

## EUROPEAN ELECTIONS BROCHURE

### “EUROPE FOR WOMEN, WOMEN FOR EUROPE”

#### 1. The European elections

##### An opportunity for women

**Between 10 and 13 June 1999, European citizens will elect their representatives to the European Parliament. This is an opportunity for women to have a direct say in the future development of the European Union. As voters or as future Members of the European Parliament itself, women can play a central role in achieving objectives in the area of equality between women and men and in facing up to the political challenges of the future.**

**The European Parliament is the only directly-elected institution of the European Union, and is one of the principal decision-making bodies.** Following the June elections, the Parliament should reflect the composition of the European population –in particular a balanced representation of women and men.

#### 2. Women in politics in the European Union

##### Women must be further involved

After the 1994 elections to the European Parliament, women accounted for only 146 of 567 Members of the European Parliament. With a few exceptions, there is a similar pattern at national level. At the parliamentary assemblies in the Member States of the European Union, the average level of women's representation is only 17.6% (1998).

<b>Year</b>	<b>Women's participation in the European Parliament (%)</b>
Elections of 1989	19%
Elections of 1994	25.7%
After the accession of three new Member States – 1998 (626 elected members)	26.7%

Because of this under-representation of women, the image of the “people's representative” is essentially male.

European democracy cannot be complete without the balanced participation of women and men in the decision-making process. The 1999 European elections can help women move towards this balance.

Women are **under-represented in decision-making in the political, social and economic arenas**, and are also subject to discrimination on the labour market. Despite a longstanding European Union commitment to equal opportunities between women and men, there are at present 25 million fewer women than men employed in the Union. Women do not have jobs with the same level of responsibility or decision-making power as men and are confined to only a few economic sectors. They earn lower salaries (women are paid 10 to 30% less than men for the same work), are frequently found in part-time or other “atypical” work and enjoy less social-welfare protection.

We face a significant **democratic and political challenge**. The European Parliament is at the centre of European democracy. Since the Treaty of Rome in 1957, the Parliament has gained increased power in political decision-making at European level. Since 1979, the Members of the European Parliament have been directly elected by citizens in the Member States for a five-year period. The Parliament, by virtue of its representative nature, is an essential means of promoting equality and social justice in the European Union.

### 3. **Europe for women:**

#### **Towards a new policy on equality between women and men.**

Women across Europe face discrimination every day. Fighting against such discrimination means **political involvement and a better representation of women**. This is why equality between women and men has been recognised as one of the European Union’s fundamental objectives. The European Union needs women’s perspective in order to build a better society. In meeting this challenge the Union has operated at many levels.

#### **Political commitment**

With the **Amsterdam Treaty**, equality between women and men has been recognised as one of the European Union’s fundamental objectives, and a great deal of work is going on at European level towards this goal. Quite apart from the moral issues involved, the European Union needs the skills and qualities of women in the labour market, as well as their opinions and ideas as we build a better society for all.

The need for more women in decision-making positions has been recognised at the highest level in the European Union. In its Recommendation of 1996 the Council of Ministers called for actions to achieve a balanced participation of women and men in decision-making. Two specific reports of the European Parliament have emphasised the importance of this objective.

#### **European legislation on equal opportunity**

There is broad-ranging European **legislation** on equal access and treatment of women and men in the labour market. Several Council Directives and Recommendations guarantee and promote equality in employment and occupation. The European Court of Justice has reinforced this legislation.

#### **Creation of specific structures**

The European Institutions have set up structures that are specifically responsible for equality issues. In the European Parliament, **the Women’s Rights Committee** has been very active in supporting legislation and programmes aimed at promoting equality and fighting discrimination. This Committee has played a key political role within the Parliament. During the present legislature, the Women’s Rights Committee has put forward reports on many important subjects, such as trafficking in women, violence against women, incorporating equal opportunities for

women and men into all Community policies, the state of women's health, and the impact on women of unemployment. The Committee maintains an ongoing dialogue with representatives of national Parliaments.

The European Commission also has specific structures for promoting gender equality. In 1995 the **Group of Commissioners on Equal Opportunities** was created as an expression of political commitment at the highest level. The group maintains regular contacts with the European Parliament, the Advisory Committee on Equal Opportunities and the European Women's Lobby. Directorate General V (Employment and Social Affairs), the **Equal Opportunities Unit** is responsible for initiating and monitoring legislation on equality, for the implementation of the Action Programmes for Equal Opportunities and for integrating the gender dimension in all community policies. Within Directorate-General X (Information and Communication), the **Women's Information Section** disseminates information about Community policies and activities to women and promotes debate with women in Europe on these policies. An **Advisory Committee on Equal Opportunities**, bringing together representatives of national bodies working for equality and the social partners, follows and advises on the development of European policy on equality between men and women.

### **Support through funding**

The European Union's commitment to equality is further reflected in financing aimed at promoting equality of opportunities. The most important financial tool is the European Social Fund which finances a large number of specific projects on women's vocational training in particular under **the NOW Community Initiative**. The proposal for the new Structural Funds from the year 2000 has mainstreamed the commitment to remove inequality and the promotion of equal opportunities for women and men. A specific political tool is the Action Programme on Equal opportunities which supports pilot projects, exchange of experience, conferences and events. Directorate-General X also regularly publishes calls for proposals for projects concerning provision of **information to women** on various subjects of European interest. The recently-launched **Daphne programme** brings together civil society organisations and is aimed at fighting violence against women and children.

### **Mainstreaming gender equality**

All European Union Institutions aim to ensure that the issue of **gender equality is taken into consideration across all relevant policy areas**. Equality of opportunity is a fundamental aspect of the European employment strategy, put in place at the Luxembourg Jobs Summit in November 1997. The 1999 Employment Guidelines spell out how Member States will fight the gender gap in employment and improve policies geared to reconciling work and family life. Significant progress has also been made in promoting equality in development co-operation, in youth, education and training policies, and in the research area. In the same way, the European Parliament has included gender equality in its description of a large number of 1999 budget lines.

**The European Union, through its policies and programmes, has provided an impetus.**

**Women themselves must also take up the challenge.**

**Women in the European Parliament will help to bring about a change in political culture, creating a fairer Union that is closer to the concerns of its citizens, both male and female.**

#### 4. Women for Europe

##### **Towards a truly democratic society**

Equality between women and men is a question of basic human rights, social justice and democratic representation. It cannot be fully realised without equal participation for all, women and men, in every area of activity, including the political process. One way to do this is **through the vote**, the primary expression of the will of the people. It is therefore vital for women to vote in the European elections of 1999 to express their views on Europe.

**The European Union is built on the basis of democratic representation of its citizens**, with a view to social progress and justice. Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have a key role to play in the civil dialogue between the European institutions and the citizens of the Union.

One such organisation is the European Women's Lobby (EWL). Founded in 1990, the EWL represents more than 2,700 member organisations from right across the European Union. **The European Women's Lobby, supported by the European Community, serves as the contact point between women's organisations from throughout Europe and the Union Institutions that are concerned with equality of opportunity.** Its objective is to represent women's perspectives at European level and to inform and raise the awareness of women in the Member States regarding European issues.

**Now is the time to make your voice heard. Women must increase their involvement in the European debate. The European elections of June 1999 are your opportunity. Take it - vote for gender balance.**

**Addresses:**

At European level	In the Member States
<p>Equal Opportunities Unit European Commission Directorate-General V – Employment and Social Affairs 200, rue de la Loi B - 1049 Brussels Fax: 32 2 296 35 62 Internet :<a href="http://europa.eu.int/comm/dg05/eq_u_opp/index_en.htm">http://europa.eu.int/comm/dg05/eq_u_opp/index_en.htm</a></p> <p>Women’s Information Sector European Commission Directorate-General X – Information 200, rue de la Loi B - 1049 Brussels Fax: 32 2 299 38 91 Internet : <a href="mailto:infodemmes@dg10.cec.be">infodemmes@dg10.cec.be</a></p> <p>European Parliament Women’s Rights Committee Kirschberg L - 2929 Luxembourg Fax: 352 4300 27708 (Luxembourg), 32 2 284 4945 (Brussels) 388 179069 (Strasbourg) Internet: <a href="mailto:DG2-femm@europarl.int">DG2-femm@europarl.int</a></p> <p>European Women’s Lobby 18, rue Hydraulique B - 1210 Brussels Fax: 32 2 219 84 51 Internet: <a href="mailto:ewl@womenlobby.org">ewl@womenlobby.org</a> <a href="http://www.womenlobby.org">http://www.womenlobby.org</a></p>	<p><b><u>UNITED KINGDOM</u></b></p> <p><u>European Commission Representations</u> Jean Monnet House, 8, Storey’s Gate UK - LONDON SW1P 3AT Tel: 441 71 973 1992 Fax: 441 71 973 1900</p> <p>9/15 Bedford Street (Windsor House) UK - BELFAST BT2 7EG Tel: 441 232 240708 Fax: 441 232 248241</p> <p>4, Cathedral Road UK - CARDIFF CF1 9SG Tel: 441 222 371631 Fax: 441 222 395489</p> <p>9 Alva Street UK - Edinburgh EH2 4PH Tel: 441 31 225 20 58 Fax: 441 31 226 41 05</p> <p><u>Representations of the European Parliament</u> 2, Queen Anne’s Gate UK - LONDON SW1H 9AA Tel: 441 71 227 4300 Fax: 441 71 227 4302</p> <p>9 Alva Street UK - Edinburgh EH2 4PH Tel: 441 31 225 20 58 Fax: 441 31 226 41 05</p> <p><u>United Kingdom Joint Committee for the EWL</u> c/o Northern Ireland Women’s European Platform 52 Elmwood Avenue NI – BELFAST BT9 6AZ</p> <p><u>Members of the Advisory Committee</u> Sex and Race Equality Div., Dept of Education &amp; Employment, 4F Caxton House, 6-10 Tothill Street UK - LONDON SW1H 9NF Tel: 441 71 273 5541 Fax: 441 71 273 4906</p> <p>Equal Opportunities Commission, Overseas House, Quay Street UK - MANCHESTER M3 3HN Tel: 441 61 833 9244 Fax: 441 61 835 1657</p> <p>Equal Opportunities Commission for Northern Ireland Chamber of Commerce House, 22 Great Victoria Street NI – BELFAST BT2 7BA Tel: 441 232 242 752 Fax: 441 232 331 047</p> <p><b><u>IRELAND</u></b></p> <p><u>European Commission Representation</u> Dawson Street, 18 IRL - DUBLIN 2 Tel: 353 1 662 5113 Fax: 353 1 662 5118</p> <p><u>Representation of the European Parliament</u> European Union House, 43, Molesworth Street IRL - DUBLIN 2 Tel: 353 1 605 7900 Fax: 353 1 605 7999</p> <p><u>National Women’s Council of Ireland</u> 16/20 Cumberland St. IRL - DUBLIN 2 Tel: 353 1 661 5268 Fax: 353 1 676 0860</p> <p><u>Member of the Advisory Committee</u> Employment Equality Agency 36, Upper Mount Street IRL - DUBLIN 2 Tel: 353 1 662 45 77 Fax: 353 1 662 51 39</p>

**A campaign kit containing a CD-ROM with campaign material (logo, slogan, print ads, posters, TV spot etc) and guidelines for their production is available in all Community languages. Please contact the member of the Advisory Committee in your country or directly the European Commission (Equal Opportunities Unit).**

This brochure has been prepared by the European Commission—DG V, in the framework of the Medium-Term Community Action Programme on Equal Opportunities (1996-2000), in co-operation with the Women's Rights Committee of the European Parliament.