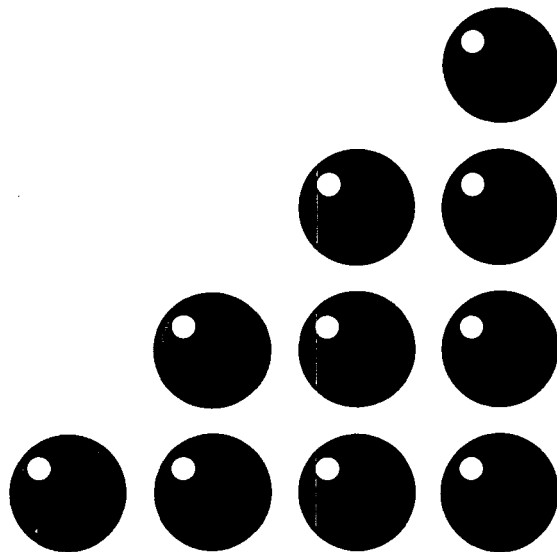


# WOMEN IN THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY

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# **Women in the European Community**

**Manuscript completed in October 1983**

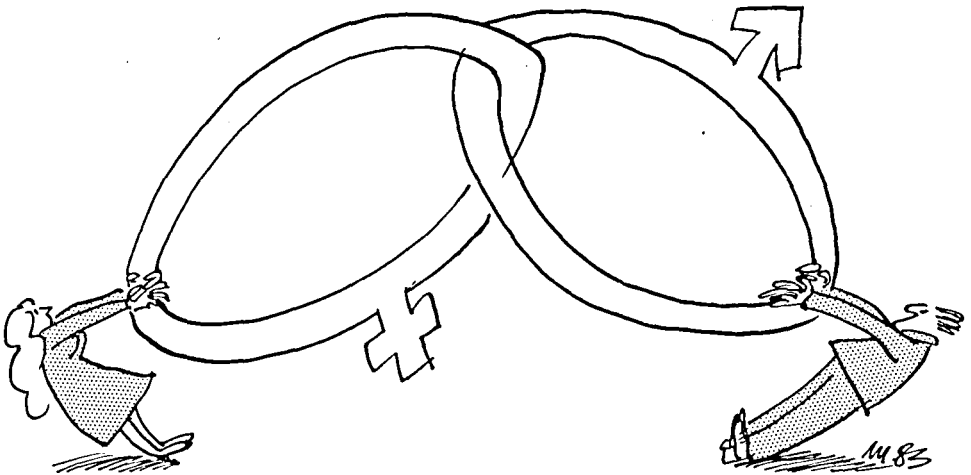
# Contents

<b>I. Introduction</b> .....	5
Women and society: Opinions and attitudes .....	5
<b>II. Women, fully-fledged citizens of Europe?</b> .....	9
1. Women and population .....	9
2. Women and family .....	10
3. Women and training .....	12
4. Women and work .....	13
5. Women in social and political life .....	15
<b>III. A European policy for women</b> .....	19
1. Towards equality: objectives and limits .....	19
2. The main lines of Community action .....	21
— three Directives to promote equality .....	21
— women in Community policies .....	26
— the new action programme (1982-85) .....	28
<i>Useful addresses</i> .....	33
<i>Notes and bibliographical references</i> .....	34

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# I. Introduction

## *Women and Society: Opinions and attitudes*



The question of women's role in society has always occupied an important place everywhere in social, political, cultural and religious debate. Although it is a complex problem with very many facets, discussion on the role of women in society tends to revolve around two poles: should women concentrate exclusively or mainly on looking after the home and promoting the interest of the family or should they be actively involved in political, economic, cultural, social and working life?

The debate on the identity of women falls between these two extremes: should women live first and foremost for and through others, or live more for themselves?

In the space of fifty years, the law has recognized women's equality with regard to political rights and their capacity in legal matters, work and training; over the same period, changes in customs and morality and medical progress have fundamentally affected questions of sexuality and reproduction while technical progress has considerably lightened the burden of household chores.

All these changes allow women to combine, or choose more easily between, their role, which was previously exclusively that of looking after the home, and their aspiration to participate actively in all aspects of civic life.

The debate does not, however, end there since attitudes have shifted in various ways along with profound changes in society. For while the women's movement is encouraged and influenced by changes in society and custom, it is affected by the economic crisis which has brought calls for women to remain in the home where they are not a 'threat to jobs'.

Although the extent of the problem varies between countries and depending on differing social situations and economic needs, and although history, time-honoured practice and custom give rise to different forms of behaviour, there is now an evident desire for change throughout Europe.

Some 43 million European women <sup>1</sup> now go out to work. The proportion of single women and young women working is approaching more and more that of men in nearly all the Member States and more and more married women are working (nearly 50% in the United Kingdom and Denmark, 40% in France, one-third in the Federal Republic of Germany and in Belgium).

Nevertheless, the recognition of women's right to equal treatment with regard to work continues in practice to meet with reservations that are all the more marked in the present prolonged economic crisis.

Is it therefore attempting the impossible to seek to combine two apparently contradictory aspirations?

Sociological studies conducted in the United States and in Europe indicate that a woman's aspiration to fulfil herself professionally and in politics, for example, goes hand in hand with a powerful desire to love, be loved, make a success of her life with her partner and of bringing up their children.

The studies also show that women at home wish to make the most of their free time since families are smaller and housework less exacting: a woman of 40 who no longer has children to bring up, still has, according to the statistical average, 35 years to live.

A survey conducted in the Community <sup>2</sup> reveals that nearly half of all women at home wish they had a job: the percentage is higher in France (58%) and in Italy (53%), and lowest in Luxembourg (25%). The percentage rises with increased age.

Are women happier than before?

This is a difficult question because there is no way of measuring happiness and nor is there any way of imposing it to order.

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<sup>1</sup> Footnotes and other references are given at the end of the brochure.





*Sharing family responsibilities.* (Photo Christa Petri, Nurnberg)

The same survey indicates that the degree of satisfaction or dissatisfaction among women working and women at home is quite similar in all the Member States, with two exceptions. Irish women at home are more content than Irish women working whereas Italian women at home are more dissatisfied than Italian women working.

Women at home are therefore changing in just the same way as those who work. Neither group bears more than a passing resemblance to their grandmothers or even to their mothers. They all demand a better quality of life both at home and at work and the satisfaction of their aspirations.

A change is also apparent in men, or in some at least.

In the past, men exercised power, especially at work and in their social life, and respected their wives' authority in the home. Nowadays, among young people in particular, the 'new fathers' take an active interest in the running of the home.

No doubt, this introduction highlights only a few aspects of a vast problem with many facets which can be seen in different lights depending on the point of view. Its objective is to provide an introduction to the debate, to reveal its complexities and to involve all those it affects: i.e. women in the first place but also men. For there will be no real progress in society without a general consensus.

## II. Women, fully-fledged citizens of Europe?

### 1. *Women and population*

Throughout the Community (with the exception of Ireland), women are in the majority, although more boys than girls are born.

There is an area in Europe, which covers the entire Federal Republic of Germany and the south of Belgium and spreads into central west France, the south and north-west of England, Wales and Scotland, in which women are in the majority (more than 106 women for every 100 men).

The same phenomenon can be seen in the Aquitaine, Languedoc-Roussillon, Liguria, Friuli — Venezia Giulia and Copenhagen areas.<sup>3</sup>



Women, as a % of the total population <sup>4</sup>

	1980	1981	Forecast for 1990
FR of Germany	52.2	52.2	51.9
Belgium	51.1	51.2	51.0
Denmark	50.6	50.7	50.8
France	51.0	51.0	51.0
Greece	50.9	50.5	50.5
Ireland	49.8	49.8	49.9
Italy	51.1	51.2	51.2
Luxembourg	51.6	51.2	50.4
Netherlands	50.4	50.4	50.4
United Kingdom	51.3	51.3	51.1

The higher number of women can be explained by their greater longevity. In Belgium, for example, where the situation can be compared with other countries, women account for 60% of the population aged over 65 years and 70% of those aged over 80 years.

More than two-thirds of the very elderly are women, frequently single women.

The phenomenon has been studied a great deal and largely remains unexplained. Admittedly, men more than women are victims of work stress and tobacco and alcohol abuse; more than women too, men suffer the consequences of war.

Women therefore make up the majority, but a majority which exerts its authority only in private life and is almost totally absent from decision-making and political, economic and social life.

## 2. *Women and family*

In 1981, the Community recorded a female population of 139.4 million. According to the surveys by the Statistical Office of the European Communities (Eurostat), the working population was put at 37.6 million women in 1981 (40.6 million if the 3 million registered as unemployed are included). In these statistics, women at home accounted for 38.6 million and girls under 14 years were estimated at 25 million.

The value of the work of women in the home should be underlined; some studies even consider that work in the home is quantitatively more significant than an outside occupation.<sup>5</sup>

Apart from their economic value, activities in the home are particularly important for the upbringing of children.

To what extent have there been changes in the relationship between a woman and her family?

The attitude of Europeans to marriage continues to be favourable; the marriage rate <sup>6</sup> in 1980 was quite close in all the Member States: 6.4 for every 1 000 inhabitants of the Community. The rates are below average in the Federal Republic of Germany (5.9), France (6.3), Italy (5.7), Luxembourg (5.9) and Denmark (5.2).

The trend since 1960, however, shows a fall in the marriage rate throughout the 10 Member States, except for Ireland and Greece. The fall is very noticeable in Germany and Denmark.

Number of marriages per 1 000 inhabitants <sup>7</sup>

	B	DK	D	GR	F	IRL	I	L	NL	UK	EUR 10
1960	7.2	7.8	9.4	7.0	7.0	5.5	7.6	7.1	7.8	7.5	7.3
1970	7.6	7.4	7.3	7.7	7.8	7.5	7.3	6.3	9.5	8.5	7.6
1980	6.7	5.2	5.9	8.4	6.3	6.4	5.7	5.9	6.4	7.5	6.4

At the same time, there has been a sharp fall in the birth rate.

Birth rate (births per 1 000 inhabitants) — The 10 Member States <sup>8</sup>

Year	B	DK	D	GR	F	IRL	I	L	NL	UK
1960	17	16.6	17.4	18.9	17.9	21.6	17.9	15.9	20.8	17.5
1970	14.8	14.4	13.4	16.5	16.8	21.9	16.5	13	18.3	16.3
1980	12.7	11.2	10.1	12.6	14.9	21.9	11.3		12.8	13.5

Divorces have practically doubled since 1970 throughout the Member States, save for Denmark where the rate was already high; the figures have tripled in France, the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg and have increased fivefold in the United Kingdom. In Ireland, divorce does not exist.

Divorce rate (for every 1 000 inhabitants)

	B	DK	D	GR	F	IRL	I	L	NL	UK
1960	0.5	1.5	0.9	0.3	0.6	—	—	0.5	0.5	0.5
1980	1.5	2.7 (1979)	1.6	0.5	1.7	—	0.2	1.6	1.8	2.8

In a survey conducted by the European Community <sup>9</sup> parents mentioned the problems of families with regard to money, accommodation, lack of open space and play facilities for children, discrepancy between working hours and school hours and the problems of looking after small children.

The survey shows in this respect a discrepancy between the aspirations of the couple and the clear lack of facilities and services of a sufficient standard for looking after children under the age of three.

Europeans continue to attach a great deal of importance to the family, despite the increase in the number of divorces and the quest by certain young people for new forms of life.

### 3. Women and training

Girls are remaining longer in full-time education than ten years ago.<sup>10</sup>

During the 1980/81 school year, 36% of young men aged 18 years and the same percentage of young girls were pursuing full-time education while ten years ago the percentages were 28% for young men and 23% for young women.

It is only after the age of 19 and at the higher education stage that women are in the minority compared with men; they are nevertheless more numerous than in the past.

Community statistics do not distinguish between boys and girls in the choice of educational options. However, a number of studies<sup>11</sup> show that the options chosen by girls at school are still determined by tradition and conventional wisdom.

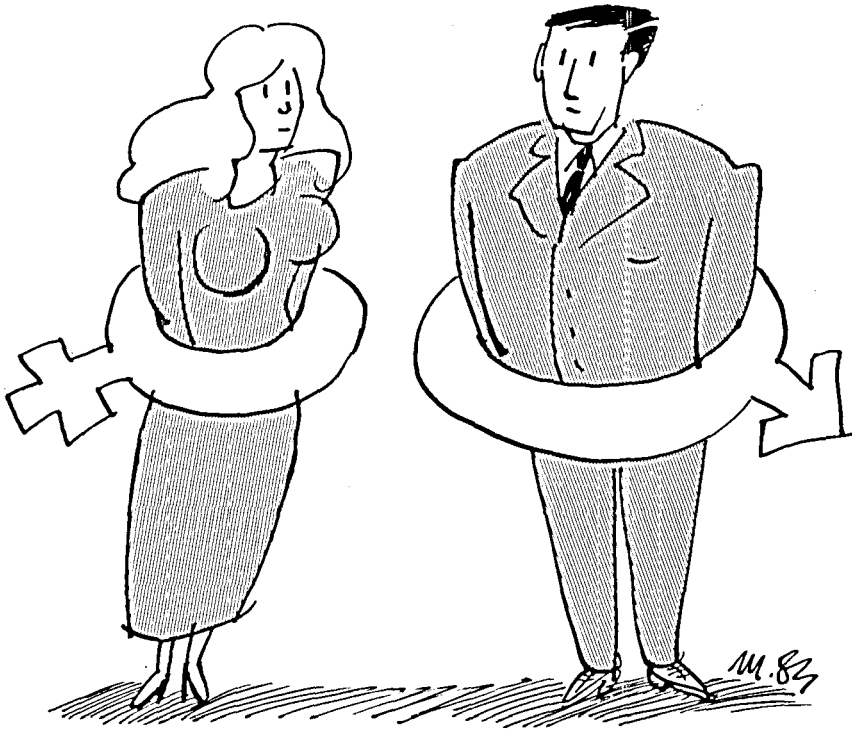
#### Number of pupils in some typical branches of the economy

France 1980. Schools under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education  
(Leading to qualifications at skilled, manual or non-manual level)<sup>12</sup>

	State schools		Private schools	
	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys
Engineering trades	406	42 668	19	6 293
Electrical trades	185	21 810	6	4 351
Clothing and textile trades	10 679	302	2 754	52
Woodworking	22	8 067	9	1 762
Secretarial	22 605	150	13 599	106
Arts and crafts	64	180	125	145
Horticulture	37	241	11	11

#### Germany 1978. Number of apprentices in training<sup>13</sup>

	Girls	Boys
Electrical trades	760	112 232
Engineering and related trades	1 050	252 873
Mechanical trades (excluding craftsmen)	691	134 246
Textiles	21 145	850
Carpenters	696	40 973
Technicians and auxiliary office staff	115 973	37 103
Horticulturists	10 311	11 242



Some disciplines such as the sciences in general, mechanical and electrical engineering and electronics, continue to be considered more suitable for boys, and others, such as secretarial skills, teaching, the paramedical professions, beauty care, hairdressing and domestic skills, more suitable for girls.

Girls are therefore concentrated in a small number of branches of training while boys are spread over a much wider range of training courses, relating to all aspects of the labour market.

In some Member States, efforts have been made via the media to diversify educational options for girls; attention should be paid to the now very clear aspirations of girls to pursue studies at an increasingly higher level and, at the same time, to the difficulty of modifying their training options: the consequences of the situation can be seen in the employment figures.

#### 4. *Women and work*

Some 43 million women in the European Community go out to work.

The proportion of women in the working population continues to increase: 34.4% in 1970, 35.6% in 1974, 36.8% in 1977, 37.7% in 1980.<sup>14</sup>

We can see that, despite the present economic situation, this tendency is growing.

The increase in the post-war years is mainly due to the fact that more and more married women are working: nearly half of all married women are working in Denmark and the United Kingdom, 40% in France, a third in the Federal Republic of Germany, 30% in Belgium, 23% in Italy, 21% in Luxembourg; it is in the Netherlands (17.6%) and in Ireland (13.6%) that we see the smallest numbers of married women working and the least acceptance of this phenomenon by the general public. The rate of young women working is very high: between 65 and 75% of young women work or are seeking employment in all the Member States of the Community.

However, women are concentrated in a few sectors of the economy and occupations which are considered specially suited to them: secretarial work, teaching, the service industry, paramedical professions, beauty care and unskilled jobs in industry.

This high concentration in sectors very vulnerable to the economic crisis, together with inadequate qualifications, is the reason that a higher proportion of women than men are victims of unemployment: the proportion of women in overall unemployment increased from 27.9% in 1970 to 45% in 1980 and was still 42.2% in 1981.<sup>12</sup> Long-term unemployment affects women more seriously than men.

Even where they have equivalent qualifications, young women encounter more difficulties than young men on entering working life.<sup>15</sup>

Percentage of women among all unemployed persons under 25 years <sup>16</sup>

	1980	1981	1982
FR of Germany	60.5	54.2	45.9
Belgium	61.6	58.5	58.5
Denmark	55.5	53.2	53.5
France	63	58.6	57.1
Greece	—	—	—
Ireland	33.6	33.8	36.2
Italy	54.3	55.7	53.5
Luxembourg	64.8	55.9	56
Netherlands	49.9	45.9	44.5
United Kingdom	42.3	40.0	39.5
Ten Member States	53.5	51.2	49.1

The recent reductions in the proportion of women of all ages in the overall unemployment figures are relative and result mainly from the recent deterioration in the male unemployment figures. In some countries, regulations could also play some role in lowering unemployment among married women.

Lastly, women's pay continues to be lower than that of men. These differences are only partially explained by differences in qualifications or position in society: a number of factors relating to subjective assessment, which it would take too long to analyse here, result in discrimination that is all the more difficult to detect since it is indirect and not immediately apparent.<sup>17</sup>



However, a European survey conducted in 1980 at the request of the European Parliament <sup>18</sup> shows that the large majority of women are highly involved in their work and that this is the case even in the less educated groups and on the lower levels of the salary scale: we have seen women violently resist moves to close the firms employing them, even where their work was carried out under the most difficult conditions.

### 5. Women in social and political life

Women are scarcely represented on any of the bodies involved in political and social life, from the local authorities to the European institutions, including governments and national parliaments and the advisory or decision-making bodies active in economic and social life.

This under-representation is apparent in all the Member States, although to varying degrees.

It is generally recognized <sup>19</sup> that the proportion of women active within the local authorities, while much lower than their proportion of the general population, is higher than at national level.

During the recent French municipal elections in towns of more than 3 500 inhabitants, the majority party had some 21.95% women among its elected representatives, and the opposition 21.29%.

In the national parliaments, female representation is still very low (7.4% for all the Member States of the Community). The percentage of women is highest in the Danish Parliament (23.4%) and lowest in the House of Commons (United Kingdom) where they account for only 3%.<sup>20</sup>

National parliaments (lower House) <sup>21</sup>

	Number of Seats	Number of women Members of Parliament	Percentage of total
Federal Republic of Germany	518	41	7.9
Belgium	212	16	7.5
Denmark	179	42	23.4
France	491	21	4.3
Greece	—	—	—
Ireland	148	6	4
Italy	630	51	8.1
Luxembourg	59	8	13.5
Netherlands	150	22	14.6
United Kingdom	635	19	3
Total	3 022	226	7.4

In the 1979 direct elections, women considerably improved their position in the European Parliament, as compared with the seats they hold in the national parliaments and as compared with previous years when the Members of the European Parliament were appointed by national parliaments.

**Trend in number of members elected to the European Parliament <sup>22</sup>**  
(number of members)

Representation by country	1952	1973**	1979	% in 1979
Federal Republic of Germany	— (18)	2 (36)	12 (81)	14.8
Belgium	— (10)	— (14)	2 (24)	8.3
Denmark	—	1 (10)	5 (16)	31.2
France	— (18)	— (36)	18 (81)	22.2
Greece	—	—	—	—
Ireland	—	— (10)	2 (15)	13.3
Italy	— (18)	2 (36)	11 (81)	13.6
Luxembourg	— (4)	2 (6)	2 (6)	33.3
Netherlands	1 (10)	— (14)	6 (25)	24
United Kingdom	—	1 (21) ***	11 (81)	13.6

\*\* First year of the European Parliament representing nine Member States.

\*\*\* Fifteen Labour (MEPs absent).

The 69 seats obtained in 1979 increased to 70 out of 434 in 1983, taking into account the entry of Greece and the changes which had taken place in the meantime; the percentage of women is now 16.1%.

There are very few women at the highest levels of national and international administrations, including the administration of the European Community. There is not a single woman Member of the Commission of the European Communities and women are very rare in the Council of Ministers.

Few studies have been conducted on the representation of women on the growing numbers of advisory or decision-making bodies on social matters in every country (relating to working conditions, social security and wages policy); however, we are not concerned here with the numerous social advisory bodies in the broadest sense (charitable, educational, family matters) in which women play a role.

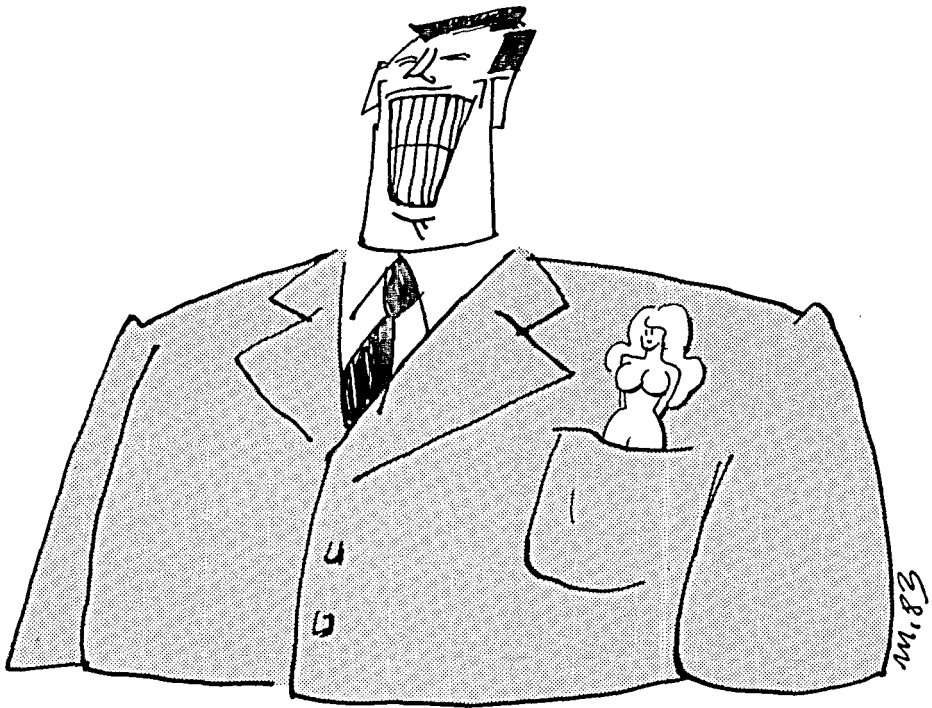
It appears from some available data <sup>23</sup> that women, who account for more than one third of the workforce in all the Member States, are even less represented on employers' and employees' representative social bodies than on corresponding political bodies.

On the other hand, in several countries women are making a remarkable breakthrough in the elected bodies at works level (works councils and health and safety committees).

Women are, therefore, taking their place at grassroots level on authorities and councils, but they are noticeably absent from the big decision-making centres at the highest level.

What are the reasons for this?

Could it be that women are less interested in political and social life than men or is it that those who at present hold power oppose greater representation of women?<sup>24</sup>



In fact, the phenomenon is more complex than these questions suppose.<sup>25</sup>

What appears certain is that women do wish to be involved. At local level and in companies in which they feel involved and accepted, they play an active role.

At other levels, some of them campaign for a level of participation commensurate with their numbers.

There are innumerable women's committees, commissions and committees on equal opportunity, emancipation and the status of women: they exist in every country at all levels even within international organizations and also within trade union and employers' organizations.<sup>26</sup>

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### III. A European policy for women

#### 1. *Towards equality: objectives and limits*

One of the Community's objectives is to improve the living and working conditions of Europeans, and, consequently, at the same time, of European women.

The Community swiftly identified the main problem facing European women, that of equality: equality with men at work and equal opportunities in society.

Article 119 of the EEC Treaty is the only one which makes specific mention of women; it stipulates that men and women should receive equal pay. The principle is of great importance when we consider that before the Second World War it was generally accepted that women should be paid approximately 60% to 70% of a man's wage for equal work.

Article 119 of the EEC Treaty had been devised in the first place to avoid distorting competition between employers using male or female labour. Soon, this social aspect of Article 119 — included in the social policy chapter of the EEC Treaty — began to gain ground over economic considerations. The Community realized that, to achieve equality for men and women, something more than mechanisms for fixing pay was needed. Community legislation was therefore introduced in the 1970s on vocational training, employment, working conditions and social security.<sup>27</sup>

Whilst it is true that the legislation on equality has improved matters, the situation of women remains precarious.

Legal action alone quickly proved insufficient. Concrete measures also needed to be taken to influence the various groups in a position to bring about change, including women themselves.

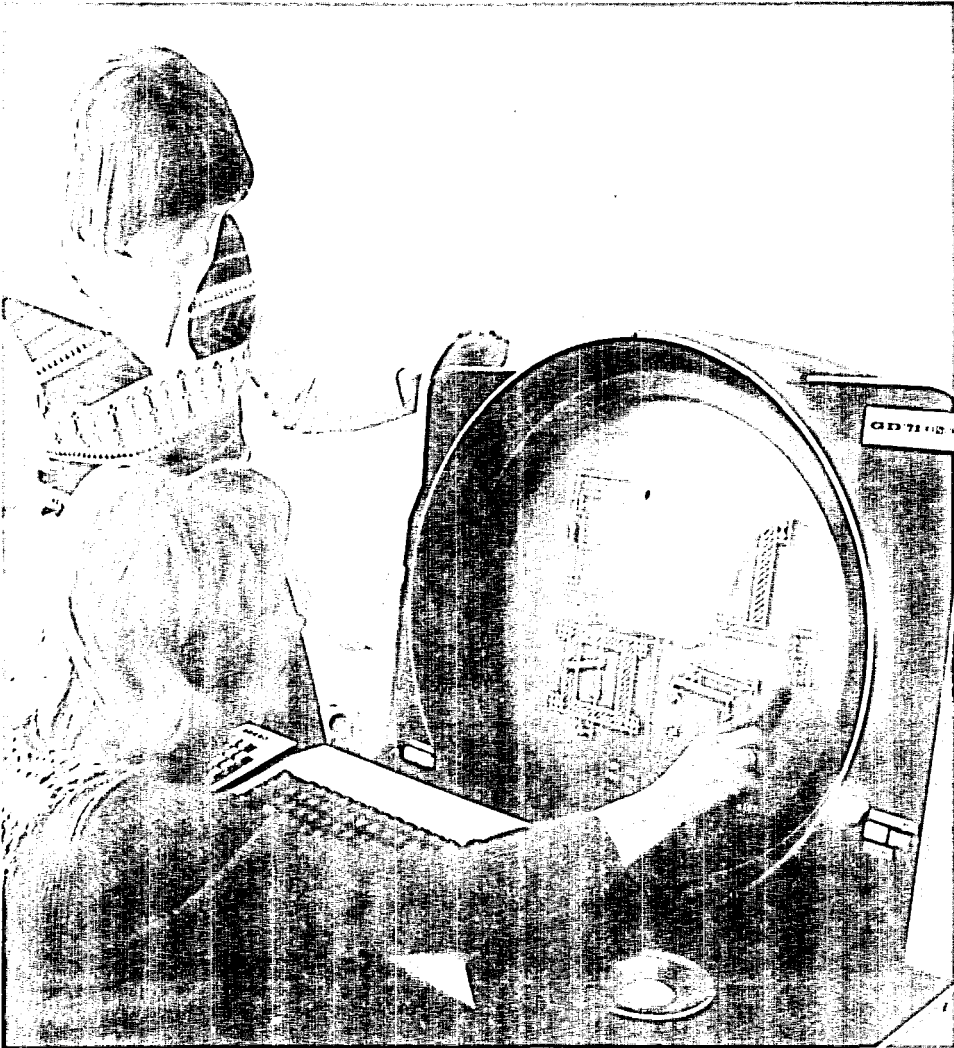
In this context, the European Social Fund granted aids for the training of women in non-traditional occupations, i. e. those mainly held by men.

New measures are envisaged for the 1980s. They should remedy discrimination in practice by means of positive action, on the lines of what has been done in the United States and the Scandinavian countries. In this context, the motivating role of the public services is a determining factor.

The European Community's action has limitations which are laid down by the Treaty of Rome (EEC Treaty). In important sectors, the Community is unable to take action. This is

the case in civil law, which determines the status of women as regards parenthood, family relationships, marriage, assets, inheritance, nationality as a married woman and in some areas relating to health.

It is also clear that the achievement of the Community's objectives depends, in the Member States, on ideological and economic factors which determine the actions of governments and their administrations.



*Working at visual display units demands attention and concentration. (photo Belga)*

To reinforce this action, the European Commission has created two departments: the 'Bureau for questions concerning employment and equal treatment for women' and the 'Information Unit for women's organizations and publications'.

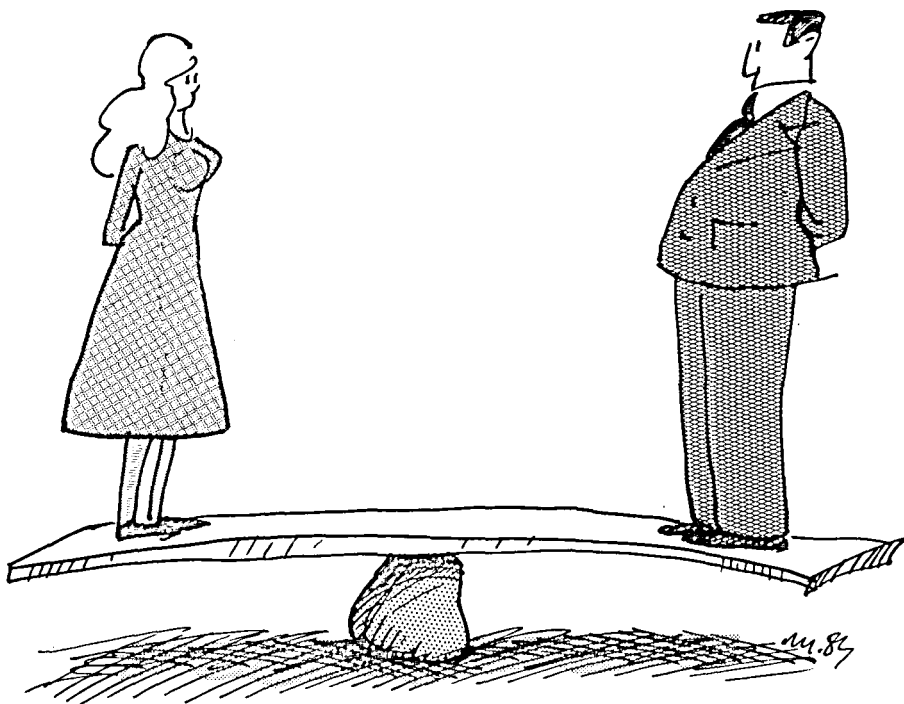
## 2. *The main lines of Community action*

### Three Directives to promote equality

The Community has so far issued three Directives to implement the principle of equal treatment for men and women in working life.

A Community Directive is a legally binding instrument which lays down the objectives which the Member States are to implement, leaving it up to them to choose the means of so doing.

The first (10 February 1975) concerns equal pay for men and women,<sup>28</sup> the second (9 February 1976) concerns equal treatment as regards access to employment, vocational training and working conditions<sup>29</sup> and the third (19 December 1978) concerns the progressive implementation of the principle of equal treatment in matters of social security.<sup>30</sup>



### *Numerous infringements*

The Commission has on several occasions brought Member States before the Court of Justice for not correctly implementing the equal treatment Directives: they are therefore to be complied with and are taken seriously.

Men and women workers with a grievance do not have direct access to the Court of Justice. A woman who wishes to have her rights upheld must first apply to the competent court in her country.

It will rule on the matter or refer the case to the Court of Justice.

One famous example was the Defrenne case, which concerned a Sabena air hostess and which was referred to the European Court of Justice by the Brussels Labour Tribunal.

The European Court of Justice ruled that Miss Defrenne should benefit from the same working conditions and same pay as her male colleague. It considered that even in the absence of national legislation, Community legislation (Article 119 of the Treaty of Rome) was applicable.

National procedures are frequently cumbersome and there are few avenues of appeal, with the exception of the United Kingdom, where the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) has been instructed to provide aid and advice for male and female workers, together with legal assistance.

In practice, persons and organizations (women's or trade union, for example) with a grievance may send their complaints by letter to the European Commission which examines the case and, where necessary, begins the infringement procedure against those in breach of the Directive.

The equal treatment envisaged by the three Directives works in both directions, and therefore also in favour of men.

In the United Kingdom, for example, one third of the appeals are brought by men. For its part, the Commission recorded the complaint of a British male who wished to train as a midwife and that of a Frenchman who had been refused entry to a school for beauticians.

### *The present position on equal pay*

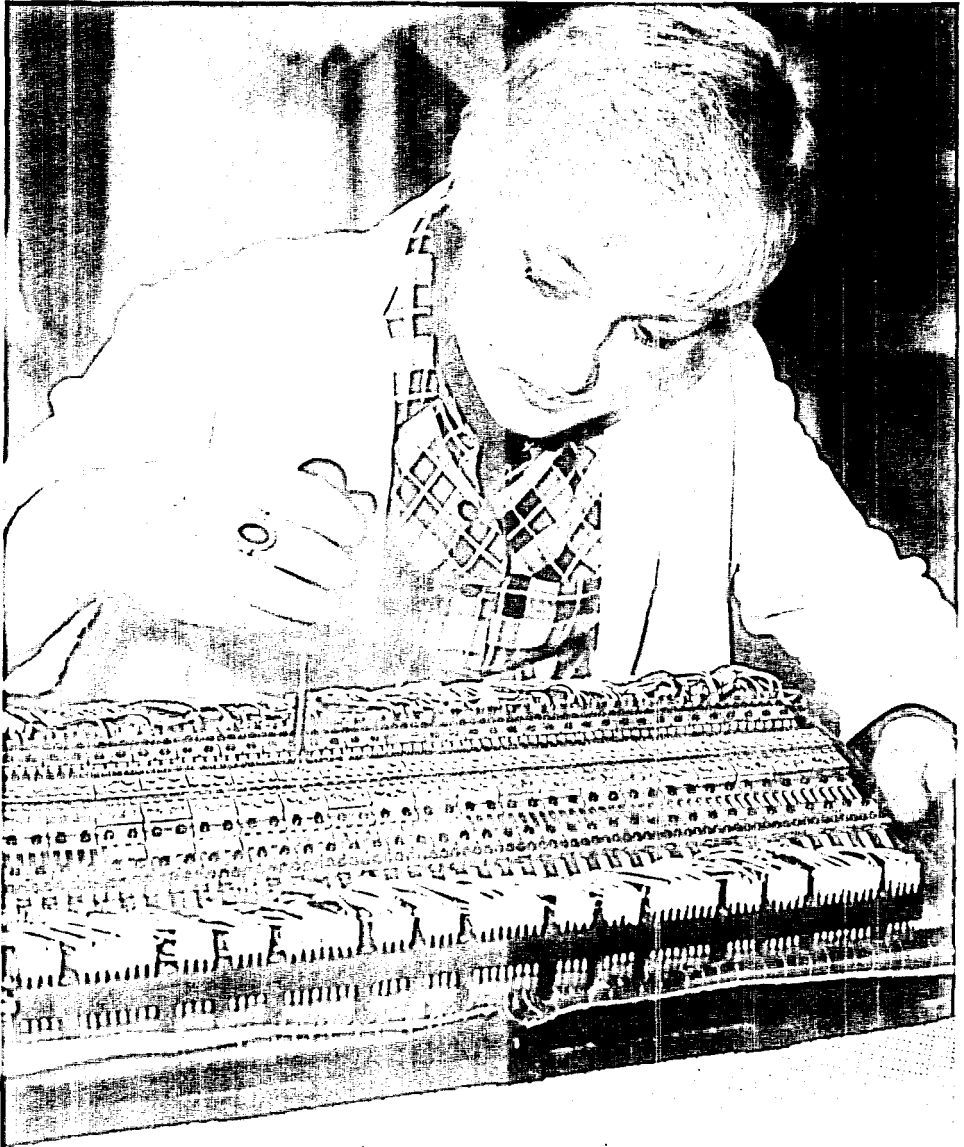
Under Article 119 of the Treaty of Rome, equal pay should have been achieved by the end of 1961. However the situation has been very slow to improve.

In 1966, at the Fabrique Nationale de Herstal (Belgium) 3 000 women downed tools to press for equal pay. This is only one of many examples.

In all the Member States there were clear difficulties in implementing equal pay. The 1975 Community Directive was issued at just the right time to identify important factors which had



until then been disputed since incidences of discrimination are not always obvious. No one says 'John will be paid FF 20 000 and Janet FF 19 000 for the same job' but discrimination is concealed either by describing the work Janet does differently or by granting John bonuses for which Janet is *a priori* ineligible, or again by sending Janet and John to different workshops so that they are unable to compare their duties and pay.



Women are particularly suited to precision work. They are frequently more dexterous than men.  
(Photo Belga)

According to the Community Directive, equal pay should be the rule, even where male and female workers are not doing the same job but work of 'equal value'.

Occupational categories should be drawn up on an equal basis. They should therefore not attach greater value to more masculine qualities such as physical strength and underestimate more feminine qualities such as dexterity and concentration, or disregard the consequences of work done by women, such as nervous tension, for example, in the electronic assembly industry, which employs predominantly women.

Some problems remain: What is work of equal value? How can it be assessed? How can we detect discrimination in a system of occupational classification which tends to put the occupations exercised by women to the bottom of the scale? These problems are being solved gradually by means of negotiation and legal decisions but there is still a long way to go.

Nevertheless, some progress has been made.

In the Federal Republic of Germany, the Federal Labour Court declared illegal a bonus granted to men because they 'might' be called upon to work at night, without this necessarily being so, and considered that the ban on nightwork for women should not be used to counteract the principle of equal pay.

In France, a textile firm granted men employed in knitting a hard work bonus which was refused to the women employed to iron garments on the grounds that the men's work was more essential than that of the women. The Court of Appeal declared the bonus illegal. It considered that the work of the women was of equal value to that of the men.

The European Commission has instituted infringement procedures against Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Luxembourg, France, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom for taking measures which do not comply with Article 119 of the EEC Treaty.

### *Equal treatment as regards employment, vocational training and working conditions*

The second Directive (1976) guarantees equal access to all jobs in the public and private sectors, even those traditionally occupied by men or by women, as in the case of the occupations of customs officer and midwife, for example.

From now on, all vocational training must be open to pupils of both sexes, in particular in the technical and vocational schools where certain training courses are traditionally followed by boys (mechanical engineering) and others by girls (secretarial work).

Working conditions should be the same for men as for women.

Equality should be respected in the legal texts and also in practice.

Direct or indirect discrimination is prohibited. In some cases, discrimination is flagrant, while in others, and there is no shortage of examples in daily life, it is more difficult to detect: extra-

legal advantages are accorded to the 'person whose spouse is at home'. Or else vacancies are advertised for 'a worker who has completed military service' or 'a worker at least 1.85 metres tall' — measures to put men at an advantage.

The Community Directive has opened up or broadened the range of new possibilities for women wishing to become electricians, computer experts, welders, fitters, gardeners, etc.

Even language experts must play their part. In France, a high level meeting was needed to find a name to describe a man exercising the profession of 'midwife'. He will be called a 'maieuticien' (someone who practises 'maieutics' or the art of obstetrics).

Only those jobs which cannot be done by a man or by a woman are excluded from Community legislation. A tenor will never be anything other than a man and a wet nurse will always be a woman.

All the Member States have taken steps to implement the Community Directive. In Greece, the law has not yet been passed (August 1983).

As in equal pay, the European Commission has started infringement procedures against all the Member States since they have all failed to comply fully with the objectives of the Directive.

Are women going to do nightwork, maintain law and order and carry heavy weights?

In every country, special protective provisions apply to women, often based on International Labour Conventions (nightwork, underground work and work which is too arduous).

Community legislation proposes abolishing all specific protective measures for women which are not justified.

Each situation therefore needs to be analysed and this is currently being done. It shows firstly great disparity between one country and another.

Women can work in the police force in Belgium, Denmark, Italy, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. They can be lighthouse-keepers in every country except the United Kingdom and Ireland. British and Irish women engineers can go down mines. Dutch and Italian women may lift any weight, Belgian women may lift up to 27 kilos and French women 25 kilos.

Some legislation appears to use pretexts to exclude women from some jobs.

Measures to protect pregnant women do not fall within the scope of the Directive.

### *Progressive implementation of equal treatment in social security matters*

The third Directive, dating from 1978, concerns the progressive implementation of the principle of equal treatment in matters of social security, for civil servants, workers in the private sector and self-employed persons.

The Directive is progressive because, initially, it covers statutory social security systems and not those which, by agreement, are called occupational or extra-legal schemes, which are common in the sphere of supplementary pensions.

The Directive is also progressive because it provides for the implementation of equal treatment in some sectors of social security only: sickness insurance, invalidity, old age, industrial injuries, occupational disease and unemployment. In these sectors there can no longer be any discrimination in the level of contributions or benefits nor in the conditions for granting benefit.

Lastly, the Directive is progressive because it has given the Member States six years in which to implement the first important reforms it lays down (December 1984). However, they cannot take any measures during the transition period which might be regarded as a retreat from the situation existing at the time of the adoption of the Directive (December 1978); given the budgetary problems facing social security schemes, there is a genuine risk of such regressive measures.

The essence of the Directive is the measure banning indirect discrimination, in particular, that is based on marital or family status.

The implementation of equal treatment in social security matters may necessitate far-reaching reform and in some instances some reallocation of budgets, which explains the cautious attitude of the negotiators.

It will be for other legal instruments to regulate equality in the occupational schemes or in the sectors of family allowances and survivor's pensions (e.g. widows' and widowers' pensions).

Moreover, the Member States may for the time being allow certain forms of discrimination to continue: for example, differing retirement ages for men and women.

It is basically in unemployment and sickness insurance that the effects of the third Directive will be felt: in one country, for example, the concept of 'head of household' will have to be abolished, while in another increased allowances for dependants generally accorded to male workers will now have to be extended to female workers who find themselves in the same circumstances.

It is for these reasons that the third Directive is considered to be an important step towards equality.

## **Women in Community policies**

### *Vocational training: the European Social Fund and CEDEFOP*

The European Social Fund is the financial instrument of the Community employment policy; its purpose is to improve job prospects for workers and, to this end, contribute to vocational training schemes implemented by public or private bodies and submitted by governments.

Men and women both clearly have access to all the operations which consist in helping, on specific terms, for example, persons leaving agriculture, those who are unemployed or facing redundancy, those who are underemployed or working in economic branches affected by technological progress, or young people under the age of 25 who are unemployed or seeking jobs.

From 1978 to 1983, the Social Fund allotted a specific budget for the financing of vocational training operations for women aged over 25 who had lost their jobs, or women at home, wishing to resume work following an interruption. Priority has been given to operations for training in occupations in which women are traditionally under-represented, as well as those linked to the introduction of new technologies.

The Social Fund has just been reviewed; it now provides for a minimum of 75% of its funds to be used for young people; operations in favour of women and, in particular, those designed to facilitate their entry into occupations in which they are under-represented should be developed and pursued in this context.

The European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP) in Berlin is responsible for providing information and arranging exchanges, study and coordination in the sphere of vocational training.<sup>31</sup>

It devotes part of its work and its funds to diversifying vocational training for women with a view to facilitating their access to a greater number of occupations.

The Centre has promoted new vocational training courses to prepare women for occupations such as electricians, computer experts, garage mechanics or insurance brokers. It has conducted a survey on the forms of training existing in the Member States (prior to Greek accession) and analysed the causes of failure and success of certain vocational training schemes.<sup>32</sup> The Centre has also canvassed firms with a view to identifying more clearly the role played by training as an advantage in achieving equal opportunities for women.

The efforts made by the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training depend on the support given them by governments and employers; where these efforts have been made they have stimulated an awareness of problems which up to then had received little attention.

### *Education*

The school remains the first testing bench for equal opportunities, as was confirmed by the Ministers for Education in their Resolution of 13 December 1976.

On this basis, the Commission has done work which has highlighted the difficulties for girls wishing to enter certain branches.<sup>33</sup>

The Commission has set up pilot projects on the transition from education to working life in which special attention is paid to girls and is financing a scientific study in Ireland on special educational problems, and, for example, the choice of school options for girls and for boys. The Commission is also working on a study of sexual stereotypes and roles attributed to men

and to women in secondary school textbooks (comparison of the situation in several Member States).

The situation of women and occupational choices is one of the themes of Schools T.V. (European Broadcast) which deals with the educational options for boys and girls between the ages of 10 and 14, leading to non-traditional occupations with a future.

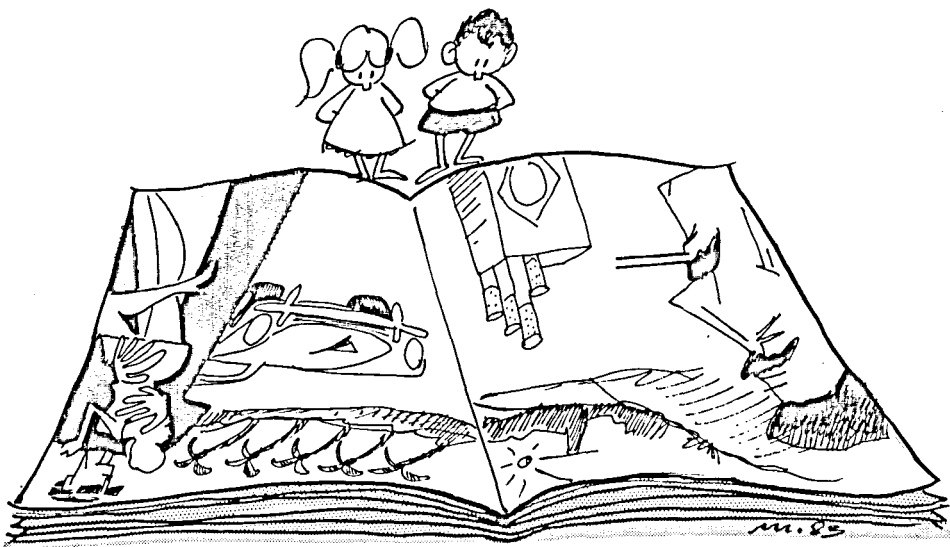
Lastly, the Commission is proposing a vocational training programme for the 1980s underlining the need to diversify educational choices for women.

### *Information*

'Informing women': this has been one of the European Community's concerns since the 1960s. The Commission cannot reach 10 million European women but it can reach and inform the press and women's organizations which should then relay the information. Such is the role of the special department set up within the Directorate-General for Information and entitled Information Unit for Women's Organizations and Publications.<sup>34</sup>

In addition to organizing traditional-style meetings and colloquia, the unit publishes 'Women of Europe', a bi-monthly bulletin, in seven languages.

This bulletin contains information on trends in the European institutions and the legislation of the 10 Member States, on militant action, on the activities of national and international organizations and on Community schemes: these are set out in more detail in the 'Supplements' to 'Women of Europe'.

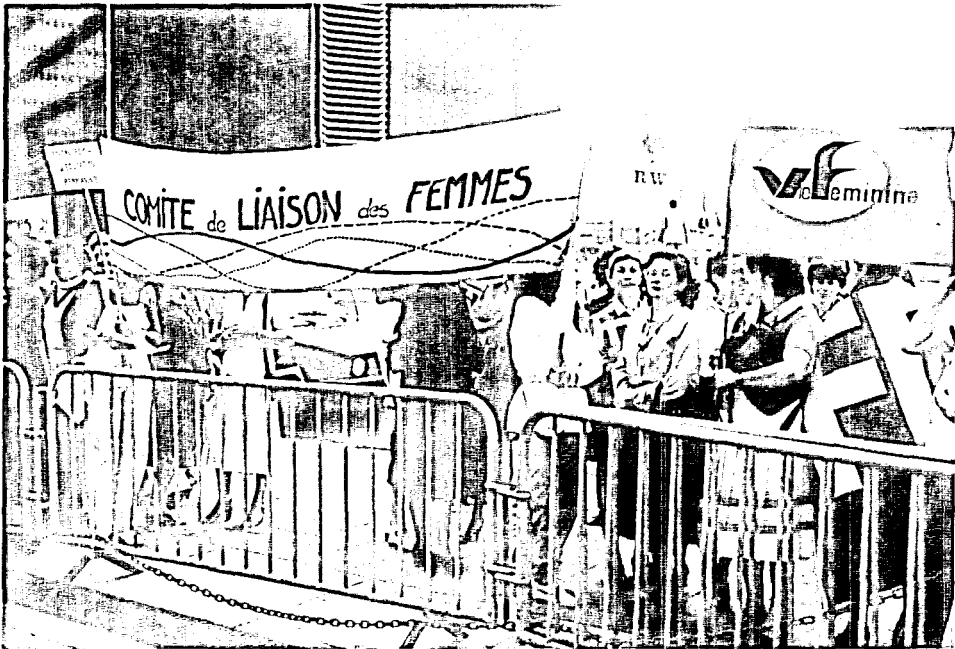


Reference should be made in a chapter on information on women to the opinion polls and the 'Euro-barometers' conducted by the European Commission. They reveal the opinions of women on the European Communities, jobs, the place of women in society, the family and working life and on the discriminations suffered by women who go out to work.

### **An overall approach: the new Community action programme on the promotion of equal opportunities for women (1982-85)**

At the beginning of the 1980s, a period marked by economic crisis, the Community reaffirmed its commitment and decided to develop and supplement its action to promote equal opportunities. Its intentions are set out in the action programme for the period 1982-85.<sup>35</sup>

In its introduction, the programme states that 'equal opportunities for men and women will only be attained by sustained action over a long period. This means reinforcing the Community's role as prime mover'. A little further on it states that 'current economic difficulties will undoubtedly hamper the underlying trend towards equal opportunities' — hence the need to step up Community action.



*Women demonstrating in Brussels in front of the Charlemagne building, the headquarters of the Council of Ministers, pressing for the adoption of the Action Programme on the promotion of Equal Opportunities for Women. (Photo Belga)*

The programme is based on a number of positions adopted by the bodies and circles concerned,<sup>36</sup> and in particular on the European Parliament Resolution of 12 February 1981 on the position of women in the European Community.<sup>37</sup>

It goes beyond the problem of employment and tackles certain aspects of family life and life in society.

It is based on two main themes: the reinforcement of individual liberties and the achievement of equal opportunities in practice by means of 'positive action'.

It involves firstly applying existing Community legislation (the three Directives on equal treatment described in Chapter III, 1) as efficiently as possible in all the Member States while concentrating on problems such as the improvement of the current procedures and the interpretation of certain difficult but fundamental concepts like 'indirect discrimination'. A network of contacts and exchanges will make it possible, moreover, for the European Commission to identify more precisely the problems of implementing the Directives in the various Member States.

It also means supplementing Community legislation in some spheres not covered or only partially covered by the existing Directives; for example, the occupational status of self-employed women and women in agriculture, the development of parental leave in connection with maintaining community facilities and services, the elimination of the adverse effect of certain taxation systems on the employment of women, the revision of protective legislation, the improvement of the level of protection for pregnant women.



*Nursery garden in Tanzania. Women working in a European Development Fund (EDF) regional development project. (FED)*



In the same context, new ground will be broken with regard to equal treatment in social security matters: a proposal for a Directive on equality in occupational social security schemes was submitted for the approval of the Council of Ministers at the end of April 1983.

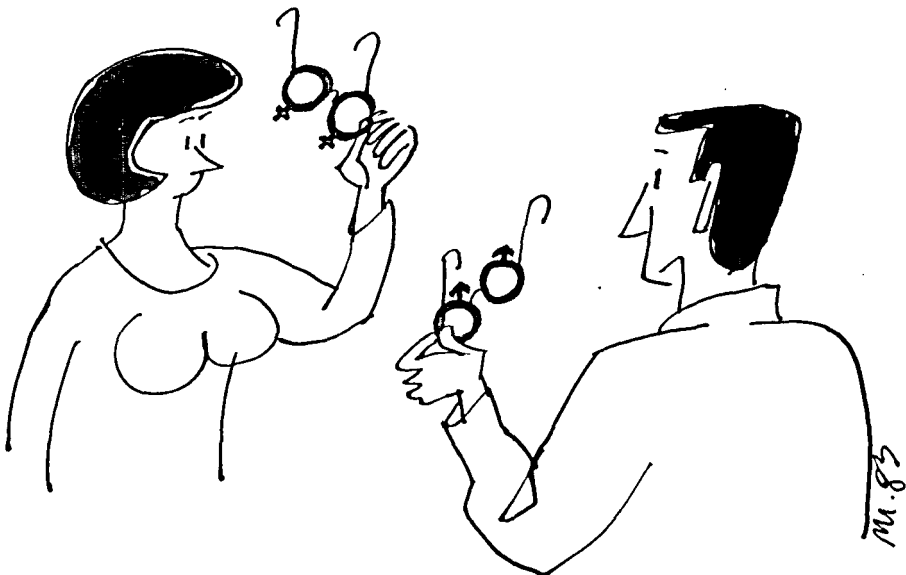
However, society does not evolve exclusively by means of legislation. 'Positive action', i. e. programmes, concrete measures, policies to correct the detrimental effects on women of situations or social behaviour, should be developed to increase and enhance their participation in social and working life.

Among the important aspects of the programme are the integration of women into working life in connection with the new technologies with a view to giving them the means of mastering the new techniques, the dissemination of information on the real opportunities for vocational choice for girls, the diversification of employment for women, in all sectors of activity and in all occupations. Experiments will be conducted in certain sectors and the Commission is devising a scheme in the banking sector.

The application of equal treatment to immigrant women can also not be envisaged without the implementation of specific programmes.

Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, problems of equality in connection with the quality of life, the sharing of occupational, family and social responsibilities and the development of attitudes via analysis, the provision of information and publicity make up the remainder of the action programme.

The European Commission is committed to taking action with regard to its own staff. Moreover, the Council, on examining the Commission's proposals, considered that in future gra-



ter attention should be paid to the equal opportunities aspect of any Community policy likely to have a bearing. This could apply, for example, as regards the shortening of working hours and the redistribution of available work.

The programme was favourably received by the Council (Resolution of 12 July 1982).

Finally, although the programme deals mainly with the situation of women in the Community, it stresses the need to take more account of the special problems of women in developing countries, by consulting their representatives when considering Community development projects.

In seven of the 10 Member States there are national committees for women's employment or equal opportunities. These bodies are of an advisory nature and frequently composed on a tripartite basis. In the Federal Republic of Germany, there is a special department; in Greece and Italy committees are being set up.

In adopting the new action programme, the Commission decided to bring together the representatives of these national bodies on to a single European committee responsible for helping to draw up *implement* its policy and ensure a permanent exchange of experience.

Most of the measures contained in the programme are being implemented and proposals for Directives and preparatory analyses are ready. It is expected that the whole programme will be satisfactorily completed by 1985.

# Useful addresses

## COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

- Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Education  
Bureau for questions concerning employment and equal treatment for women  
Arch 1-7/2  
200 rue de la Loi  
1049 Brussels
  
- Directorate-General for Information  
Information Unit for women's organizations and publications  
200 rue de la Loi  
1049 Brussels

## EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

- Committee of inquiry into the situation of women in Europe  
European Parliament  
Plateau du Kirchberg — Grand-Duché de Luxembourg

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- <sup>23</sup> See, for example, 'La participation des femmes aux relations sociales dans le monde du travail' (The participation of women in social aspects of working life), Belgium. Ministry of Employment, Brussels, *Revue du Travail* (Labour Review), 76th year, September 1976, p. 533.
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- <sup>31</sup> CEDEFOP, Bundesallee, 22 D-1000 Berlin 15.
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European Communities — Commission

Women in the European Community

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ISBN 92-825-4360-9

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The brochure describes the situation of women and the measures taken and envisaged at Community level to promote equal treatment for women.

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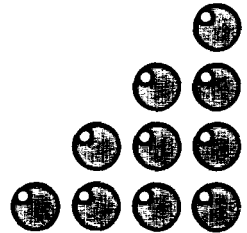
Should women concentrate exclusively or mainly on looking after the home or should they be actively involved in economic, social and working life? The question is still at the centre of social and political debate.

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It then reviews the progress made at Community level in promoting equal treatment for women and the measures to be taken in the coming years.



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