties are built, in particular by ensuring balanced participation between women and men in all political, economic, social and cultural positions, through measures to raise awareness and through mechanisms.

We call upon the leaders of trade unions, workers' organisations and other employers' associations at national and European level to recognize the increasing contribution of women to the labour market by ensuring the mechanisms necessary for equal participation by women at all levels of these organisations, including decision-making bodies.

We call upon women's organisations at national and European level to continue their efforts to further women in the exercise of their full rights as citizens by awareness raising, training programs and any other appropriate measures.

We call upon those working in the media to present non-stereotyped images of women and men and to inform public opinion of the need for balanced participation in decision-making by women and men and to defend the principles on which this balance is based.

We call upon the women and men of all the countries of Europe to recognize the need to implement a balance between women and men and to accept the consequences of it in order to contribute to building a meaningful and lasting democracy.

WE UNDERTAKE A CAMPAIGN TO STRENGTHEN EUROPEAN DEMOCRACY

We affirm the need for a time of profound change and believe that Europe needs to implement the changes in attitudes and structures which are indispensable to achieving a proper balance between women and men at decision-making levels.

These essential changes should accompany contemporary developments in European society which will be the more welcome if women are as equally involved in them as men.

By agreeing this Declaration we hereby launch a campaign to mobilize all concerned in society to ensure balanced participation of women and men in decision-making at all levels, local, regional and national level and in the European Institutions including the next European Parliament.

The people who signed the Athens Declaration included Belgian Employers' Association Minister Micheline Maes, former French Prime Minister Edith Cresson, Former Greek Culture Minister Mollia McCall, former Chairwoman of the European Parliament Simone Veil, Dutch Culture Minister Hans Wijers, Danish parliamentarian Lone Delikjaer, Luxembourg Parliament Chairwoman Irena Hercofska-Scheipers, Deputy Chairwoman of the Portuguese Parliament Leonor Bento, Finnish Housing Minister Milla Rusanen, Swedish Public Administration Minister Inger Davidson, Swiss parliamentarian Judith Stamm, Hungarian Deputy Undersecretary of State at the Culture and Education Ministry Kristina Dobos, the United Nations Director of the division for the Advancement of Women Chellika Medeni. The Athens Declaration was later signed by Rita Suttermans, Chairwoman of the German Parliament, Madeleine Fernandes de Azevedo, Spanish Social Affairs Minister, and Harry O'Brien, Ireland, Trade and Marketing Minister.

Many prominent women were present at the conference. They included the presidents of the United Nations, Mary Robinson, and Ireland, Vigit, Finland's Ostrovnik, Norwegian Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland, and Hannah Quick, who was Polish Prime Minister at the time.
European Summit
"Women for the Renewal of Politics and Society"

CHARTER OF ROME
18 May 1996

We, the undersigned, women ministers of different member states of the European Union, gathered in Rome on 18 May 1996 at the invitation of the President of the European Community Council and on the occasion of the European Summit "Women for the Renewal of Politics and Society" have together adopted the following Charter:

1. WE NOTE A DEMOCRATIC DEFICIT.

Notwithstanding the evolution of the respective roles of women and men in European society, the general statutory recognition of the equality of rights for women and men, and the equal opportunities policies pursued in the Member States of the European Union, we note that the situation of women is still characterised by inequality in most sectors of society. This inequality can be seen in decision-making bodies and authorities, in politics, economics, social and cultural life, and at the local, regional, national and European level, where women are usually in a minority position.

We welcome the research done by the European Expert Network on Women in Decision-Making and acknowledge that it greatly contributes to increased visibility in this field and that thereby constitutes a basis for action.

Substantial progress has been made since the Declaration of Athens, adopted in 1992 on the occasion of the first European summit of women in power. This progress, however, is not yet sufficient. In the field of politics, the average female participation in the Member States amounts to 15 % for the national parliaments and 16 % for the governments; 28 % of the present Members of the European Parliament and 25 % of the European Commissioners are women.

In other spheres of civil society where decisions are taken that have an indisputable impact on the lives of citizens, both male and female, female representation at decision-making level can be even lower.

We therefore cannot but face the fact that political life and decision-making in general are still dominated by men. This impairs the quality of decision-making and of democracy. Democracy will acquire a true and dynamic sense when women and men together define the values they wish to uphold in their political, economic, social and cultural life, and together take the relevant decisions.

2. WE CALL FOR A RENEWAL OF POLITICS AND SOCIETY.

The equal participation of women and men in decision-making is an objective that has priority at European level.

This is necessary to reinvigorate democracy and its mechanisms; a balanced sharing of power and responsibilities between women and men will improve the quality of life.
of the whole population; the representation of all parts of society is indispensable if the problems of European society are to be addressed. The effective implementation of policies to achieve equal participation and partnership between women and men is a priority.

Women, if present in sufficient numbers, contribute to changing politics and decision-making, in terms of the priorities and content, as well as the practices of decision-making.

A renewal of politics and society will be realised with the joint contribution and balanced participation of women and men. This contribution and participation bridge the gap between citizens and politicians, revitalise democracy, and increase citizen confidence in the institutions of democracy.

The equal participation of women at all decision-making levers in economic, social and cultural structures is likewise necessary to guarantee that the needs of women and men are taken into account in all policies, programmes and actions.

3. WE DECLARE OUR COMMITMENT TO THE NEED TO RECOGNISE EQUALITY OF WOMEN AND MEN AS A PRIORITY OF THE EUROPEAN UNION.

The principal responsibility of the Intergovernmental Conference (IGC), which will revise the European treaties, as laid down in the Maastricht Treaty, is to reinforce European democracy by bringing the concepts and structures of Europe closer to its citizens. Representatives of national governments, the European Parliament and the European Commission have declared this to be a priority.

More than half of European citizens are female. A democratic European society must therefore be built on the effective and real equality of its citizens of both sexes.

We affirm our commitment to the need of enshrining equality between women and men in the new European Union Treaty. We consider it indispensable to integrate a gender perspective into all policies of the European Union (mainstreaming). This lies at the heart of European citizenship and its conditions of practice.

We call on the institutions and organs of the European Union to adopt, urgently, a strategy for achieving an equal participation of women and men and to set concrete targets to that end.

4. WE RECOGNISE THE NECESSITY OF CONCRETE ACTION AT ALL LEVELS TO PROMOTE THE EQUAL PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN AND MEN IN DECISION-MAKING IN ALL SPHERES OF SOCIETY.

Where progress has been made, notably in the area of public life (in elected assemblies, in councils and consultative committees etc.), this has been the result of putting into force incentives and/or legislative or regulatory measures on the part of governments and political parties.

An integrated and specific strategy is necessary if equal participation is to be achieved in all spheres of society. In this light we welcome the Rome Conference "Women for the Renewal of Politics and Society".
We commit ourselves to take action for the urgent empowerment of women and to develop the necessary incentives and/or legislative or regulatory measures.

We call upon all actors concerned, male and female, to support this commitment by translating it into concrete actions to empower women and to achieve an equal participation of women and men in the positions of power, influence and decision in all spheres of society.
THE COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION

OF 2 DECEMBER 1996
COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION

of 2 December 1996

on the balanced participation of women and men in the decision-making process

(96/694/EC)

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

Having regard to the Treaty establishing the European Community, and in particular Article 235 thereof,

Having regard to the proposals from the Commission,

Having regard to the opinion of the European Parliament (1),

Having regard to the opinion of the Economic and Social Committee (1),

(1) Whereas the Council has adopted a series of legislative instruments and a number of political commitments in the field of equal treatment and equal opportunities for men and women (1) (1) (1);

Resolution of the Council and the Ministers for Education, meeting within the Council, of 3 June 1983 containing an action programme on equal opportunities for girls and boys in education (OJ No C 166, 5. 7. 1983, p. 1).
Council resolution of 29 May 1990 on the protection of the dignity of women and men at work (OJ No C 157, 27. 6. 1990, p. 3).
Council resolution of 22 June 1994 on the promotion of equal opportunities for women and men through action by the European Structural Funds (OJ No C 231, 20. 8. 1994, p. 1).
Resolution of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council, of 5 October 1995 on the image of women and men portrayed in advertising and the media (OJ No C 296, 10. 11. 1995, p. 15).
(2) Whereas the Heads of State and Government, meeting within the European Council in Essen, Cannes and Madrid, stressed that the fight against unemployment and equal opportunities for women and men were paramount tasks of the European Union and its Member States;


(4) Whereas the European Parliament in its Resolution of 11 February 1994 on women in decision-making bodies (6) asked the Commission to step up implementation of the equal opportunities policy set out in the third Community action programme, to combat individual obstacles which hinder women from taking part in decision-making and to define 'measures and actions to promote greater participation of women in the decision-making process';

(5) Whereas the Declaration and the Platform for Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, 4 to 15 September 1995) stressed the need to ensure that responsibilities, powers and rights are shared equally; whereas the Member States are committed to implementing the Platform for Action;

(6) Whereas participation in the decision-making process depends on representation on decision-making bodies at all levels of political, economic, social and cultural life and requires, in particular, presence in posts of responsibility and decision-taking positions;

(7) Whereas women are still under-represented in decision-making bodies, in the political, economic, social and cultural spheres;

(8) Whereas the under-representation of women in decision-making bodies is partly a result of the delay in women attaining equal civic and civil rights, of obstacles to their gaining economic independence and of difficulties in reconciling their working and family life;

(9) Whereas balanced participation of women and men in the decision-making process is a requirement for democracy;

(10) Whereas the under-representation of women in decision-making posts constitutes a loss for society as a whole and may prevent the interests and needs of the entire population from being catered for in full;

(11) Whereas measures aimed at bringing about a balanced participation of women and men in the decision-making process in all sectors should go together with the integration of the dimension of equality of opportunity for women and men in all policies and actions;

(12) Whereas balanced participation of women and men in the decision-making process is likely to give rise to different ideas, values and behaviour which will result in more justice and equality in the world for both men and women;

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(1) OJ No L 331, 19.12.1984, p. 34.
(4) OJ No C 168, 4.7.1995, p. 3.
(13) Whereas the Member States, the social partners, political parties and organizations, non-governmental organizations and the media play a key role in creating a society where there is a gender balance in the exercise of responsibilities in the political, economic, social and cultural spheres;

(14) Whereas it is appropriate to adopt guidelines to promote balanced participation of women and men in the decision-making process with the aim of bringing about equality of opportunity for women and men and whereas it is appropriate, within the framework of the medium-term Community action programme on equal opportunities for men and women (1996-2000), to make those guidelines more effective through the exchange of information on good practice;

(15) Whereas the provisions of this Recommendation apply solely within the limits of Community competence; whereas equal treatment for male and female workers constitutes one of the objectives of the Community, insofar as the harmonization of living and working conditions while maintaining their improvement are, inter alia, to be furthered;

(16) Whereas the Treaty does not confer, for the adoption of this Recommendation, any other powers than those referred to in Article 233,

I. RECOMMENDS THAT THE MEMBER STATES:

1. adopt a comprehensive, integrated strategy designed to promote balanced participation of women and men in the decision-making process and develop or introduce the appropriate measures to achieve this, such as, where necessary, legislative and/or regulatory measures and/or incentives;

2. (a) alert those involved in education and training at all levels, including those responsible for teaching materials, to the importance of:

   — a realistic and complete image of the roles and abilities of women and men in society, free of prejudice and discriminatory stereotypes;

   — a more balanced sharing of professional, domestic and social responsibilities between women and men, and

   — balanced participation of women and men in the decision-making process at all levels;

(b) at all levels of education and training, encourage girls and women to take part and express themselves in education and training activities as actively and fully as boys and men, so as to prepare them for an active role in society, including political, economic, social and cultural life, and in particular in decision-making processes;

(c) make public opinion aware of the importance of disseminating an image of women and men that neither reinforces nor consolidates discriminatory stereotyping of women’s and men’s responsibilities;

(d) without encroaching on their autonomy, encourage and support efforts of associations and organizations in all areas of society to promote women’s access to the decision-making process and balanced participation by women and men in decision-making bodies;

(e) without prejudice to their autonomy, encourage and support the efforts of the social partners to promote balanced participation of women and men in their activities and highlight the social partners’ responsibility for promoting and proposing women candidates for nomination to various assignments on public commissions and committees in the Member States and at Community level;

(f) devise, launch and promote public campaigns to alert public opinion to the usefulness and advantages for society as a whole of balanced participation by women and men in decision-making;
3. (a) promote or improve the collection and publication of statistics to provide a clearer picture of how women and men are represented at all levels of the decision-making process in the political, economic, social and cultural spheres;

(b) support, develop and encourage quantitative and qualitative studies on the participation of women and men in the decision-making process, and especially:

— on the legal, social or cultural obstacles impeding access to and participation in the decision-making process for persons of either sex,

— on strategies for overcoming such obstacles, and

— on the utility and advantages for society and for the operation of democracy of a better balance between the sexes in the decision-making process;

(c) promote, support and encourage initiatives creating examples of good practice in the various areas of the decision-making process and develop programmes for the dissemination and exchange of experience with a view to propagating activities;

4. (a) promote balanced participation by women and men at all levels in governmental bodies and committees;

(b) raise the awareness of those involved of the importance of taking initiatives to achieve balanced participation of women and men in public positions at all levels, paying particular attention to the promotion of a balanced composition in committees, commissions and working parties at national as well as Community level;

(c) provide for, implement or develop a coherent set of measures encouraging equal opportunities in the public sector and respecting the concept of balanced participation in the decision-making process, and ensure, when recruitment competitions take place, that women and men are, as far as possible, represented equally in the committees responsible for preparing competitions and in the selection boards;

(d) encourage the private sector to increase the presence of women at all levels of decision-making, notably by the adoption of, or within the framework of, equality plans and positive action programmes;

II. CALLS ON THE INSTITUTIONS, SUBSIDIARY BODIES AND DECENTRALIZED BODIES OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES TO:

design a strategy for achieving balanced participation by women and men in the decision-making process in each institution, subsidiary body and decentralized body of the European Communities;

III. CALLS ON THE COMMISSION TO:

1. encourage and organize, within the framework of Council Decision 95/593/EC of 22 December 1995 on a medium-term Community action programme on equal opportunities for men and women (1996-2000), systematic pooling of information and experience between Member States on good practice and the assessment of the impact of measures taken to achieve a better balance between women and men in the decision-making process;

2. to this end, and within that framework, step up its efforts to provide information, alert public opinion, encourage research and promote schemes aimed at achieving balanced participation by women and men in the decision-making process;
3. submit a report to the European Parliament, the Council and the Economic and Social Committee, for the first time three years after adoption of this Recommendation and thereafter annually, on its implementation, on the basis of the information provided by the Member States and the institutions, subsidiary bodies and decentralized bodies of the European Communities.

Done at Brussels, 2 December 1996.

For the Council
The President
E. FITZGERALD
ELECTED WOMEN'S ISSUES

CEMR INFOS
A EUROPEAN NETWORK OF WOMEN ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES

In this first issue of CEMR INFOS, I am pleased to be able to present a truly innovative project in Europe. This project is promoted by CEMR and it is thanks to this initiative that we have the means to contact you - the European network of women elected representatives of local and regional authorities.

This project was first initiated by the CEMR Committee of Women Elected Representatives of Local and Regional Authorities of which I am proud to be the chairwoman and whose primary goal has always been to boost the presence of women in political decision-making and to increase their involvement in European construction.

In Dublin in July 1995 the Vth European Conference of Women Elected Representatives of Local and Regional Authorities was held. Among the key figures present were Mary Robinson, President of the Republic of Ireland, and Padraig Flynn, European Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Industrial Relations. The Conference participants noted that the lack of information and the absence of means facilitating exchange of experience were one of the major obstacles faced by women wanting to enter or make headway in politics. To respond to this need, CEMR launched the idea of setting up a network at the XXth General Assembly of European Municipalities and Regions which took place in Thessaloniki on 22-25 May 1996.

The Network aims to facilitate information flow and relay, passing on ideas, exchanging experience to promote the mainstreaming of women into politics, be it at local, regional, national or European level.

Owing to the support of the Women's Information Unit, DG X of the European Commission, the network members can now receive the "Women of Europe" newsletter.

The second stage of the initiative is to set the project into motion under the 4th Community Action Programme on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men (1996-2000) with co-financing provided by DG V of the European Commission.

Our project intends to enlarge the Network (which currently includes more than 600 members) and to make means of communication and exchange available among members by making use of the decentralised structure of CEMR, which is active in 25 countries across Greater Europe.

At the present moment, the Community programme only covers EU Member States. However, we believe that it is important that our Network should also support women in other European countries who are struggling to enter mainstream politics at all decisional levels.

Françoise Gaspard, expert in the "women and decision-making" European network, will conduct research to identify obstacles met by the two different groups, to compare the real situation in different countries and emphasise the contribution made by women on the democratic arena.

The success of the work involved requires active input from all women elected representatives of local and regional authorities Europe-wide. We would therefore appreciate any information you send into us which you would like published in this newsletter or on our open pages on Internet. These items can be sent in to the CEMR Secretariat General at the address indicated on the last page.

Till the next issue ....

Rosemary McKENNA
Chair of the CEMR Committee of Women Elected Representatives of Local and Regional Authorities, Councillor of North Lanarkshire
STRATEGIES FOR A BETTER GENDER BALANCE IN POLITICAL DECISION-MAKING

Women such as Olympe de Gouges or Taslima Nasreen, Louise Michel or Alexandra Kollontai (and the list goes on) have protested, written, manifested, often putting their own lives at risk, to say that women are human beings. Each one of these women, in her own particular way, and under different social, cultural and political conditions, worked towards mobilising women. At various moments over the last two hundred years, the voices of these remarkable women expressed the voices of the anonymous masses, calling for civil and political equality, equal working rights, the right of choice in procreation.

Women’s social movements were generally qualified as “feminist”. Women – including those fighting for equal rights – rejected this designation, preferring the term “women’s” movement. Associations cropped up in every country regrouping women on a “reformist” platform. These contributed towards women’s domination and marginalisation – both in the public and the private sphere – being taken into consideration. The so-called “feminist” movements, like the so-called “women’s” movements, were presented as rivals, with disputes actually breaking out from time to time. Yet in reality, these kinds of movements were complementary. Putting it simply, some were left-wing, some were centrist and others right-wing. But regardless of whether they were left, right or centre, they likewise, had to deal with left, right or centre government organisations or “partisan” movements fighting for other causes. These groupings always held the fear that one day women would affirm that they shared the same aims. The saying “divide et impera” perfectly applies in this case: apart from the “partisan” barriers, the classes wielding political power (male-dominated), joined efforts to keep power within their own sphere of influence.

Protests – either petitions or written manifestos – were the first strategies which had been used to gain access to political rights. In the early 70’s and especially at the beginning of the 80’s, protests were also used to make people aware of the iniquity of a system where men monopolised – or virtually monopolised – decision-making.

Such protests led to this issue being taken into account by governments and political parties. As already mentioned, supranational institutions played a decisive role. Given that they were less involved in contingent problems, they underlined the loss which the scarcity of women in public decision-making represented for society and stressed the need for affirmative action to be taken to remedy this. Conventions were

The City of Sintra (Portugal), whose mayor is Ms Edite ESTRELA, will welcome on 20-21 April, the seminar on "the presence of women in decision-making" which CEMR is organising as part of the activities of its European network of elected women representatives of local and regional authorities. The seminar will provide a framework for debates and a significant exchange of ideas in this phase of preparation leading up to local Portuguese elections, to be held in December of this year. According to the statistical data gathered in 1993, women elected representatives in Portugal total 757 and represent 11.1 % of all elected representatives. We will be referring back to the detailed programme of the seminar in the next issue of CEMR INFOS.

The first meeting of the national project officers of the European network of women elected representatives of local and regional authorities is scheduled to take place in Rome on 3 February 1997. CEMR INFOS will come back to topics covered in the next issue.

Two extremely important texts adopted by the European Council of Ministers, dated 2 December 1996, need to be mentioned:

• the Council recommendation concerning balanced participation of women and men in the decision-making process (96/694/CE).

• the Council resolution concerning the integration of equal opportunities for women and men into the European Structural Funds (96/C 386/01).
adopted by the UN and the Council of Europe and submitted for ratification to States. In a number of countries, ministries and administrative bodies for women’s rights were set up. Public funding was used to finance media campaigns to incite parties to put up female candidates, to help women’s NGOs to take action, to encourage and to assist women in standing for election and support women’s sections in political parties. Countries which now have such structures or special committees for women’s rights in parliament are the ones at the forefront on equality issues. Pressure from political militants, especially social-democrat parties, resulted in internal party quotas being brought in. Many women criticised these quotas since they saw them as humiliating and held concerns (justified, in some cases), that they would be used as thresholds - once a quota of 10 %, 20 % or 30 % was established, the number of female candidates would stop there, and women who were elected just because the quota had to be filled would be seen as having less legitimacy than men.

Nonetheless, the quota system did result in an increase in the proportion of women elected representatives, especially so in Nordic countries and in Germany. The call for parity which emerged at the end of the 80’s pushed the debate further ahead. This call has popularity in all the countries, not only among women but also (although to a lesser extent) among men (excluding politicians, however).

Whereas quotas are somewhat arbitrary, parity is based on equality, on the fact that in each society there are clearly just as many men as there are women. In 1989, the German social-democrat party adopted a progressive quota which can be seen as a clear sign of progress. The aim was to reach a minimum of 40 % of either one or the other sex, both in party leadership as well as on the electoral lists.

Introducing power relationships was certainly a method which gave the most convincing results. Political leaders take women into consideration when a party (usually a newcomer on the political scene), presents many women and get good ratings because of this. This move made by the German SDP was induced by competition coming from the Greens whose popularity was based on the fact that they were a party with women. Leaders look more closely at women when they think women will rock the boat. A few examples of this can be given. The first was in Norway where the instructions to cross men off the electoral lists in the 1972 local elections - which worked well - encouraged parties to present even more female candidates in the next elections. The Swedish elections in 1995 were also interesting: the threat of setting up a women’s party, which was also highly rated in the opinion polls, resulted in an increase of female candidates.

Another example is when women go beyond “partisan” frontiers and stand together at the front, calling for more space in assemblies, which is when parties feel obliged to take steps. This is what is happening today in France where three years ago high profile figures (just as many men as women) paid for pages in the widely read daily “Le Monde” to call for parity. This led to ten women, all of whom were former ministers from different parties, launching an appeal for parity which, in turn, resulted in the Socialist Party’s decision to present 30 % women at the 1998 legislative elections.

There are contrasts in the situation of women in political decision-making across Europe. There is no country where women are a majority in assemblies. In some countries, however, especially in the North, the ratio is more balanced. In others, like Germany for example, it is on the rise, whereas in France, Greece or the United Kingdom, the proportion of women is stagnating at very low levels. Strategies were brought in everywhere to remedy women’s under-representation, although these were extremely diverse with varying results. Their transferability is not always obvious due to the diversity of our political systems. In all cases, however, women’s movements were the driving force leading to change.

Unless women protest, unless they take action, unless they organise themselves at local, national or international level, unless they find relays for their message and seek allies among men, nothing changes. Women elected representatives of local authorities have an important role to play in the fight for parity. CEMR can be justifiably proud of being the privileged place for launching parity democracy initiatives.

“in principle, the democratic era is not favourable to women”, but in principle, democracy is the political system which allows of things which criticism are contrary to its principles. European women elected representatives of local authorities – if they join together – can contribute towards making Europe a truly democratic place.

Françoise GASPARD
AN APPEAL FROM
LUISA LAURELLI
VICE PRESIDENT OF THE MUNICIPAL COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF ROME

In view of municipal elections which will be held in Italy from June to November 1997 in the big cities such as Rome, Milan, Naples, Turin, Venice, etc., as well as the medium-sized cities, we are publishing an appeal from Luisa Laurelli, Vice President of the Municipal Council of the City of Rome.

The municipal elections which will be held in Italy at the end of this year in both the large and medium-sized cities will constitute a major political test. At this time, it would be advantageous to reflect on the presence of women in institutions and local and regional authorities. The number of women elected representatives has been diminishing progressively and the change in the electoral system from a proportional to a majority one, will not help to slow down this process. The experience of recent years has shown that the situation will only change if the political parties modify their own "culture" and give preference to the presence of women in institutions.

At the next election, women will be deprived of the law, which has been definitively repealed, that enforced the presence of at least 30% of women on the electoral lists.

We are experiencing a period of decline which could lead to the exclusion of women during the phase of the drawing up of the electoral lists.

It is therefore essential to appeal to the network of associations which can influence the parties and who are in a position to enhance the presence of women on the electoral lists, which should be accomplished on a basis of attention given to quality and quantity. Discrimination can be found everywhere. This fact requires women to exercise more pressure by asking to be represented in the name of democracy.

Any initiative which CEMR chooses to take in order for women to be well represented on the electoral lists would be very useful. It is also important to find ways of encouraging women to vote for women.

AN EXAMPLE OF BEST PRACTICE IN FAVOUR OF EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

With the aim of promoting a policy of equal opportunities for women and men, the Municipality of Sintra has created an Information Centre for Women.

The creation of this Centre was preceded by the signing of a protocol, by the Municipality of Sintra and the Commission for Equal Opportunities and women's rights, which supports this initiative. The Information Centre for Women is a free service provided by the Municipality of Sintra. To fulfil its objectives, the Information Centre for Women works in close relation with local institutions.

The Information Centre for Women helps women to find institutions which can:
• improve their educational level;
• provide them with the necessary training;
• offer them financial aid;
• integrate them professionally;
• show them how to look for employment in another European country.

The following slogan was adopted:

THE INFORMATION CENTRE
FOR WOMEN
on their way...
towards a new, dynamic life

Edite Estrela,
Mayor of Sintra

page 6
Elected Women's Issues

The Sintra Meetings

An initiative of the CEMR, European network of women elected representatives of local and regional authorities with the support of the National Association of Portuguese Municipalities, hosted by the City of Sintra.

Sintra, 20-21 April 1997
Palácio Nacional de Sintra
Largo Raimunda A. Amélia, 2710 Sintra

Sunday, 20 April 1997
Meeting of European local and regional women elected representatives with women elected representatives from Portugal

Chairwoman of the session: Rosemary McKENNA, President of the CEMR, Committee of Women Elected Representatives of Local and Regional Authorities

15 h 00 Opening of activities by Rosemary McKENNA
The role of the Standing Committee and the European network of women elected representatives of local and regional authorities and the objective of this initiative

15 h 30 Edite ESTRELA, Mayor of Sintra (Portugal)
The initiative of Sintra and the mobilisation of Portuguese women to participate in political life at local level

16 h 00 Maria BENGSTSSON, Vice President of the CEMR, Committee of Women Elected Representatives of Local and Regional Authorities, Deputy Mayor of Katrineholm (Sweden) - Presentation of a Swedish example promoting the participation of women in political life at local level

16 h 30 Remarks from the participants

18 h 15 Ana COUCELLO - The introduction of gender in municipal administrations: the example of the municipality of the City of Lisbon

18 h 30 Concluding remarks by Fausta GIANI CECCHINI, First Vice President of the CEMR, Committee of Women Elected Representatives of Local and Regional Authorities

18 h 45 Press conference

19 h 00 Reception

Provisional Programme

Monday, 21 April 1997
Seminar on the presence of women in political life at local level

9 h 00 Opening of activities by Edite ESTRELA

9 h 15 Maria BARROSO

9 h 30 Greetings from Mario de ALMEIDA, President of ANMP

9 h 45 Panagiotis GAZI, Vice President of the CEMR, Committee of Women Elected Representatives of Local and Regional Authorities, Mayor of Amfissa (Greece)
The objective of this seminar held within the framework of activities of the CEMR European network of women elected representatives of local and regional authorities

10 h 00 Introduction to the debate
Chairwoman of the session: Françoise GASPARD, Expert within the framework of "development and activities of the CEMR European network of women elected representatives of local and regional authorities"
Theme of the debate: the presence of women in municipal councils - development, difficulties and possibilities for enhancement

Examples from several countries

France:

10 h 15 Presentation by an expert: Françoise GASPARD

10 h 30 Remarks from a national spokesperson and elected representative

Spain:

10 h 45 Presentation by an expert: Lucila CORRAL

11 h 00 Remarks from a national spokesperson and elected representative

Portugal:

11 h 15 Presentation by an expert: Joana BARROS, High Commissioner for Issues concerning the Promotion of Equal Opportunities and the Family

11 h 30 Remarks from a national spokesperson and elected representative

11 h 45 Debate

13 h 00 Buffet lunch

14 h 30 Continuation of activities

Germany:

14 h 30 Presentation by an expert: Barbara LEUTNER

14 h 45 Remarks from a national spokesperson and elected representative

Sweden:

15 h 00 Presentation by an expert: Elisabeth ELEMAN

15 h 15 Remarks from a national spokesperson and elected representative

Italy:

15 h 30 Presentation by an expert: Maria Grazia RUGGERINI

15 h 45 Remarks from a national spokesperson and elected representative

16 h 00 Debate

17 h 00 Closing session preceded over by His Excellency Mr Jorge SAMPAIO, President of the Portuguese Republic (to be confirmed)

Remarks by:
Rosemary McKENNA
Odile QUINTIN, Director of DG V/C of the European Commission

Net B.M. VAN DJIK, Chairwoman of the committee on Women's Rights of the European Parliament
Edite ESTRELA
Mario de ALMEIDA

Marie de Lourdes PINTASILGO, Former Prime Minister of Portugal (to be confirmed)
His Excellency Mr Jorge SAMPAIO, President of the Portuguese Republic

18 h 15 Press conference
### 1. Women and Men in the Municipal Councils of European Union Member Countries

<table>
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<th>Countries</th>
<th>Election date</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Nbr of men</th>
<th>% of men</th>
<th>Nbr of women</th>
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<tr>
<td>Luxembourg</td>
<td>1993</td>
<td>11 072</td>
<td>8 597</td>
<td>77.6</td>
<td>2 475</td>
<td>22.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>1994</td>
<td>6 737</td>
<td>6 040</td>
<td>88.9</td>
<td>757</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>1993</td>
<td>1987</td>
<td>1 534</td>
<td>75.4</td>
<td>651</td>
<td>24.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U-Kingdom****</td>
<td>1989</td>
<td>660 426</td>
<td>525 952</td>
<td>79.6</td>
<td>134 474</td>
<td>20.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* These figures only apply to municipalities of more than 20,000 inhabitants.
** Partial and provisional data.
*** The data is not available. The number of women registered was 0.85% (20 out of 2333) in 1994.
**** The figures for the United Kingdom are difficult to analyse due to a municipal system which is not uniform.
† The municipality of London has 27.9% of women.

### 2. Women in the Parliamentary Assemblies of European Union Member Countries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Countries</th>
<th>Date of the last election</th>
<th>Lower chamber</th>
<th>Upper chamber</th>
<th>% of total in the National Parliament</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>1994</td>
<td>73.7 26.3</td>
<td>80.9 19.1</td>
<td>74.3 25.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>74.4 25.6</td>
<td>75 25</td>
<td>74.5 25.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>88.7 11.3</td>
<td>76.4 23.6</td>
<td>84.7 15.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Danmark</td>
<td>1994</td>
<td>67 33</td>
<td>* *</td>
<td>67 33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>78.3 21.7</td>
<td>86.9 13.1</td>
<td>82 18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>66.5 33.5</td>
<td>* *</td>
<td>66.5 33.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>1993-95</td>
<td>93.9 6.1</td>
<td>94.4 5.6</td>
<td>94.1 5.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>1993</td>
<td>94.3 5.7</td>
<td>* *</td>
<td>94.3 5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>86.7 13.3</td>
<td>86.7 13.3</td>
<td>86.7 13.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>89 11</td>
<td>92 8</td>
<td>90 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luxembourg</td>
<td>1994</td>
<td>83.3 16.7</td>
<td>* *</td>
<td>83.3 16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
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<td>68.7 31.3</td>
<td>77.3 22.7</td>
<td>71.6 28.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>87.8 12.2</td>
<td>* *</td>
<td>87.8 12.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U-Kingdom</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>90.8 9.2</td>
<td>93.5 6.5</td>
<td>92.5 7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>1994</td>
<td>59.6 40.4</td>
<td>* *</td>
<td>59.6 40.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* No upper chamber.
### 3. STATISTICS ON WOMEN WITHIN THE GOVERNMENTS OF THE EUROPEAN UNION MEMBERS STATES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Countries</th>
<th>Formation date of the last government</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>% of women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>1994</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>15.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>1996</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>28.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>1994</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>1996</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>17.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>38.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>19.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy*</td>
<td>1996</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>21.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luxembourg</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>1994</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>34.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>1995</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>8.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>U-Kingdom</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>1994</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* These figures concern only the ministers

### 4. WOMEN AND MEN IN THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Countries</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>% of men</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>% of women</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>64.6</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>66.7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>33.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>56.25</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>43.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
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<td>43</td>
<td>67.2</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>16</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>37.5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>62.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>France</td>
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<td>61</td>
<td>70.1</td>
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<td>29.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>73.3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>26.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>87.4</td>
<td>11</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luxembourg</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>66.7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
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<td>21</td>
<td>67.7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>32.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U-Kingdom</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>81.6</td>
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<td>18.4</td>
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<td>22</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>54.5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>45.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>626</td>
<td>453</td>
<td>72.4</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>27.6</td>
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</table>
HIGHLIGHTS OF THE MEETING OF NATIONAL OFFICERS
OF THE NETWORK OF WOMEN ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES

The first meeting of national officers of the European network of women elected representatives of local and regional authorities took place on 3 February 1997 in Rome, under the Presidency of Rosemary McKENNA, President of the CEMR Committee of women elected representatives of local and regional authorities.

Ms Maria STRATIGAKI, of the European Commission’s DG V, presented the place held by the European network of women elected representatives of local and regional authorities within the 4th action programme for equal opportunities between women and men.

Ms Gabriella VENEZIA, representing the Italian Ministry for Equal Opportunities, recalled the role of the Ministry, set up by the government of Mr Poulil, and stressed the need for strategies and actions aimed at helping obtain equal participation of women and men in democratic life.

Referring to her experiences as a woman elected representative, Ms Luisa LAURIELLI, Vice President of the Municipal Council of Rome, brought up the difficulties encountered by women in exercising their functions as women elected representatives and emphasised that women should be more united, if they wished to succeed in fully participating in democratic life in a way equal to that of men.

The meeting then addressed the issues concerning the functioning of the network: its enlargement in different countries, techniques to be used in the diffusion and exchange of information, the development of the study on the participation of women in local life, and the contents of the publication planned for the end of the project.

In the closing stages of the meeting, the participants debated over the contents of the seminar on “the presence of women in political life”, planned within the framework of activities of the network, to be held in Sintra (Portugal) on 20-21 April 1997.

AN EXAMPLE OF GOOD PRACTICE IN FAVOUR OF EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

On 22-23 November 1996, the city of Montpellier organised a symposium entitled “Women Citizens”, on the initiative of Ms Monique Pétard, the Municipal Councillor responsible for women’s rights.

At this symposium, which was opened by the Mayor of Montpellier, Mr Georges Fréche, the municipality invited the men and women of Montpellier and the surrounding region to participate in the debate on “women citizens” and to discuss the causes behind the low numbers of women participating in public and political life.

Approximately 1 000 persons participated in the symposium, which resulted in a project being drawn up on “mixed society”. The participants had concluded that “without the participation of women, our Republic is handicapped, amputated, and our democracy is not representative. Thus, power must be shared through equality, liberty, and fraternity”.

“Women in local government” at the 33rd world congress of IULA

As was announced in CEMR Infos n° 1, the 33rd World Congress of IULA will be held in Mauritius on 6-10 April 1997.

One of the Congress’ working groups will be dedicated to “Women in Local Governance, Politics and Leadership”, and will be meeting on Tuesday, 8 April, to be presided over by Rosemary McKenna, President of the CEMR Committee of Women Elected Representatives of Local and Regional Authorities.

Marita Bengtsson, Vice President of the CEMR Committee of Women Elected Representatives of Local and Regional Authorities, Deputy Mayor of Katrineholm, has been designated rapporteur of the working group. Véronique Houdart-Blazy, officer of the Women’s Information Unit of the European Union’s DG X, will be speaking during the working group’s activities.
WOMEN IN POLITICS:
THE SUCCESS OF THE SINTRA INITIATIVES

As had been announced in the last issue of CEMR Infos, the city of Sintra (Portugal), hosted on 20-21 April 1997, two days of debates on "the presence of women in political life at local level", with the participation of nearly 200 women elected representatives, which included a large number from Portuguese cities, as well as a substantial number of women experts from all the member States of the European Union.

The political determination of Ms Edite Estrela, Mayor of Sintra, the work and the availability of her staff, the co-operation and the support of the National Association of Portuguese Municipalities - all these elements largely contributed to the success of this initiative, launched by CEMR within the framework of activities of its European Network of Women Elected Representatives of Local and Regional Authorities.

The debates of this gathering were chaired by Rosemary McKenna, President of the CEMR Committee of Women Elected Representatives of Local and Regional Authorities.

They proceeded in two stages: the presentation of CEMR activities and our Committee and the encounter with Portuguese women elected representatives were followed up by a seminar on the "presence of women in political life at local level", which included contributions from elected representatives, both men and women, as well as experts in this area.

The initiatives of Sintra were successful on all levels, especially in the light of the number of participants brought together in anticipation of the local elections to be held in Portugal (December 1997). Thus, women politicians were all the more numerous with more than 150 mayors, deputy mayors, and Portuguese municipal councillors.

CEMR members widely responded to this first initiative from the network and shared their experiences from different countries: Spain, Italy, Greece, Switzerland, Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, France, Sweden, Finland, and Great Britain.

Many high-profile figures were present in Sintra: leading Portuguese politicians and representatives of the State, the European Institutions, CEMR and of its Committee of Women Elected Representatives of Local and Regional Authorities as well as of the National Association of Portuguese Municipalities.

Participants discussed the well known question regarding the difficulties women meet in succeeding in politics, or rather... in taking up the position occupied by a man!

Why? The answers given were numerous and often inter-linked: the obstacles faced by women in reconciling their family and public life (much more so than for men), an education traditionally inadequate in preparing women to take on this role, a culture which delegates to women a role different from the one which is reserved for men and which does not encourage participation in the decision-making process, especially of a political nature.

Some countries have certainly achieved more progress than others in the area of the number of women present in politics (the Nordic countries in this case). Yet men are more visible in government everywhere. Faced with the existence of these various obstacles, how can women's presence in political life be increased and encouraged?

The introduction of the quota system in the electoral lists seems to be the most appropriate method.

The leading political representatives and the experts have reached agreement on the effort to be made in order to promote and exchange positive experience on this matter as well as to improve the information and training received by women.

This is the primary purpose behind the existence of the CEMR European Network of Women Elected Representatives of Local and Regional Authorities.

A technical meeting of the members of the Standing Committee and the CEMR European Network of Women Elected Representatives of Local and Regional Authorities will be held in London on 19 June 1997 by invitation of the British Section of CEMR (LOIB) and President Rosemary McKenna.
WOMEN’S SUFFRAGE
CHRONOLOGY OF THE RECOGNITION OF WOMEN’S RIGHTS TO VOTE AND TO STAND FOR ELECTION

1788 United States of America (to stand for election)
1833 New Zealand (to vote)
1902 Australia*
1906 Finland
1907 Norway (to stand for election)*
1913 Norway **
1915 Denmark, Iceland
1917 Canada (to vote)*, Netherlands (to stand for election)
1918 Austria, Canada (to vote)*, Estonia, Georgia*, Germany, Ireland*, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Poland, Russian Federation, United Kingdom*
1919 Belgium, Luxembourg, Netherlands (to vote), New Zealand (to stand for election), Sweden*, Ukraine
1920 Albania, Canada (to stand for election)*, Czech Republic, Slovakia, United States of America (to vote)
1921 Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria (to stand for election)*, Georgia**, Lithuania, Sweden**
1924 Kazakhstan*, Mongolia, Saint Lucia, Tajikistan
1927 Turkmenistan
1928 Ireland**, United Kingdom**
1929 Ecuador*, Romania*
1930 South Africa (Whites), Turkey (to vote)
1931 Chile*, Portugal*, Spain, Sri Lanka
1932 Maldives, Thailand, Uruguay
1934 Brazil, Cuba, Portugal*, Turkey (to stand for election)
1935 Myanmar (to vote)
1937 Philippines
1938 Bolivia*, Uzbekistan
1939 El Salvador (to vote)
1941 Panama*
1942 Dominican Republic
1944 Bulgaria, France, Jamaica
1945 Croatia, Guyana (to stand for election), Indonesia, Italy, Japan*, Senegal, Slovenia, Togo
1946 Cameroon, D.R.R. of Korea, Djibouti (to vote), Guatemala, Liberia, Myanmar (to stand for election), Panama**, Romania**, The F.Y.R. of Macedonia, Trinidad and Tobago, Venezuela, Viet Nam, Yugoslavia
1947 Argentina, Japan**, Malta, Mexico (to vote), Pakistan, Singapore
1948 Belgium**, Israel, Niger, Republic of Korea, Seychelles, Suriname
1949 Bosnia-Herzegovina, Chile**, China, Costa Rica, Syrian Arab Republic (to vote)*
1950 Barbados, Canada (to vote)**, Haiti, India
1951 Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, Grenada, Nepal, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines
1952 Bolivia**, Côte d’Ivoire, Greece, Lebanon
1953 Bhutan, Guyana (to vote), Hungary (to vote), Mexico (to stand for election), Syrian Arab Republic**
1954 Belize, Colombia, Ghana
1955 Cambodia, Eritrea (?), Ethiopia, Honduras, Nicaragua, Peru
1956 Benin, Comoros, Egypt, Gabon, Mali, Mauritius, Somalia
1957 Malaysia, Zimbabwe (to vote)**
1958 Burkina Faso, Chad, Guinea, Hungary (to stand for election), Lao P.D.R., Nigeria (?)

Rosemary McKenna, President of the CEMR Committee of Women Elected Representatives of Local and Regional Authorities has been elected a member of Parliament during the recent legislative elections which were held in Great Britain on the 1st of May 1997.

We would like to offer our congratulations to Ms. McKenna for her successful results, which are a much deserved recognition of the constant commitment she has shown to political life, and which she has demonstrated in her responsibilities as President of our Committee of Women Elected Representatives of Local and Regional Authorities.

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Publications

We wish to announce the recent edition of several publications of significant interest for European women elected representatives... and why not ? for their male counterparts as well:

The Interparliamentary Union has just published the comparative global study "men and women in politics - incomplete democracy". This document can be obtained at : Interparliamentary Union, P.O. Box 438, CH - 1211 Geneva
tel.: +41 22 - 919 41 50
fax: +41 22 - 33 31 41

The European Commission has just published two reports : the progress report on the medium-term social action programme 1995-1997 (including a chapter on "equal opportunities") and the report on "equal opportunities for men and women in the European Union - 1998". These reports can be obtained by writing to the Office of Official Publications of the European Communities, L - 2985 Luxembourg.

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1959 Madagascar, San Marino (to vote), Tunisia, United Republic of Tanzania
1960 Canada (to stand for election)**, Cyprus, Gambia, Tonga
1961 Bahamas*, Burundi, El Salvador (to stand for election), Malawi, Mauritania, Paraguay, Rwanda, Sierra Leone
1962 Algeria, Australia**, Monaco, Uganda, Zambia
1963 Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Fiji, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Kenya, Morocco, Papua New Guinea (to stand for election) (?)
1964 Bahamas**, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Papua New Guinea (to vote), Sudan
1965 Afghanistan, Botswana, Lesotho
1967 Ecuador**, Kiribati, Tuvalu, Yemen (D.R. R.), Zaire (to vote)
1968 Nauru, Swaziland
1970 Andorra (to vote), Yemen (Arab Republic), Zaire (to stand for election)
1971 Switzerland
1972 Bangladesh
1973 Andorra (to stand for election), Bahrain (right recognised), San Marino (to stand for election)
1974 Jordan, Solomon Islands (?)
1975 Angola, Cape Verde, Mozambique, Sao Tome and Principe, Vanuatu
1976 Portugal**
1977 Guinea Bissau
1978 Republic of Moldova*, Zimbabwe (to stand for election)
1979 Marshall Islands (?), Micronesia (Fed. States of), Palau
1980 Iraq, Vanuatu **
1984 Liechtenstein, South Africa (Coloureds + Indians)
1986 Central African Republic, Djibouti (to stand for election)
1989 Namibia
1990 Samoa
1994 Kazakhstan, Republic of Moldova*, South Africa (Blacks)
1997 United Arab Emirates (?) Rights to vote and to stand for election not yet recognised for women: Kuwait This data is part of a comparative global study carried out by the Interparliamentary Union (men and women in politics - incomplete democracy).

* Right subject to conditions or restrictions
** Restrictions or conditions lifted

The IPU is the international organisation which brings together the representatives of the Parliaments of sovereign States. As the focal point for worldwide parliamentary dialogue, the IPU works for peace and cooperation among peoples and for the firm establishment of representative institutions. Its programme includes promotion of women's rights, with special emphasis on equality between men and women in political life.

As of 1 January 1997, 135 National Parliaments were members of the IPU, and three international parliamentary assemblies were associate members (Andean Parliament, Latin American Parliament and Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe).

The Employers Platform, Employment and Equal Opportunities

Within the framework of its cooperation with European Commission DG V and the European Public Services Union, the Employers Platform is organising two important conferences:

• 1 July 1997 on "employment and work organisation" in order to assess the impact of a new organisation of work on employment within local public services.
• 12 December 1997 on equal opportunities (training, sexual harassment, equal pay, reconciliation with private life, etc.) within a European context.

These two conferences will lay emphasis on exchanges of experience and research into transferable practices between European local and regional authorities. The European Commission would also like to involve CEMR in a broader study on equal opportunities in the public services sector: an initial work meeting will take place on 28 May 1997 in Brussels.
AN EXAMPLE OF GOOD PRACTICE PROMOTING EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

THE PROJECT DEVELOPED IN THE ÖSTERTÖLLAND REGION

The County Council and the Association of Local Authorities in Östergötland are running a project which primarily supports and helps young and/or newly elected women politicians through their first term of office.

In Östergötland, during the elections of local authorities and the county council, a large number of women were elected, of whom many were young. However, experience shows that too many women quickly feel dissatisfied and not entirely at ease with their new responsibilities. They often leave office after their first term to commit themselves to other activities. The project in question attempts to remedy this situation.

The project’s goals
To help 40 newly elected women politicians through their first term of office,
- To support 40 experienced elected women representatives in a changing political context,
- To reach 40 men in high-ranking political office with the message that women’s participation is necessary for more comprehensive, more representative political decisions, which take into account both male and female perspectives.

The project’s objectives
- To foster the competence and knowledge of women politicians,
- To make young and newly elected women politicians understand that they have the necessary skills to take on increasing responsibility in the future,
- To support elected women representatives as women,
- To develop leadership capacities in women already having experience in politics,
- To influence male politicians by increasing their awareness of women’s skills so as to foster these skills,
- To change the decision process so that all decisions include both a male and a female perspective.

The project’s methods
A special method is used by way of mentorship programmes to allow for the transfer of knowledge and experience and has proven very effective in changing traditional work methods. This can be presented as a sort of teaching organisation which has led to positive results in the economic sector. Such programmes usually involve the co-operation of two persons - a “novice” and a mentor - working together to reach set goals.

Another way to change working methods is through supervision. In small group situations, various topics and issues are discussed. The members of the group are responsible for the content whereas the supervisor is in charge of the overall process and, if necessary, presents theories and experiences.

The group can also work autonomously without support from a supervisor.

Novices are young and/or newly elected women in local councils, county councils or in any of the committees.

The project’s organisation
Women politicians from different parts of the county and different political parties are responsible for the project.

The project management group consists of administrators from the county administration board, the county council and the association of the local authorities.

A part-time project manager is responsible for maintaining the project concept and keeping to the set schedule.

This project was presented by Gun Axellson, Chairwoman of the Finspång City Council (Sweden), and Christine Hasselrot, Chairwoman of the Committee for Social Affairs - City of Finspång, at the seminar on “Best Practices for the Promotion of Equal Opportunities” (Tallinn, 8-9 November 1996).
Elected Women’s issues

THE STANDING COMMITTEE
of women elected representatives of local
and regional authorities of CEMR
which met in Paris on 19 September 1997
under the presidency of Rosemary McKenna

1 Recalled that Europe has a population of more than 370 million inhabitants, 51 % of which are women; yet this majority nevertheless remains manifestly under-represented at all levels of decision-making – European, national, regional and local.

2 Took note of the following modifications resulting from the draft Treaty of Amsterdam, particularly in the area of equal opportunities:

- the addition in Article 2 of the EC Treaty of equality between women and men to the tasks of the Community,
- the addition of a new subparagraph to Article 3 of the EC Treaty, specifying that in all activities referred to in that article the Community has the aim of eliminating inequalities and promoting equality between women and men,
- the insertion of a new Article 6a in the EC Treaty allowing the adoption of measures aimed at outlawing all discrimination, including gender-based discrimination,
- the insertion of a new Title on employment, Article 5 of which provides a new legal basis for the adoption of incentive measures,
- inclusion of the Social Protocol and, more specifically: Article 118(1), fifth indent (equality between men and women with regard to labour market opportunities and treatment at work) and Article 119 on equal pay for male and female workers;

3 Commended the recent progress made during the recent legislative elections – for example, in the United Kingdom and France.

4 Called attention to the Council Recommendation of 2 December 1996 concerning the balanced participation of women and men in the decision-making process and emphasised that the under-representation of women in positions of decision-making represents a serious democratic deficit.

5 Recalled the breadth of the mainstreaming concept – or the integration of the principle of equal opportunities between women and men – which involves systematic consideration of the priorities and respective needs of women and men in all Community policies and actions.

6 Welcomed the EP Resolution of 16 September 1997 (Kokkola Report) concerning the Commission’s communication on mainstreaming, and consequently, invited the member States to ensure the application of a policy of mainstreaming in local, regional and national policies.

7 Welcomed the EP Resolution of 16 September 1997 (Kestelijn-Sierens Report) concerning the European Commission's annual report, "equal opportunities for women and men in the European Union in 1996", which constitutes a very useful instrument to monitor national and Community policies with regard to equal opportunities, and asked the European Commission to strengthen its strategic aspects.

8 Supported the Committee of the Regions’ resolution of 18 September 1997 addressed to the member States on the future nominations to CoR concerning equal opportunities.

Continued on page 6
RESOLUTION BY THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS TO MEMBER STATES with regard to future CoR appointments in terms of equal opportunities  
(Brussels 18 September 1997)

The Committee of the Regions emphasises the important role that it plays in the European Union by bridging the "democratic deficit", by bringing the EU closer to the citizen, and reflecting the needs and aspirations of local and regional communities in the European decision-making process. In order to perform this role more effectively, the membership of the Committee of the Regions should address equalities considerations.

The Committee of the Regions agrees with the preamble to the Council Recommendation on the balanced participation of women and men in decision making (96/694/EC) which stated:

- The under-representation of women in decision-making posts contributes a loss for society as a whole and does not allow the interests and needs of the whole population to be catered for in full.
- Balanced participation of men and women in the decision-making process is likely to give rise to different ideas, values and behaviour which will result in more justice and equality in the world for both men and women.

The membership of the Committee of the Regions in gender terms is composed as follows:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Countries</th>
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<th>Alternates</th>
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</thead>
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Based on list of members and alternates by country of 5 May 1997

Councillor Joan Taylor elected new president of the CEMR Committee of Women Elected Representatives of Local and Regional Authorities

Councillor Joan Taylor, member of the County Council of Nottinghamshire (United Kingdom), was elected President of the Council of European Municipalities and Regions' Committee of Women Elected Representatives of Local and Regional Authorities on 19 September 1997, thus succeeding Rosemary McKenna who was recently elected to the British Parliament.

In her election address, Councillor Taylor declared that her priorities will be "to broaden the scope and activities of this Committee, and to strengthen its links with the Institutions of the European Union - notably the European Parliament and the Committee of the Regions - in order to increase the ability of this Committee to promote equal opportunities in local and regional government".

After having paid tribute to the work carried out by Rosemary McKenna, the new President pledged to continue her work, particularly in encouraging women to participate in political life at local and regional level in Europe, and to reach out to women within the framework of developing local democracy in Central and Eastern Europe.

Cllr Taylor is also President of the Equal Opportunities Panel of the Local Government Association in the United Kingdom, and can be expected to bring her wide experience of work with other sectors of society facing exclusion, prejudice and discrimination - such as people with disabilities, ethnic minorities, young people - to her work with this Committee.
When looking at other European institutions, the position in the Committee of the Regions does not compare well. For example, 25% of the College of Commissioners are women and in the European Parliament, 27.3% of the members are women.

The Council of Ministers in its Resolution of 27 March 1995 on the balanced participation of women and men in decision-making stated that "the objective of balanced participation of women and men and the sharing of responsibilities between women and men in decision-making in every sphere of life, constitutes an important condition for equality between women and men". Whereas some Member States are closing the gap between representation of women and men in their national parliaments (e.g. Sweden 40.4% in 1994 - Finland 33.5% in 1995 - Denmark 33% in 1995), the Committee of the Regions itself has made some progress to make.

The Committee of the Regions notes the Council Recommendation on the balanced participation of women and men in decision-making (94/694/EC):
"calls on the institutions, subsidiary bodies and decentralised bodies of the European Communities to design a strategy for actively balanced participation by women and men in the decision-making process in each institution, subsidiary body and decentralised body of the European Communities."

The Committee of the Regions through its Working Group on Equal Opportunities has already begun to progress equality issues, but is aware of the role of the Council of Ministers in the nomination procedure for membership of the Committee of the Regions. While not wishing to interfere with the nomination procedure in individual Member States, the Committee of the Regions would nevertheless ask the Council of Ministers to encourage and promote a more balanced participation of women in political life and to take steps towards reflecting a gender balance in its nominations to the Committee of the Regions.

The Committee of the Regions agrees that it is important to chart progress towards achieving a more balanced representation in its membership and will establish mechanisms for monitoring the next and subsequent rounds of appointments to the Committee of the Regions so that the position in future can be compared to the current position.

The Committee of the Regions also calls upon the national governments and local and regional government associations involved in the nomination procedure to take equal opportunities considerations into account when the new lists of COR members are proposed.

The Committee of the Regions recognises that while the current focus has mainly been on gender balance, the new Treaty will widen the scope of EU competence in terms of equalities. When this is ratified it will be important for the Council of Ministers to build on the good practice identified here in terms of gender and include in the nomination process considerations of ethnic minorities, disability, religion, sexual orientation and age.

On 17 and 18 October, the European Commission and the technical assistance team Anima are organising a meeting in Brussels of managers from the projects financed under the 4th Community Action Programme for equal opportunities for women and men (1996-2000).

This meeting will be the opportunity to develop new exchanges between the different participants and to increase the visibility of the programme within the framework of which the activities of the European network of women elected representatives from local and regional authorities are being developed.

We should like to draw the attention of our readers to two reports of great interest for the progress of equal opportunities between women and men which were adopted by the European Parliament at its September Plenary session:

Mrs Kestelijn-Sierens' report on "the Annual report from the Commission "equal opportunities for women and men in the European Union - 1996"",

and Mrs Kokkola's report on "the Communication from the Commission - Incorporating equal opportunities for women and men into all Community policies and activities - mainstreaming".

We should like to remind you that a seminar on equal opportunities organised jointly by CEMR's Employer's Platform and the European Federation of Public Service Unions (EPSU) will be held in Brussels on 11 and 12 December next.
9 Recalled that parity democracy involves the full integration of women on an equal footing with men at all levels and in all aspects linked to the functioning of a democratic society. In certain countries, the quota system appears to be one of the means of achieving a balanced representation of women and men in the political bodies. Other means that are more adapted to other countries must be implemented in order to allow parity democracy to be achieved.

10 Asked the appropriate authorities to help support the gathering and the publication of statistical data concerning women’s participation at all levels of political life. This information constitutes one of the most important tools for implementing policies of positive action.

11 Welcomed with interest the initiative aiming to convene a European Council on equal opportunities between women and men in 1998, and wished to add the contribution of European women elected representatives of local and regional authorities on this occasion.

12 Emphasised that the European Network of Women Elected Representatives of Local and Regional Authorities represents an irreplaceable means to disseminate strategies and positive actions that have been adopted to promote women’s participation in politics, particularly at the local level which is the basic foundation of democratic life, and asked the relevant Institutions and bodies to support the functioning of this Network.

13 Called on the European bodies and Institutions, the national governments and local and regional authorities to take into account the application of the mainstreaming principle in their policies, in order to attain a balanced participation of women and men in the process of decision-making.

14 Invited the national Sections and governing bodies of CEMR to fully include the concept of mainstreaming in CEMR’s future political priorities.

THE PRESENCE OF WOMEN
in political life at local level

The Hague, 21 November 1997

The second seminar on the “presence of women in political life at local level” will be held in the Hague on 21 November next.

This initiative is part of the activities carried out by CEMR’s European network of women elected representatives of local and regional authorities in its second year of existence. It is organised in cooperation with the Association of Dutch Municipalities (VNG) in view of the elections to be held in the Netherlands in Spring 1998.

The aim of the seminar is to take stock of the situation regarding the presence of women in local political life, to note the obstacles to their participation, to pinpoint the means available to increase their presence and to publicise the existing examples of best practices. Following the opening of the session by Joan Taylor, President of CEMR’s Committee of Women Elected Representatives of Local and Regional Authorities and member of the County Council of Nottinghamshire, and F.A.M. Kerekhaert, Director for Education and Social Welfare at the VNG, J.W. Holtslag, Director for Public Administration, Ministry of Home Affairs, will present the Dutch government’s policy on stimulating the participation of women in political life at the local level. Magda Berendsen-Jansen, Mayor of Beverwijk and Chair of the VNG’s “Women and local government” Committee, and M.H. Leijenaar, Dutch expert and university professor, will analyse the participation of women in local political life in the Netherlands. Local government politicians, both men and women, from different towns will present the policies and projects carried out in their authorities to integrate women into municipal life.

The seminar being organised in a European context, there will also be an exchange of experience and best practices with politicians from other European countries.

Alongside the presentation of the situation in the Netherlands, an analysis of the presence of women in local political life in Germany and Luxembourg will also be presented. These analyses will contribute to the research carried out by CEMR, under the direction of Françoise Gaspard, on the presence of women in political life at the local level in Europe, which is a major component of the project carried out in the framework of the 4th Community Action programme for equal opportunities between women and men (1996-2000).
Dear Readers,

For several years now, CEMR has devoted much effort to its activities in favour of equal opportunities between women and men and, through the Committee which I now have the honour of chairing, works to increase women's participation in political life, particularly at the local and regional level.

The European Network of Women Elected Representatives of Local and Regional Authorities - whose activities are supported by the European Commission within the framework of the 4th Community Action Programme for equal opportunities between women and men (1996-2000) - was established to enlarge the Committee's field of action and to increase its impact.

As the new President of the Committee of Women Elected Representatives of Local and Regional Authorities, I have the pleasure today of being able to address the members of its network, whose first year of activities were concluded in July 1997.

During our first year, we have sought to improve the dissemination of information and the exchange of good practices between the members of the Network.

In addition to this newsletter, the pages on CEMR's website which are dedicated to women elected representatives constitute another means of disseminating information to the members of the Network. You can access this website at http://www.cemr.org/women/woman.shtml

Being aware of the importance of the exchange of experiences and best practice between women elected representatives, we organised a seminar on "the presence of women in political life at local level" in Sintra (Portugal) in April 1997.

We hope that this second year of activities will contribute to the improvement of the Network's functioning and that its work will be further enriched through your participation.

Thus, we are striving to increase the circulation of information which is of direct interest to you, and will continue to organise events to provide opportunities for interaction and discussion amongst European women elected representatives of local and regional authorities. The second seminar in the series concerning "the presence of women in political life at local level" recently took place in The Hague on 21 November 1997, and we hope to organise similar seminars in the future.

However, we also hope to witness an increase in your role as the network's key players. From this perspective, we ask you to send us examples of good practice which could be effectively implemented elsewhere in order to improve the application of the principle of equal opportunities in local politics throughout Europe, or any information in general which you would like to see disseminated, or which you would simply like to share.

Another of our objectives is for the network to become an instrument for increasing your ability to participate in multinational exchanges and in European life. We therefore invite you to contact your national Association if you wish to set up a project with your counterparts and are searching for partners in other countries.

We also invite you to send us any comments or positions taken concerning the different elements of the European Union's policies which concern your area of actions and which you wish to circulate and disseminate at European level.

I believe that these small efforts contribute to the awareness and understanding of the positions of European women elected representatives of local and regional authorities, for whom the Network offers a means of speaking with one powerful voice, the effectiveness of which is dependent on your contribution.

Therefore, I would like to reiterate my request for contributions to our Network's activities, and concluding this short note, I would like to wish you a very happy new year for 1998.

Joan Taylor, President of the Committee of Women Elected Representatives of Local and Regional Authorities
ACTIVITIES OF THE EUROPEAN NETWORK OF WOMEN ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES

A seminar on the presence of women in political life at local level was held in The Hague on 21 November 1997.

This event was part of the continuing activities being carried out by the Network of Women Elected Representatives of Local and Regional Authorities. As a European project selected by DG V and co-financed under the framework of the Fourth Community Action Programme of Equal Opportunities between Women and Men (1996-2000), CEMR lists among its objectives the strengthening of ties between local and regional women elected representatives, to have increased recognition and acknowledgement of the place and role of women elected representatives in decentralised authorities, and to identify the obstacles confronted by women in gaining access to elected posts.

The seminar in The Hague is the follow-up to the successful initiatives begun in Sintra on 20-21 April 1997, and on which occasion political experts and women elected representatives had analysed the place of women in municipalities in Sweden, Italy, Spain, Portugal, France and Belgium. The gathering in The Hague, which assembled more than 150 women elected representatives from numerous European countries, enabled the participants to determine the state of progress of women’s situations in the Netherlands, Germany and Luxembourg. As had been the case in Sintra, a very enriching debate was held among the women elected representatives and the political experts, which covered areas such as comments on the global situation of women in local political decision-making and presentational concrete examples of actions carried out by women elected representatives, and a film concerning immigrant women who are elected representatives in municipal councils. These exchanges demonstrated the interest of such gatherings which allow bonds to be strengthened among women elected representatives, to take into account similarities and differences between European Union countries and which also function as a forum for an exchange of good practice.

The increase of women’s presence in the political decision-making process is a major stake for the end of this century. All the EU countries are signatories of the 1979 UN Convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination towards women, which constitutes a commitment on the part of the States to take action in order to improve the participation rate of women, particularly in elected assemblies. The European Union played a decisive role in the adoption of the final declaration of the world conference in Beijing which reaffirmed this objective. Lastly, on 2 December 1996, the EU’s Council of Ministers adopted a recommendation concerning the balanced participation of women and men at the decision-making level, through which each member State is compelled to provide, by the end of 1999, a national assessment and a list of the actions (legislative or other) which have been adopted in order to attain a balance between women and men in making political, economic, social, and cultural decisions. The activities and the seminars of the Network of Women Elected Representatives of Local and Regional Authorities are therefore complementary to the Community actions taken in favour of equal opportunities.

We should also like to mention that the choice of The Hague as the venue of the seminar, like that of Sintra last Spring, was not a random one: local elections will be held soon in both Portugal and the Netherlands. These seminars also provided the opportunity to not only ask the countries concerned, but above all, to ask the political parties to be attentive to the presence of women candidates.

Particular thanks must be addressed to the Association of Netherlands Municipalities (VNG) for having hosted this seminar and for their co-operation with CEMR in organising this event, whose impact will only truly be measured during the electoral campaign and in light of the results of the local elections to be held in the Spring of 1998.

Françoise GASPARD,
Expert for CEMR’s “Development and activities of the European Network of Women Elected Representatives of Local and Regional Authorities” project
VOTE FOR KIDS
An example of good practice

A project carried out by the department for emancipation of Gelderland (the Netherlands) in order to further the involvement of young boys and girls in the decision-making process. We are including below the text from the presentation brochure of the project which was presented at the seminar in the Hague.

Suppose you are seven years old and you are fed up with your neighbourhood where you can hardly play hockey, skate or shoot marbles. Where can an eleven year old air his or her grievances? Who decides about extra playgrounds? How can you exert your influence? How are decisions made and what does it mean to vote? The project "Vote for Kids", a series of lessons about decision making and politics, aimed at children in group 7 and 8 (age 10 to 12) of primary school, intends to give an answer to these and other questions.

Learn young, learn fair
The idea behind the project is "learn young, learn fair". Those who learn to stand up for themselves at an early age, will be able to express their opinion to decision makers in politics and executive committees when older. This leads to participation which is vital for our democracy. Because young people and women do not show much interest in politics, the project is aimed especially at these groups - their interest and involvement should increase through this project.

Teaching package
The teaching package consists of a series of five lessons and a teacher's manual. The lessons are about the children Anna and Farouk who make a voyage of discovery through municipal decision-making bodies. Mayor, aldermen, civil servants and others will be reviewed. By way of a role-playing game, children learn how to stand up for themselves. By the end of the project, the children are ready to take part in a children's council at the town hall.

More information about this can be found in the teacher's manual. The didactic point of view is to teach by way of experience: not only through discussions but a focus on practising.

Let's have a look in the classroom
Today group 8 of primary school De Wingerd follows lesson 5: "The council meeting". Today they are practising, but in a few days, the meeting will be acted out in a lifelike way in the school hall.

The teacher plays the mayor and chairs the meeting with a real agenda. The setting is just like a real conference. The children play their roles as leader of a political party, alderman, member of the council or listener. The mayor opens the speaking time of each political party with a hammer.

One by one the leader of the parties put their plans into words. One wants a football pitch in front of the patch of grass near Lindenhol College, another wants a climbing frame and a third wants to use the available money to do up the goals and put down a bench for the parents. Lots of creative ideas come forward to realise even more: "Because the money is practically used up, people from the area will help us. If we put up an ice-cream cart or a fish and chips stand...we earn money!".

The children on the stands sit on the edge of their seats and can hardly restrain themselves from interfering. Everyone takes part in the deliberations with the children on the stands; there is a lot of talking. After the reports and queries comes the voting. The tension increases... and ... "Yes!", the children whose plan has won, put their arms up high, cheering. Some others are very disappointed; their plan did not make it, alas. The teacher evaluates the proceeding of the meeting.

Further information:

• Instituut voor Publiek en Politiek (Institute for Public and Politics)
Prinsengracht 911 - 915
1071 KD Amsterdam
Phone +31 20 521 7600

• Emancipatiebureau
Gelderland (Bureau for Women's Affairs, initiator of the project)
Postbus 606
6800 AP Arnhem
Phone +31 26 351 7017
European Commissioner Ritt Bjerregaard DG XI (Environment, Nuclear Safety and Civil Protection) presented the European Sustainable City Award 1997 on 24.11.1997, in the Brussels Town Hall to the representatives of three European Cities:

- Municipality of Calvià, Spain - Mayor Margarita NAJERA ARANZABAL
- City of Heidelberg, Germany - Mayor Beate WEBER
- City of Stockholm, Sweden - Vice Mayor Margareta OLOFSSON

The winning towns have achieved outstanding progress in the implementation of a long-term action plan towards sustainability.

The municipality of Veliko Tarnovo, Bulgaria, received a Special Distinction for Central and Eastern Europe.

The CEMR, representative at the Campaign’s Co-ordinating Committee, Councillor Celia Cameron of Norfolk County Council (UK), presented 13 cities with Certificates of Distinction.

Ms Cameron also presented the new CEMR publications, which were distributed to the participants:

- The CEMR, Local Agenda Basic Guide – a short and basic introduction to the issue (available in English only);
- Local Sustainable Development in Europe – 18 Good Examples: summary and evaluation of 18 examples of Sustainable Development implemented by cities/towns who were presented with Awards or Certificates of Distinction in 1996.

The Award ceremony marked the opening of the European Event on Sustainable Development and Local Agenda 21, held in Brussels on 24.11. – 25.11.1997, organised by the European Sustainable Cities & Towns Campaign. Some 300 participants from local and regional authorities, European institutions, networks and organisations participated in the event.

The European Sustainable City Award, launched by the CEMR, in 1996, is a project within the European Sustainable Cities & Towns Campaign. The Campaign was launched following the first European Sustainable Cities and Towns Conference in Aalborg, Denmark in 1994 and aims to promote the concept of sustainable development and assist in the implementation process.

The Campaign is supported by European Commission, DG XI Environment, Nuclear Safety and Civil Protection and the City of Aalborg.
Prospects for Equal Opportunities in a Wider Europe

This is the theme of the seminar being organised by CEMR’s Committee of women elected representatives of local and regional authorities in Sofia on 19-20 March at the invitation of the National Association of Municipalities in the Republic of Bulgaria and with the support of the European Commission.

This initiative is part of the dialogue taking place between the Committee of women elected representatives of local and regional authorities from central and eastern Europe, the first stage of which began with a meeting in Cieszyn (Poland) in March 1994, and has been strengthened since with meetings in Maribor (Slovenia) in September 1994, Ostrava (Czech Republic) in November 1995, and Tallinn (Estonia) in November 1996.

These meetings represent a platform for women elected representatives from East and West to exchange ideas and reflect together on the changes following the transition to a democratic society after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the new challenges which this poses.

The meeting in Sofia represents a new stage in this dialogue as the European Union begins a new process of enlargement leading progressively to the construction of a Wider Europe. This wider Europe, the one of the XXI century, must be built on a strong democratic base where men and women have a strengthened position and are the proof of a renewed conception of citizenship. Within tomorrow’s Europe, respect for equal opportunities between men and women will be an indispensable condition for the future of European democracy. Elected representatives, men and women, from local government will have a major role to play as across in the institutional decision making level closest to the democratic base. They must play a full role in the enlargement process.

By bringing together local elected representatives, personalities from other levels of decision making and experts on equal opportunities from Bulgaria and other European countries, East and West, the seminar in Sofia will propose ways of taking forward the question of equal opportunities between men and women in this wider Europe, which will be closer to the citizen, and where local authorities will have an increasing role to play in the renewal of our democracies.

The next seminar to be organised by the CEMR network of women elected representatives of local and regional authorities will take place at the invitation of the town of Amfissa on 4 and 5 May 1998, in preparation for the local elections to be held in Greece in October 1998.

For information regarding this seminar, please contact the national Section of CEMR in your country or the CEMR Secretariat General.

At the initiative of the “Equal Opportunities” Unit of European Commission’s DGV and with the support of the Animat team, a seminar for heads of projects co-financed under the 4th Community programme for equal opportunities on decision making was held in Brussels on 30 and 31 January last.

A very useful debate took place on the themes and strategies connected to equal opportunities between men and women in decision making, thanks to the contribution of those concerned by decision making within the Commission and the Parliament and of experts in equal opportunities. Particular attention was paid to this question in view of the European Parliament elections coming up in 1999.
**WOMEN ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS**

On 26 January 1998, the Council of Ministers of the European Union approved the list of members of the Committee of the Regions for the 1998-2002 mandate.

Made up of 222 full members and 222 substitutes proposed by the member state governments for a mandate of four years, the Committee of the Regions is the EU consultative body for local and regional authorities established by the Maastricht Treaty which started work in 1994.

At the session held in Brussels on 18 February, the new assembly elected Manfred Dammeyer, Minister for Federal and European Affairs of the Land of Nordrhein-Westfalen (Germany), as President and Jozef Chalier, Minister for Economy and Finance of the Brussels Capital Region (Belgium), as 1st Vice-President, these positions being reversed half way through the mandate in line with the agreement drawn up by the political groups.

In the table below, we indicate the situation concerning the presence of women within the CoR.

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<td>25,00</td>
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<td>33</td>
<td>14,86</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>22,07</td>
</tr>
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*First mandate: figures dated May 1997*
SPAIN: A CAMPAIGN TO INCREASE THE NUMBER OF WOMEN IN MUNICIPALITIES FROM 15 TO 33% IN 1999

Women local councillors of 52 councils from the Peoples Party, the Socialist Party, the United Left, the PNV, the Initiative for Catalonia, the Coalition for the Canaries and the New Left together with women from the feminist movement and various institutions, as well as politicians and experts from India, El Salvador, Norway, Argentina and Portugal, gathered together on 16 and 17 January 1998 in Madrid for the "More women in local government" event organised by the Dolores Ibarruri Foundation, decided:

1. That the political parties must guarantee the presence of at least one third of women in each of the 8 637 Spanish municipalities at the municipal elections in May 1999, date of the celebration of the 20th anniversary of the establishment of democratic municipalities:
   a) to subscribe to the ratification of the Action Platform of the 4th World Women's Conference (Peking, 1995) and to the 4th Community Action Programme for equal opportunities,
   b) because local authorities have the lowest level of female participation of all the representative institutions: 13.5%, whereas the percentage is 22% in the House of Commons and 39% of the Spanish members of the European Parliament and this figure represents half of the average presence of women in municipalities across Europe,
   c) because exclusion of half of the population for reasons of sex constitutes in itself a democratic deficit and a factor rendering institutions illegitimate,
   d) because municipalities are the democratic institution with the widest social base and closest to the citizens, and the exclusion of half of the population is not only a problem for women but also democracy as a whole.

2. To request a joint action by women of all parties and of women's organisations, with the support of the Federation of Municipalities and the institutions to implement strategies for parity democracy. These include quotas and constant denunciation of the tactics used by men (sometimes unconsciously) to exclude women from their "space": by ignoring, ridiculing, marginalizing, accusing and making them feel guilty.

3. To ask the mass media to publicise the presence of women in local authorities and their efforts to improve this presence.

4. The studies presented during this event showed the accumulation of difficulties faced by women wishing to exercise a political mandate, in particular at local level. These include:
   a) a triple day - professional, family and political - which provokes tensions and unnecessary and unjust renunciations for female councillors,
   b) the hours of politics, conceived in line with men's needs, instigating mechanisms for the segregation and expulsion of women,
   c) the social marginalization of women in power,
   d) the high level of turnover of women in local politics - two out of three do not renew their mandate whereas only one out of three changes for men - prevents the reaching of a "critical mass" for women and highlights the uneasiness of women in their exercise of power.

5. However, we see the fight for democracy as a relay race. The important thing is to pass on experience from one woman to another and thus to accumulate a collective "savoir-faire".

6. To request the Ministry of the Interior and the CIS to collect and circulate official statistics broken down by sex for all the 100 000 councillors: their age, level of study, the length and responsibilities of their mandate, in order to give more transparency and equality to the demands and selection mechanisms in application of the Peking Action Platform and the 4th Community Action Programme for equal opportunities.
7. To send a delegation to the Nordic countries to improve understanding of the strategies used over 30 years to facilitate the sharing of political power between men and women and its contribution to wellbeing.

8. To unite the million women who are currently councillors in India thanks to the 1/3 minimal quota system set up for municipal elections, as well as the growing role of women in the construction of democracy in Latin America and many developing countries by showing that the claim to dignity and equality is not the heritage of rich countries.

9. To act locally against poverty, discrimination and violence. With this aim in mind, minimal actions should include:
• the elimination of discrimination for women at work, in pay and professional promotion, in all sectors of local government responsibility as well as in the companies working for them,
• the development of employment through local initiatives, particularly for women in the most difficult circumstances, whether they have the nationality of the country or are immigrants,
• the prevention and suppression of family and street violence,
• respect for article 7.2 of the LOGSE through the creation of public nursery schools to meet the needs,
• respect for the gerontology plan and public services for invalids and other dependants,
• taking into account the point of view of women in town and country planning, amenities and public areas and in urban management.

Madrid, 17 January 1998

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The European Public Transport Prize is designed to reward the three most innovative projects developed by European communtations which improve mobility, protect the environment and promote the use of public transport and is sponsored by CEMR and the City of Innsbruck (Austria).

This prize has a threefold aim:

To highlight innovative projects which promote the development of public transport;

To encourage and intensify the exchange of experiences as well as the dissemination of information about practical solutions to urban mobility problems;

To modify the behaviour of the citizens by creating greater public awareness of transport issues.

Timetable

• January 1998: dissemination of application forms;

• 4 April 1998: deadline for sending applications to CEMR;

• 5 May 1998: evaluation panel, Innsbruck;


The Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) will soon launch the European Sustainable City Award 1998

following the successful implementation of the Award scheme in 1996 and 1997 and the positive reactions on behalf of local and regional authorities all over the continent.

Applications will be available in April 1998, the Award presentation will take place in October/November 1998.

---

WOMEN COUNCILLORS IN SPANISH MUNICIPALITIES OF MORE THAN 10,000 INHABITANTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Autonomous communities</th>
<th>Nbr of women councillors</th>
<th>Total Nbr of councillors</th>
<th>Percentage of women</th>
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<td>2,600</td>
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<td>Aragón</td>
<td>53</td>
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<td>25,6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Asturias</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>430</td>
<td>24</td>
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<tr>
<td>Baleares</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>308</td>
<td>22</td>
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<tr>
<td>Canarias</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>594</td>
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<td>Cantabria</td>
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<td>23</td>
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<td>C. Valenciana</td>
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<tr>
<td>Melilla</td>
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<td>25</td>
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Total: 2,651  12,280  21,6

Statistical analysis of Local and Autonomous elections held in May 1995 from the point of view of gender.
Elected Women’s issues

LOCAL ELECTIONS

Preparation of the forthcoming elections in Greece (October 98)

The city of Amfissa and the Greek Section of CEMR (KEDKE) hosted the seminar on “the presence of women in local and regional government” on 4-5 May. This seminar was held upon the initiative of the Council of European Municipalities and Regions and its European Network of Women Elected Representatives of Local and Regional Authorities, with the support of the European Commission’s DG V within the framework of the Fourth Community Action Programme on equal opportunities between men and women (1996-2000).

The activities were opened by Ms Panagiota Gazi, Mayor of Amfissa, Vice President of CEMR’s Standing Committee of Women Elected Representatives of Local and Regional Authorities and substitute member of the Greek delegation of the Committee of the Regions. Mr Dimitrios Avramopoulos, Mayor of Athens, took the floor during the opening session as President of KEDKE.

The Amfissa seminar was particularly significant in light of upcoming local elections to be held in Greece in October. With women making up 6.3% of the members of the national Parliament and 3.6% of elected representatives at local level, Greece has the lowest percentage of women in politics of all the countries in the European Union.

Today, everyone agrees on the fact that the participation of women in politics is a right and a necessity for democracy. At a time when the leaders of our countries are faced with pressure from citizens asking for modifications of the political terms of reference, the increased presence of women represents an irrefutable factor for the renewal and the representivity of political life.

In several countries, the governments and the political parties, certain that women can contribute to a different vision of public issues and to new aspects of democracy, have already begun to advocate measures to promote the increased participation of women in order to give a breath of fresh air to politics. Within this framework, presentations were given of policies which encourage equal opportunities between men and women and that were implemented in several European Union member countries as well as examples of good practice carried out at local level in view of the same objective.

Lastly, the participants held an exchange of views concerning the contribution of European women local and regional elected representatives to the European Summit on equal opportunities which will take place in early 1999 in Paris, upon the invitation of the French Government, following the Summits held in Athens in 1992 and in Rome in 1996.

The interventions from the Amfissa seminar, which all participants found very interesting, will be published in the near future. For the moment, we should like to give our readers some news regarding the results of local elections, as far as women are concerned, in Portugal and in the Netherlands, which were presented at the seminar. As you will remember, our network dedicated two seminars to the preparation of these elections.

Results of the local elections in Portugal (December 97)

The representation of women in the municipalities is still very low in spite of the fact that the number of women elected representatives increased in the last elections.

The meetings organised in Sintra on 20-21 April 1997, within the framework of the European Network of women elected representatives of local and regional authorities, actively contributed to these results.

These meetings allowed for the exchange of ideas and good practice, the presentation of the experiences of women elected representatives from
Northern Europe which mentioned the means used to strengthen their position and the difficulties to be overcome. A wide debate open to Portuguese and European women elected representatives revealed the enthusiasm and interest of women in political participation.

In Portugal in 1993, five women were elected as the heads of executive bodies; since 1997, there are twelve women. Currently, 196 women are members of an executive body, compared to 157 women prior to the December elections.

With regard to the municipality of Sintra, there were no women in the executive body before 1997 when I was already the mayor. I therefore presented on my list, in an eligible position, a woman who was also elected.

If we continue to compare the results, we may note another positive development with regard to the representation of women in the municipal assembly, where their number has doubled (three members in 1993 and six in 1997); in the municipal councils, where the number of women members has increased and the number of presidents has even tripled (one woman president in 1993 and three in 1997).

These results encourage us to continue our actions in light of the fact that we are still far from the objective of parity (only 3.9% of mayors are women).

Among the measures to be adopted in view of equal opportunities, I would emphasise:

- establishing training for women - particularly training which focuses on relations with the media, given that women politicians, at local and regional level, can use the media for their promotion and to disseminate their message;

- implementing actions intended to increase the public's awareness of the need for the balanced presence of women and men in politics;

the analysis and the modification of criteria which serve as the basis for selection or nominations;

- Lastly, the adoption of legislation which guarantees the balanced representation of men and women in decision-making.

In Portugal today, we are striving to change the law in such a way as to promote equality by proposing quotas of 25% of each gender to eligible positions on the political party lists. I am aware that there are persons who reject this measure and consider it humiliating. In my opinion, quotas are nevertheless effective in guaranteeing the presence of women and in promoting a balanced participation of men and women.

Extract from the report of Edite ESTRELA,
Mayor of Sintra

Results of the local elections in the Netherlands (March 98)

Following the elections for the reorganisation of local government of Autumn 1997, and other local elections held in March 1998, the relative number of female council members has increased to some extent. In mid-1997, prior to these elections, the share of female council members was 20.2%. It is now at 22.2%. This may therefore not be viewed very optimistically, given that it is a fact cry from the balance pursued by the central government. According to the official target figures of the Home Department, three out of ten councillors ought to be women. Moreover, in the first half of the last term in 1994, 22% of all councillors were women. Therefore, in effect, no increase in the number of female council members has taken place.

In all the political parties, more women were elected to the council than a year ago. The balance between the parties has not changed.

Labour (catch-all) and the Green Party are represented by, relatively speaking, quite a few women in the council. Women members of the Socialist Party (an extreme left-wing party) have also gained from its victory in the elections. The Liberal Party (conservative) is represented by more than the average number of women in the municipal council. The regional differences, by and large, have remained unchanged. In municipalities with more than 100,000 inhabitants, on the average, more women are elected to the council.

There is another fact which does not give rise to optimistic forecasts concerning the number of women elected to the council. Only 20% of all councillors who have been re-elected are women. This indicates that, in all probability, women resign sooner from council work or do not stand for re-election.

The reasons are manifold: often women have to prove themselves more than their male colleagues, are intentionally or unintentionally taken less seriously by the latter or are given insufficient support from their spouse or family to combine their council activities with other (domestic) responsibilities. Regardless of the reason, the fact remains that in the year 2001, the relative number of women elected to the council will have plummeted to under 20%. On the whole, one has to conclude that the aim to increase the number of female representatives in local politics has come to a complete halt in 1998.

Extract from the report of the VNC (Association of Dutch Municipalities)

The conference was jointly organised by the CEMR and the Bulgarian Association of Municipalities bringing together over 50 delegates from 14 countries in Western and Central Europe. The purpose of the conference was to exchange experiences, strategies and ideas for improving the participation of women in political life in the context of future enlargement of the European Union and its relationship with the wider Europe.

Delegates from Central & Eastern Europe learnt that participation rates in their local and regional authorities are generally higher than in the West; for example, female participation in Bulgaria is six-times greater than in neighbouring Greece. In contrast, participation in national parliaments is lower in Central and Eastern countries than in the West. This apparent contradiction is explained by the fact that whereas the former state socialist regimes of Central Europe actively encouraged women to be active in political life, traditional family structures survive in the provinces which tie women to the home. Thus, women are able and willing to be active in local politics, but are unable to travel to the capital city for meetings of the national parliament.

In the East therefore, the position of women in local politics is relatively better than in the West, if still somewhat below the target of parity. Policies to enable and encourage men to play a more active role in family life are needed (as in the West!) to enable women to stand as candidates, as experience shows a very high success rate for female candidates in many East European countries.

There are some exceptions, as political parties in some countries show a reluctance to select female candidates. In some of these countries gender quotas are being considered and the conference discussed the varying experience of quotas in Western Europe. Experience suggests that quotas work better as a temporary correction to an abnormal situation (rather than a permanent obligation which is itself sexist), and when they are established internally and

Contd. pg. 6
voluntarily by political parties as in Germany rather than by national legislation (which may conflict with national constitutions, as in Italy). Other suggestions included controls on the accumulation of multiple mandates in order to open up more opportunities (as in Belgium, with some success); training for potential candidates; reorganisation of political life to avoid conflict with family life (as in Scandinavia).

Birgitta Alqvist MEP stressed subsidiarity: with so many different traditions, constitutions, and structures it is impossible to find a prescription that suits all. However, she welcomed the organisation of seminars such as Sofia which enable elected members and candidates to share ideas and to learn from other countries.

The conference, which was the first international CEMIR event to be hosted by the Association of municipalities in the Republic of Bulgaria since its establishment in 1996, was also important in establishing an East-West dialogue at local level.

The acts from the Sofia seminar can be obtained from the CEMIR Secretariat General.

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**PROPORTION OF WOMEN IN ELECTED BODIES IN THE TEN COUNTRIES OF CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE APPLICANTS FOR EUROPEAN UNION MEMBERSHIP**
*(data in percentages)*

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Ministers&lt;sup&gt;(3)&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>National Assembly in 1997</th>
<th>Municipal Councils</th>
<th>Town Councils</th>
<th>Women presidents of municipal council&lt;sup&gt;(3)&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>Mayors of town councils&lt;sup&gt;(3)&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
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<td>(10.8)&lt;sup&gt;(1)&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
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<tr>
<td>(10.0)&lt;sup&gt;(1)&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
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<tr>
<td>Slovakia</td>
<td>22.0</td>
<td>14.7</td>
<td>10.0 to 30.0&lt;sup&gt;(2)&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
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<td>13.5</td>
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<td>12.0</td>
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1. The figures given for 1997, by the Interparliamentary Union and the Council of Europe respectively are contradictory.
2. The data has been combined for both types of bodies (municipal and town councils).
3. Sources: Council of Europe (1997) and data from various sources received in March 1998.
4. The data has been combined for both types of bodies (municipal and town councils).
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