



LOBBY EUROPEEN DES FEMMES EUROPEAN WOMEN'S LOBBY

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EUROPEAN WOMEN'S LOBBY COMMENTS TO THE PES MANIFESTO

The European Women's Lobby (EWL) welcomes very much the opportunity given by the PES to comment on the PES Manifesto in view of the European elections 2009. The EWL is the largest coalition of women's organisations in the European Union, with member organisations in 28 EU Member States and accession countries. The present document gives comments to the sections on 1) New Social Europe and 2) European Democracy and Diversity.

1. Comments on the New Social Europe Section

The EWL welcomes the focus on equality between women and men in the New Social Europe Section of the Manifesto and would like to make the following comments in relation to this issue:

General comment:

Concerning the mentioning of the values of the EU, the EWL recalls that equality and equality between women and men are now also included in the new article on the EU values of the Lisbon Treaty (article 2).

Full employment and labour market policies

The EWL welcomes the recognition of the remaining gender inequalities in employment as described in the PES Manifesto. The EWL stresses that alongside the quantitative approach of the job market highlighting the increasing number of jobs created in the EU a qualitative analysis is needed which takes into account the nature of these jobs. Fixed term contracts, part-time jobs and job insecurity are some of the characteristics of the employment created within the new economic paradigm based on flexicurity - combining flexibility in work and security out of work. The way in which flexicurity is currently framed, the traditional gender division in paid and unpaid work remains intact, **and the EWL therefore stresses the need for a serious monitoring of the flexicurity strategy with a gender perspective in the context of future employment policies.**

EWL would like to stress that women and men are not equal in terms of employment; in the majority of cases, women are in the most vulnerable situation and experience the first hand consequences of insecure employment conditions and pay. Moreover, women face specific situations and discrimination such as segregation within the labour market, which leads

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women to occupy low skilled, routine, badly paid, low opportunities for training and career progression and part time jobs. Women also face the gender pay gap and a glass ceiling phenomenon. EWL stresses the need to pay special attention to women's situation within the labour markets and to create specific measures to tackle the multiple forms of discrimination that women face. **The European Union has a major responsibility in ensuring the effectiveness of the implementation of existing legislation to forbid sex-based discrimination in Employment.**

The new shape of the labour market requires highly skilled workers and therefore life long learning strategies. The EWL believes it is important to pay special attention to how women will be able to take part in training, taking into account their situation in the labour market and their overrepresentation in unpaid work, particularly concerning care issues. It is important to pay particular attention to the barriers in access to quality education and training by creating mechanisms and tools to ensure employability of women.

Care policies and policies for the reconciliation of work and private life for women and men

The issue of care is crucial in relation to issues that are tackled in the Manifesto such as full employment and the role of the welfare state and it requires broadening the issue beyond being considered a women-only responsibility. Care policies and the provision of care services are intrinsically related to the achievement of equality between women and men. It is true that women have careers, jobs, professional responsibilities, at the same time, women continue to be in large part responsible for the care of their children, housework and care of dependents whose numbers are increasing as the population ages.

The EWL stresses the necessity of welfare states to design and implement care policies and to create care services and make them available for all. One way out of this 'double life burden' for women lies firstly in **changes in the gender division of paid and unpaid work to ensure an equal sharing of caring tasks between women and men. However, at the same time, social and employment policies and the provision of services also have a very important part to play.**

As previously stated, it is often taken for granted that women carry the majority of family responsibilities. There is some evidence to suggest that because of economic pressures women are not having as many children as they would ideally prefer¹. On the other hand, there is a causal link between the lack of reconciliation of private and work-life options and the decrease of the birth rate. Therefore, the EWL strongly believes there are also other reasons to explain the low birth rates such as **lack of accessible, affordable and high quality care services and lack of co-responsibility of men in care and domestic work.**

The need for accessible, affordable and high quality care services for all dependants (and not only children) as a precondition for equality between women and men and

¹ A Eurobarometer survey of women who have completed fertility concluded that while they had an average of 2.1 children, they would have preferred to have had 2.3. Extracted from the Commission's document on Europe's Social Reality (http://ec.europa.eu/citizens_agenda/social_reality_stocktaking/docs/background_document_en.pdf)

quality life also needs to be fully integrated and taken into account in the debate around the European Social Model and legislation related to the Internal Market.

Traditional gender roles and stereotypes continue to have a strong influence on the division of labour between women and men at home. This is true both for the workplace and for society at large, and adds to the perpetuation of the spiral of obstacles to achieving gender equality. Therefore, a culture where both women and men are equally considered as carers and as actors in the paid economy must be promoted and **the EWL hopes that the PES Manifesto will integrate this issue of unpaid work.** In order to achieve an equal sharing of care and domestic tasks, men's responsibility for care must be reinforced through public policies and the fight against gender stereotypes on all fronts. Media and educational systems are good spaces to work on the elimination of stereotypes. It is also essential to recognise the economic value of care services provided by family members, the role of the not-for-profit sector in this field and the job creation potential of this sector.

Equally, **particular attention should be paid to ensure equal workers' rights to domestic workers, independently of their legal status.** Domestic work in private households has become crucial to many European families and social support systems, due to the lack of accessible, affordable and high quality care services and the lack of co-responsibility of men in care and domestic work. It remains yet invisible and suffers discriminatory employment regimes in many European countries. As a consequence, thousands of domestic workers are denied the right to decent work while they contribute to improving the employment prospects and living standards of other categories of workers.

Moreover, families in Europe are experiencing several transformations from which new models have emerged. These new models need to be taken into account. Within these new trends it is important to highlight the growth in single-parents families, the majority of which are headed by women. Along with the changes of family forms and the changing conditions in the labour markets has led also to a transformation in the distribution of the risks of low income, including the working poor, poverty and social exclusion. Therefore, women are more exposed to poverty².

Migration policies : the need for a fundamental rights approach and a gender perspective

Currently migration is one of the key issues shaping the European Union. The increase in ethnic and cultural diversity has become a reality in the EU today. However, there is a strong tendency to consider the phenomenon of migration from a utilitarian and economic point of view. The EWL strongly believes that **a human rights approach is needed when addressing migration.** A fundamental rights approach will contribute to ensuring that everybody has access to their fundamental rights (including civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights) in full compliance with international agreements and Conventions, whatever their migration status. This approach implies treating migrants as women and men

² For specific data and indicators check: Study on Poverty & Social Exclusion among Lone-Parent Households in Europe. European Commission - Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs & Equal Opportunities 2007. http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/spsi/docs/social_inclusion/2007/study_lone_parents_en.pdf

and considering their needs and their rights. A more positive discourse is urgently needed which values the contribution of migrant communities to European societies.

The EWL welcome the willingness of the PES to explore the possibility of common EU admissions procedure for economic migration. EWL has been advocating in this regard for **the adoption of a horizontal approach covering the conditions of entry and residence of any third country national exercising employed, self-employed or other economic activities**. This approach is the only one which does not introduce discrimination between migrants, in particular between low skilled migrants and ‘specially’ or highly skilled migrants. This approach should include a careful analysis of the specific needs and concerns of women. The sectoral approach currently advocated by the European Commission would unavoidably introduce arbitrary decisions and a differentiated classification of rights to the detriment of immigrants – in particular immigrant women - in the most precarious situations.

The EWL also strongly believes that is crucial to **adopt a gender equality perspective** to migration policies as well as a specific approach **to address particular issues faced by migrant women**. In this context, it is particularly important to highlight that one of the most important obstacles for the integration of migrant women in the host societies derives from the dependency factor generated by the legal status. Dependency on the husband, in case of family reunification, on employment when entry to the EU is for economic purposes in a designated sector or due to the fact that their qualifications are not recognised, and on the State, for asylum seeking women. In order to achieve autonomy and social inclusion, migrant women must be guaranteed an independent legal status.

Other social aspects: the need for the European Union to secure women’s human rights

The EWL stresses that apart from issues related to employment, the European Union must play a strong role in **securing women’s human rights, in particular in relation to issues of violence against women and women’s sexual rights**, hoping that both these issues will be integrated in the PES Manifesto.

Violence against women is a structural phenomenon the cause of which is a direct result of gender inequality evidenced by the persistence all over the world. The figures of prevalence, that is the proportion of women in the general population who have experienced acts of violence, vary by methodology, but an overview figure suggests that **across European countries, one-fifth to one quarter of all women have experienced violence at least once during their adult lives**, and more than one-tenth have suffered sexual violence involving the use of force³.

³[http://www.womenlobby.org/SiteResources/data/MediaArchive/Violence%20Centre/resources/VAW%20general%20resources/PDF_CDEG\(2006\)3_E%5b1%5d.pdf](http://www.womenlobby.org/SiteResources/data/MediaArchive/Violence%20Centre/resources/VAW%20general%20resources/PDF_CDEG(2006)3_E%5b1%5d.pdf)
(Council of Europe - Directorate General of Human Rights. “Combating violence against women. Stocktaking study on the measures and actions taken in Council of Europe member States”, Strasbourg 2006)

Stronger action than the existing Daphne Programme is needed at European level to fight the phenomenon of violence against women, as advocated by the EWL and its member organisations throughout Europe for many years. The EWL hopes that the PES will tackle this issue in its programme in view of the European elections 2009.

The EWL also stresses the need to secure women's sexual and reproductive rights in Europe and hope that the PES will be an ally in this fight at a time when the right of women to choose over their bodies is under threat in a number of European countries. Sexual and reproductive rights, including the right to safe abortion, are part of fundamental women's human rights. Their absence or a limited access to them threatens women's right to life, health, freedom and dignity. Working to eliminate unsafe abortion and removing criminal sanctions for having or seeking an abortion saves women's lives and contribute to the achievement of equality between women and men. That sexual and reproductive rights are part of women's human rights and indispensable for achieving gender equality is made clear by the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo and the Beijing Platform for Action.

2. Comments on the European Democracy and Diversity section

The EWL would like to make the following comments to the European Democracy and Diversity section of the PES Manifesto:

The concept of diversity

The concept of diversity is complex and it is important to define it well. The background paper on democracy and diversity uses this term mostly when referring to national and regional differences and to immigration. The increased number of EU member states and ethnic, cultural and linguistic differences within and between them are described as the main sources of diversity.

The EWL would like to note that "diversity" should also be understood in a broader context, in order to include the diversity of women and men living in Europe in relation to sex, sexual orientation and identity, age, social situation, class, disability, beliefs, race and abilities. Diversity does not only stem from our country or region of origin and its culture and language, but it is also a question of women and men in Europe being diverse as members of different social groups and minorities. It is not just diversity within and between the Member States, but also diversity between and within the persons living in Europe that should be taken into account. The EWL would very much like to see also this aspect of diversity reflected in the PES Manifesto.

Equality between women and men as a cornerstone in the fight against discrimination

Being able to take account of diversity related to social groups is as important for modern democracy based on justice, as being able to take account of the diversity of the peoples of the European Union. In particular, because discrimination/hatred based on grounds other

than nationality continues to be a great challenge for the European Union. The increasing diversity of Europe in relation to enlargement and immigration makes it more important than ever to respect social diversity and to fight discrimination based on all possible grounds. The EWL welcomes the fact that the fight against discrimination is an important part of the Manifesto.

However, the EWL suggests that the Manifesto should also make explicit and specific reference to equality between women and men while discussing discrimination. **Gender-based discrimination should be distinguished from discrimination based on other grounds** because it is about the structural unequal distribution of power and resources between women and men belonging to all groups in society. Furthermore the issue of gender is different to other forms of inequality and discrimination in that it affects the majority of the population.

EWL stresses that equality between women and men must be the cornerstone of all anti-discrimination policies and that those should include a strong gender perspective, as women is part or sometimes form the majority of discriminated groups. The focus on anti-discrimination should not lead to gender equality being sidelined, or incorporated in the general anti-discrimination legislation. The EWL believes that if the EU changes the scope of its gender equality agenda by placing it within a strict anti-discrimination framework, the Union does not give itself sufficient means to achieve the task given to the Union in the Treaty of Amsterdam of “eliminating inequalities and promoting equality between women and men”.

Therefore, the EWL supports the development and strengthening of EU’s anti-discrimination actions, legislation and institutional capacity **while at the same time introducing new legislation and reinforcing the institutional mechanisms for equality between women and men.** In order to avoid creating a hierarchy of rights, EU legislation should ensure **uniform and enhanced protection for all grounds of discrimination.**

Another important issue that should be tackled is **multiple discrimination.** It is the belief of EWL that in order for EU policy and legislation to become more effective, inclusive and democratic, the different forms of oppression need to be seen in the light of not acting independently of, or in addition to one another but rather interrelate and apply in diverse ways to each woman and man. The EWL believes that it is precisely the combination of multiple identities and how they demonstrate and expose discrimination and inequality in different forms and shapes that needs to be taken into consideration in policy initiatives. The EWL insists that the best way to tackle multiple discrimination and how this is experienced particularly by women is by using **a combination of legislative and non legislative measures,** such as incorporating systematic implementation⁴ strategies and methods and **implementing gender mainstreaming in all anti discrimination legislative and policy instruments.**

⁴ Lack of implementation of European legislation on gender equality is one of the main issues highlighted by EWL member organisations throughout Europe.

The EWL would also favour an **enlargement of the scope of EU equality and anti-discrimination policies** to cover additional grounds to the ones mentioned in Article 13, in particular **social and economic status/origin**.

Strengthening European democracy through reflecting diversity

The paper raises the question, whether the European Parliament should be more representative of the population as to better reflect the diversity of the EU and of women and men living in Europe. The EWL fully supports this idea and would like to add that the **question of representativeness also concerns the non-elected EU decision-making bodies such as the European Commission**.

For the EWL the democratic legitimacy of the European Union depends not only on the voter turnout, but also on how all the European Institutions represent the population as such. EWL has been working for many years for the realisation of **parity democracy at European level and in particular, the EWL has been asking for binding measures for the equal representation of women and men in the European Parliament and the European Commission to be adopted**. The EWL sees parity democracy as an important step in the democratization process. As women constitute more than half of the population, they have to be represented whenever and wherever decisions affecting their lives are made. The under-representation of women is a serious democratic deficit, and it undermines women's fundamental human right to full political participation.

The EWL believes that a connection could be made between the two legitimacy issues: voters' turnout and representativeness. Decision-making bodies which reflect the needs, perspectives and interests of a diverse citizenry, are able to make more just policies which better fit the needs of those who are affected by them. This results in better overall satisfaction and might be able to change the image of EU decision-making bodies as technocratic and distant from the people they claim to represent.

The EWL welcomes the suggestion of PES for a **uniform electoral procedure** for the European Parliament elections. One of the reasons given for the reform in the discussion paper is that currently, MEPs do not represent the same number of citizens. The EWL would like to stress that electoral procedure reform is important also because some electoral systems are more favourable for the election of women and members of different social groups than others.

The EWL considers the **revision of the electoral procedure as an opportunity to include a parity democracy, in order to ensure the equal representation of women and men in the European Parliament in the future**. The EWL very much hopes that the PES will do its utmost to support this critical move towards justice and true democracy. The EWL recalls that in an EP resolution on electoral procedure unification adopted in 1998 parity was mentioned, but that the Council of Ministers did not include this provision in its final decision. If there were such a new motion in the Parliament on electoral procedure unification, the EWL urges the PES to propose again the inclusion of a strong parity democracy provision including not only the equal presence of women and men on

candidates' lists, but also a strict zipper system. **The uniform electoral procedure should also be an opportunity to make the system as inclusive and accessible to candidates of various backgrounds as possible.**

The EWL would also like to point out the need to take proactive measures to facilitate the participation of women and men migrants in democratic life and society given the greater obstacles they are facing.

Who are the “European citizens”?

The EWL very much welcomes the innovations that the Lisbon Treaty brings to *citizens'* rights and European democracy, as listed in the discussion paper. However, the EWL would like to raise the question, who are these *citizens*, and who is excluded from this new range of rights. The question is all the more important, considering the phenomenon of immigration – one of the key challenges identified in the discussion paper.

Discussing immigration and the freedoms and rights given to EU citizens in the same paper is problematic unless the rights of immigrants are sufficiently addressed. Otherwise immigrants who are not citizens but who nevertheless are living and working in Europe as part of our societies, are left aside of many of the important themes discussed in the paper, such as anti-discrimination. It is important not to reiterate a division between EU citizens and immigrants, “us” with new rights and “them” with no rights. The EWL would welcome for the Manifesto to take a wide perspective, not only referring to citizens, but to all those women and men who live in Europe.

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