



FOUNDATION FOR EUROPEAN  
PROGRESSIVE STUDIES  
FONDATION EUROPÉENNE  
D'ÉTUDES PROGRESSISTES

# Queries

N°02 / 2010

## THE NEXT WAVE OF EMANCIPATION

Magazine by FEPS - Foundation for European Progressive Studies

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## About **Queries**

Isaac Newton's famous book Opticks concludes with a set of "Queries".

These Queries are not questions in the ordinary sense,  
but rather rhetorical questions intended to stimulate thinking.

This was Newton's mode of explaining "**by query**".

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# Inside

## **GENDER SENSITIVE, PROGRESSIVE EUROPE**

- 8** Putting equality in the heart  
of the next Europe's agenda  
Ernst Stetter
- 10** The next wave of emancipation  
Judit Tanczos
- 14** Social democracy and gender  
equality  
Zita Gurmai

## **A COMMITMENT THAT ARISES FROM A CENTURY STRUGGLE**

- 34** European social democracy and  
women  
Ghislaine Toutain
- 53** Gender and the British Labour  
Party  
Pat Thane
- 65** Gender and social democracy  
in Germany  
Christa Randzio-Plath

## STRONGER FROM THE PAST, ENCOURAGING EXPERIENCES

- 80**    Gender equality policies  
         in Spain  
         Soledad Ruiz-Seguín and Marta Plaza
- 101**   An ongoing challenge for Sweden -  
         one of the most equal countries  
         Ylva Johansson

## THE NEXT AGENDA FOR A CHANGING SOCIETY

- 110**   Inhabited by Animals and Beggars?  
         Andrea Pető
- 117**   Deeds, not words  
         Maite Morren
- 128**   Biographies



**“Queries”** is the scientific magazine of the Foundation for European Progressive Studies.

The Foundation for European Progressive Studies is a European progressive political foundation, close to the Party of European Socialists (PES). As a platform for ideas, FEPS works in a close collaboration with social democratic organizations, and in particular national foundations and think tanks, to tackle the challenges that Europe faces today.

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Queries

01

# Gender **sensitive**, progressive Europe

# Putting equality in the heart of the next Europe's agenda



**Dr. Ernst Stetter** *FEPS Secretary General*

Dear Readers,

I am delighted to present the second issue of the FEPS – Foundation for European Progressive Studies' scientific magazine – "Queries", which we devoted to the theme of "The next wave of emancipation".

Since the beginning FEPS has been strongly involved in a debate on gender equality, which in fact was one of the very first projects that we established. In our work we researched and reviewed the history of the struggle for gender equality in national member states, in Europe and elaborated on the progressive agenda for the future. For this purpose we held numerous discussions, in Brussels, Boston and Paris – of which thanks is largely owed to the immense support of Jean Jaurès Foundation and Boston University. Same time I would like to extend my sincere words of gratitude also to the leading figures, who guided our debate influencing its prosperous development and ensuring its significant impact: Ghislaine Toutain (Head of external relations at the Fondation Jean-Jaurès) and Zita Gurmai (FEPS Vice President, President of PES Women and MEP). Last but not least, I wish to also thank Judit Tánczos, FEPS Junior Policy Advisor, who tirelessly worked on this specific projects.

I believe that this issue of "Queries" is a very important contribution to a debate on equality in Europe. The historical part allows to assess, what is in fact the progress that has been made on the national and European level since the formation of the socialist parties and the creation of Socialist International Women, respectively one century and a half ago. The interesting aspect of these texts is that it gives a glimpse on the evolution of the agenda of the women's movements, showing it in a context of political history and the subsequent weaves of emancipation. The following chapters



present the challenges of the contemporary society, as also the situation in which women work and live. As a conclusion, it is clear that more energy, mobilisation and direction is needed.

Despite significant progress ensured by committed women of several generations, to whom we all owe respect and gratitude, it is still the fact that equality is not enjoyed by women worldwide. It is still women, who are the majority of the population living in poverty, do not have a possibility to lift themselves out of it due to lack of any perspective for a Decent Work; it is still women, whose health and lives are endangered because of lack of appropriate treatment that would ensure safe conditions i.e. while working and during pregnancy. The anniversary of setting up the targets called “Millennium Development Goals” is a perfect historical opportunity to reiterate our commitments and pledges.

It is crucial when the world is questioning liberalism and all the causes of the financial crisis that hit states, people and most harshly women. It is women, who are statistically leading among the long-term unemployed, employed in temporary or precarious jobs. It is women, who as traditional carers will feel so heavily the burden of the austerity measures and cuts in public services. During the previous crisis, the European socialists (within the Confederation of Socialist Parties of the European Communities) promised in the first Manifesto in 1984 to focus particularly on women, while discussing the way of the late 1970's and early 1980's crisis. By then they promised to seek a solution within the context of redistribution and new division of work within the labour market. I strongly believe that today we must not only return to see what happened to these promises, but also must act more.

The debate on political priorities is particularly timely nowadays, as it shall be the part of the grand debate launched within the socialist family on the necessity of renewing social democracy in Europe and worldwide. In this context, the concepts of equality and equal opportunities, inclusion, justice and emancipation shall be looked at in particular – what they mean today, since society has changed so much, how can they convince women to come and join our common struggle for a better future. Women can and must play a fundamental role in the renewal process, and it must be ensured from all sides.

There are two conditions for that. The first one is to see it as a priority, while reconstructing the agenda and aiming at the new principles' programmes. It must be a modern and multifaceted one, to provide answers as to what the progressive vision is in this complex reality of modern times. The second condition comes in the aspect of the organisational renewal and refers to the question of representation.

I would like once again to thank all the authors, all the partner organizations in the gender equality projects and in addition the editorial Team of “Queries” for their work and contribution. I hope that as readers you will find it valuable and provocative. As for the first edition we would also enjoy receiving some comments and suggestions from you. This is what the “Queries” in our understanding should serve for – bring along the key issues and inspire, enhance and lead the debate!

# The next wave of emancipation



**Judit Tánczos** *FEPS Junior Policy Advisor*

Can you guess the common point between emancipation and FEPS? This question might seem odd at first. Nevertheless the articles in the second issue of *Queries* – *The next wave of emancipation* made me realise a similarity between these two: both are *work in progress*. Naturally, FEPS remains a work in progress in the most positive sense. It translates to a constant development, which offers new, sometimes provoking ideas on constructing a better society. Regarding gender equality, it is however rather less encouraging. Especially once one realised that after so many decades of struggle, we still experience and observe so many examples of gender discrimination.

As a European progressive think tank, FEPS not only duly obeys the legal rules of non-discrimination between men and women, but it sees *equality* in general as our core principle, which we see as determinant while concluding studies or organizing activities. There are numerous angles from which we approach this value. This specific issue of *Queries* is devoted to one of them - gender equality. As such it is not only an inspiring collection of essays and articles, but above all mirrors the scope and the proposals elaborated within the FEPS Gender Equality project.

Promoting of gender equality is for FEPS a multifaceted challenge. It begins with research, which in itself encompasses many different schools and traditions. Afterwards, translating these findings into practical solutions takes place through a multi-levelled conceptual approach towards this issue. On a general level, FEPS accepts and embraces the horizontal approach of gender equality. Hence it examines possibilities to support a better representation of women in all activity fields. To give an example, while examining the current global economic crisis, FEPS calls for more inclusion and subsequently equal participation of men and women in finding feasible solutions and working together towards their implementation. In FEPS understanding therefore *fresh thinking* shall be a domain of both men and women.

The horizontal approach towards gender equality has motivated FEPS to establish and realise a

project on gender equality. The history of emancipation and the contemporary feminism were the themes that in fact inaugurated FEPS work on that field. The first challenge that FEPS needed to face was to seek finding common European points among researchers, experts and activists coming from different countries and traditions. The initial conclusions of that phase were presented in the very first FEPS publication *Women's position in the European Union*<sup>1</sup>. This has become in fact an assessment of what a *new European wave of emancipation* is truly about.

The findings were further discussed at the FEPS seminar, which took place in Brussels in the spring 2009<sup>2</sup>. A debate, in which numerous distinguished speakers and guests took place, resulted in a confirmation that in fact the modern agenda of the feminist movement worldwide is about women's participation – in labour market, in education, in politics etc. It was reaffirmed that parity will remain a leading concept and therefore the socialist movement must above any doubt fight for implementation of the instruments such as quota or zip systems.

This discussion continued. In a search for effective measures and best practices, FEPS added to it a trans-Atlantic dimension, while holding a seminar in Boston in the autumn 2009<sup>3</sup>. It appeared that despite numerous similarities of the respective situations of women in Europe and in the US, the paths to change them differ significantly. In any of these struggles, there were strategies that could be considered successful and constructive, as also the mistakes and problems that should not be repeated. It became apparent that in order to lead a new wave of emancipation, one has to reflect on these carefully. The context of progressing globalisation on one side, and the economic crisis on the other suggest that these reflection should be made on an international level and encompass many

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1 *Women's position in the EU: an ongoing challenge and issue.*

[http://www.feps-europe.eu/fileadmin/downloads/thematic\\_studies/090129\\_FEPS\\_Toutain\\_EN.pdf](http://www.feps-europe.eu/fileadmin/downloads/thematic_studies/090129_FEPS_Toutain_EN.pdf)

2 *Philosophy of feminism within the European Union, 12<sup>th</sup> March 2009, with the support of the Fondation Jean-Jaurès.*

3 *Gender equality in the USA and in the EU, 1<sup>st</sup> October 2009, with the support of the Fondation Jean-Jaurès and Boston University.*

elements – which is why another seminar took place in Paris in the spring 2010<sup>4</sup>. It was agreed there and then that in fact the economic crisis affected all, but among them mostly the women – whose newly gained economic independence, position on the labour market and respective rights to social security have been endangered. Therefore much has to be done in order both to preserve the achievements on the field of gender equality, as also to ensure that the progress in the matter will not stop.

These three discussions were an inspiration for this edition of FEPS scientific magazine *Queries*. While reading the texts that had been submitted for this issue, I recalled my very own family anecdote. Having been a child with a great sensibility to equal treatment, I wrote a poem *That's not fair*, in which expressed my great astonishment that people accepted inequalities. Within its lines I strongly criticised all the forms of malicious discriminations (like the fact that only children get chocolates and small gifts for Easter). I advocated in one of my poem's verses the International Men's Day should be established - as I believed it was unfair to have only "*International Women's Day*". I quote it now to as it shows clearly, that at the age of seven, I was in favour of a formal equality approach and this conviction remains in me, strengthened by years and different experiences.

Perhaps if I had preserved this thought literally, I could be entirely satisfied with the situation of European women currently. Although the International Men's Day has still not been introduced, but formally equality is legally guaranteed in all the EU Member States. Even more, all the non-complying rules can be legally challenged immediately. Women can be active in political life, build a carrier, have access to all professions, have a right to all kinds of services and in some cases special, more favourable rules apply to them, for example around child birth.

However, instead of being satisfied I rather see a challenge in front of me, joining the authors of the articles in this issue. As I face my future at the beginning of my professional carrier, I feel like a marathon runner at the start. It seems the road is the same for everyone, but as women we have weights in our shoes. At this point I am still able to keep up because I am committed and enthusiastic... but for how long?

To give an example of some of the reasons for my and other young women's anxiety, it is a well-known fact that


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<sup>4</sup> Women on the labour market, 27<sup>th</sup> March 2010, with the support of the Fondation Jean-Jaurès.

birth of a child causes a disproportionate break in women's career. In our contemporary society it has been constantly repeated that women can make their own choice, that they can themselves decide if they wish to plan a family or stay working only. In theory perhaps this is true, but in reality it is more women than men who remain in precarious jobs, on short-term contracts and with atypical working hours. It does not help that there are also still so many stereotypes and prejudices – so even if a woman happens to be successful and wants to remain working instead of having children, she is being judged and her character is widely disputed by co-workers. Consequently, our symbolic women marathon runners do not only have weights in their shoes, but they often have to jump over additional obstacles or even take a longer path to achieve the finish line. Surely this is also their choice to eventually quit this crazy marathon – only that I would not really call it a free selection among well-balanced alternatives.

The situation appears even more difficult, once one looks closer at particular situations of women, who are discriminated not only because of their gender, but also because of their beliefs, age, sexual identity, sexual orientation, family background, ethnicity, origins. In order to encompass these, FEPS has, as stated above, opted for a horizontal approach. This attitude is in fact the opportunity to explore also these multiple discrimination cases, as also touch upon social problems. To name at least one of them, please let me recall gender based violence.

This issue of *Queries – the next wave of emancipation* offers possible answers for some of these dilemmas. Unfortunately those, who are waiting for a magical template with all possible solutions, will be disappointed. However, the readers looking for thought-provoking material, may be content. This issue aimed at providing historical context of the contemporary struggle, at giving an overview of the most urgent challenges and at describing possible ways to find a solution to them. The historical reflection is in our understanding necessary on the eve of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the International Women's Day, when the past record can inspire the new generations to mobilize and re-organize.



# Social democracy and gender equality



**Dr. Zita Gurmai** *PES Women, President and Vice President of FEPS*

The article is composed of three sub-chapters. They outline respectively: the history of the socialist movement and the creation a Party of European Socialist; the chosen aspects of the Gender Equality policies, as developed within the socialist family in the context of the EU. It also outlines the challenges, which remain still ahead or appear in the course of a change of the society and the world we live in.

The historical overview proves that the European social democracy has always been front runner striving for women's emancipation. It has fought for the rights to political participation and representation, and for improving women's situation on the labour market, in field of education, and sexual and reproductive health rights. Despite numerous changes of the European legislation, women still have no equal status and representation compared to men.

The socialist movement has continued pushing for progressive vision of our society where women and men have the same rights in all fields. The issues remain: ongoing-gender pay gap, lack of women in decision-making in all fields, gender-based violence, unemployment, and lack of appropriate solutions to available to women and men, so that they can to share their responsibilities and balance private and professional lives.

The contribution concludes with the vision of feminism as a concept for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The movement lead by women and men together will continue its work towards an egalitarian society, tackling the new challenges that women face. Among them are: social (new family compositions, migration), economic (a need for new economic models, the socio-economic crisis), civilisation's (climate change and IT developments), political (a growing right-wing tendency) ones. We need to explore this new wave of feminism, making steps such as creating a European Women's Rights Charter - our guarantee that all women in Europe enjoy the same rights.

## 1 | How has the PES contributed towards gender equality?

Before answering the question on what the Party of European Socialist has done for gender equality, allow me to present a retrospective view on the earlier developments related to socialism and women's rights.

Although the first International of the Labour Movement was founded in 1864 the participation of women was still not allowed. It is thanks to Karl Marx that women were granted a place in this movement as he believed that "Women play a very great role in life: they work in factories, they take part in the strikes; they fought in the Commune. They have more fervour than the men".

But the big example for women around the world, and specifically for the socialist movement in Europe, remains Clara Zetkin, member of the German Women's Working Association, and the Social Democratic Party in Germany. Already in 1889 at the International Congress in Paris, she called for a "resolution opposing the prohibition of women in paid employment" and "including working class women in the working class movement". This same resolution was also already calling for equal pay for equal work for both sexes. In addition, it was under the leadership of Clara Zetkin that in 1907, the first Socialist International Women's meeting took place in Stuttgart with 86 members from Europe and all over the world. At this first meeting, a resolution was presented calling on the one side for the creation of "women's franchises", i.e. women's organisations within the political parties, and on the other side for the right for women to vote in all countries. This resolution was also supported by the 886 delegates at the Socialist International Congress. Although New-Zealand, as the currently existing independent country, was the first to grant women voting rights in 1893, Finnish women were the first in the world to enjoy unlimited voting and standing rights thanks to the 1906 Parliament Act. On 19 March 1911<sup>3</sup> in Copenhagen, Clara Zetkin launched the International Women's Day. The last European country to grant women unrestricted voting rights was Portugal in 1974.

**After the first wave of feminism in the late nineteenth century and beginning of twentieth century, when the main aim was to gain full voting rights for women, a second wave of the feminism crossed the globe in the 1960s and 70s focusing on legal and social issues and rights such as sexual and reproductive health and rights, equal pay, maternity leave, equal rights at the work place, social and economic independence and combating violence against women.**

This second wave of feminism left a significant fingerprint in the development of women's emancipation. During that period, women started entering the labour market, universities and post-secondary education programmes and breaking the traditional social models of staying at home and

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<sup>1</sup> *La Première Internationale*, Vol II, p168.

<sup>2</sup> *The First Hundred Years, a Short Story of SIW*, p 19.

<sup>3</sup> The date of International Women's Day originally was not fixed. On the 19<sup>th</sup> March 1911 it was celebrated also in Austria, Germany and Switzerland. Only after the events in Russia, in 1913 they decided to celebrate on the last Sunday of February. This year it was 23<sup>rd</sup> February, that by the Gregorian Calendar happened to be the 8<sup>th</sup> of March. This is, how finally the date of the celebration has become fixed.



bringing up children, while facing for the first time the challenge of having and assuming the responsibility of household tasks and being active employees. Entering the labour market and continuing higher education not only gave women the freedom of breaking the traditional social models, but it allowed them to start building up their economic independence and breaking through into often male dominated environments.

Apart from the feminist movement, other historical developments influenced women's rights. In Europe, the creation of the European Community with the founding Treaty of Rome in 1957, the principle of equal pay for equal work was mentioned. Although the main idea of the creation of the European Community was primarily creating a common economic approach and area, it certainly gave a good platform for developing a common political project too.

While the creation of the European Community in 1957 gave a motivation for a first inter-party Congress of the socialist parties of the ECSC (European Coal and Steel Community) member states initiated by the PvdA (Partij van de Arbeid, the Netherlands) and for the creation of the Liaison Bureau of the Socialist Parties, based on the agreement of the Congress with the aim to formulate common position on the upcoming European Institutions, the Party of European Socialist was only established in 1992 as a result of the Maastricht Treaty that allowed the establishment of European political parties.

**The cooperation between the socialist parties and the socialist group in the European Parliamentary Assembly strengthened from 1957 onwards and several methods of coordination and common approaches were established on numerous issues. At an early stage also the issue of women rights and gender equality was among their priorities.**

In 1970, the Liaison Bureau of the Socialist Parties of the European Communities decided to organise 6 thematic meetings including a conference on socialist women<sup>4</sup>. One of the four preparatory working groups for drafting the manifesto in 1978 was on "Women's Rights", chaired by Danish feminist Karen Dahlerup (SD, Denmark). At the 1979 Congress, the 10<sup>th</sup> Congress of the EC socialist parties, which was in fact the first Congress of the Confederation (CSPEC), the final document was adopted with one point on ending "discrimination, in particular against women, through the reform of education and the provision of child care"<sup>5</sup>.

That same year in the lead up to the first European Direct elections, a set of conferences were organised, including one on Equality of Women organised by LSAP (Luxembourg Socialist Workers' Party) on 22-23 March 1979 in Luxembourg<sup>6</sup>. Following the Berlin Congress the Liaison Bureau set up 5 working groups based on the EC agenda priorities, of which one working group was chaired by a woman, Elena Florès (PSOE, Spain), who later became one of the six Vice-Presidents of the newly established PES (Party of European Socialists, 1992).

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<sup>4</sup> *History of the PES*, p19.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibidem*, p30.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibidem*, p31.



Besides the above-mentioned Working Groups, 2 extraordinary conferences were organised by CSPEC of which one in Brussels in 1991 on “Women”<sup>7</sup>. On 3-4 December 1991 at the Brussels Summit prior to the Maastricht Council summit, socialist leaders reiterated their position on the political union in a declaration, including a reference to the importance of “positive actions for women”<sup>8</sup> as part of a Social Programme and job creation approach.

**With the creation of the Party of European Socialists in 1992, new statutes were presented, committing the party already to “balanced representation of men and women in its bodies and meetings”<sup>9</sup>.** Part of the Hague declaration, setting a ten-point programme at the first PES Congress (1992) was a resolution on women, which recognised that ‘the feminist movement is a driving force for democratic and progressive policies’. Moreover, the resolution called for European policies to promote equal opportunities and increased access to child care, education and health and social services. For the first time, the PES bureau agreed to explore the idea of setting up a women’s section within the structure of the party.<sup>10</sup> In 1993 at the Brussels Congress, the PES Women’s Committee was established and the inclusion of one of the representatives from the committee was granted full voting rights in the PES Bureau.

**The 1994 PES Manifesto presented a socialist programme for action in seven fields of the New European Union with one on “Equality for Women and Men” proposing to work on “equal treatment in social security systems, increased access to child care and equal opportunities to participate in all aspects of society, the economy and politics”<sup>11</sup>. Also the 1999 PES Manifesto promoted gender equality.**

The 2001 PES Statutes revision, created a new PES body, the Presidency, in which a representative of the women’s standing committee was granted a “seat”, along with representatives from the member parties, the PES Parliamentary Group, ECOSY, (European Community Organisation of Socialist Youth), the PES Group in the Committee of the Regions and the Secretary General.

Besides Karen Dahlerup and Elena Florès, a few other women appeared in decision-making bodies or chair position of the PES working groups/committees between 1993 and 2002. Anna Lindh (SAP, Sweden)<sup>12</sup>, co-chair of the Employment and Environment Working Group (1994-1995); Clare Short (UK Labour Party), Chair of Development Ministerial meeting 1995<sup>13</sup>; Lena Hjelm-Wallen<sup>14</sup>, Vice-President PES (1995-2001). Before 1993, Gwynneth Dunwoody<sup>15</sup> (UK Labour Party) was Vice-President of the Socialist Confederation (1985-1990). **Up until the present the PES has never elected a woman President or Secretary General.**

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7 *History of the PES*, p50.

8 *Ibidem*, p 55.

9 *Ibidem*, p 60.

10 *Ibidem*, p 63.

11 *Ibidem*, p 66.

12 *Ibidem*, p 82.

13 *Ibidem*, p 91.

14 *Ibidem*, p 112.

15 *idem*.

PES Women's Committee has its own structure and functioning. **The first PES Women President was Karin Junker (SPD, Germany), who was succeeded in 1997 by late Fiorella Ghilardotti MEP (Italian Democratic Socialists) who remained President until 2004.** The Committee used to meet every three months.

PES Women brings together women - MPs, MEPs and activists - from PES member parties to discuss and promote gender equality within and outside the PES.

PES Women aims at promoting gender equality on two different levels. Firstly, PES Women is continuously strengthening the external dimension of its work, in terms of formulating and advocating policy recommendations on a broad range of issues both within all PES bodies and the European Institutions.

Secondly, PES Women pushes for equal representation in the different PES bodies (such as working groups and high level groups), supports the increase of women in decision-making in PES member parties and encourages gender equal representation during election campaigns. As PES Women President, I am a full member of the PES Presidency and participate at the PES Leader's Conferences, where I defend gender equality and women's rights issues.

Some academics and researchers on gender equality also argue that the 1990s experienced a third wave of feminism, trying to bring back on the table the issues that were never resolved in the seventies. It is true that by 1990 the issue of equal pay for equal work was still not achieved, nor was the issue of work-life balance or the famous glass ceiling. At the end of the nineties, the European Union had strengthened its cooperation on socio-economic matters and was preparing a strategy to improve employment and growth. In 2000 under the Presidency of Portugal, the head of states and governments (all but two were socialist) adopted the Lisbon Strategy. The Lisbon Strategy was a significant step by the EU for women's participation on the labour market. Not only did the strategy put clear targets for women's employment, but it also recognised at European level women as full-time employers.

Since my first election as PES Women President in October 2004 at the Brussels Congress, PES Women has gained in visibility, stronger structure and political influence. I took over PES Women's Presidency from the late Fiorella Ghilardotti<sup>16</sup>, who introduced gender budgeting in the European Parliament.

PES Women has since 2004 its own executive bureau, formed by its President, the three Vice-Presidents and the Bureau members. PES statutory meetings gather all members in representation of PES member parties and associated member parties.

PES Women members, who are nominated by PES member parties, meet three times a year to:

- Discuss strategic initiatives and specific policy themes.
- Agree on campaigns and resolutions.
- Share information on relevant European and national policies.

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<sup>16</sup> Fiorella Ghilardotti died in September 2005.

Since October 2004, PES Women has held yearly conferences four times which gathered representatives from all PES member parties, NGOs, trade unions and the media.

In the spring of 2006, PES Women in cooperation with at the time Swedish Minister for Justice Thomas Bodström (SAP, Sweden) organised a PES Ministerial meeting to bring the issue of combating trafficking of human beings during the 2006 World Cup in the context of the PES campaign on the Council agenda. As a result of the campaign and the PES Ministerial meeting, the issue was discussed at the Justice and Home Affairs Council meeting and the European Commission committed itself to enhance the ongoing work on combating trafficking across Europe.

Since this, PES Ministerial meeting on Gender Equality, held twice a year, were introduced and European Commissioner (2004-2009) for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities Vladimir Špidla attended these events regularly.

Apart from the above-mentioned meetings, PES Women has been involved in initiatives and campaigns organised with NGOs and civil society to raise awareness about social and gender equality issues. In 2008 PES Women published “Europe through women’s eyes” presenting the positive results of Europe on gender equality legislation.

Thanks to the stronger cooperation between PES Women and the PES and the enhanced ongoing work within PES Women, we achieved the inclusion of a chapter dedicated to gender equality into the election programme of the PES. “Championing Gender Equality in Europe” was the fourth priority with which the PES campaigned in 2009. As a result, one of our proposals was taken up by the European Commission President José Manuel Barroso. In his hearing prior to his election, he promised to truly commit to gender equality by presenting a “European Women’s Rights Charter” during his new mandate 2009-2014. Although, the European Commission has presented its version of such Charter through a declaration<sup>17</sup> reiterating its commitments towards gender equality in the EU, PES Women is determined to push for a more ambitious Agenda.

**While some consider feminism to be dead today, I believe that as we still have not achieved gender equality yet and that fighting for a society where equal opportunities should be the norm, feminism, which aims at advocating true gender equality in the whole society and for the sake of achieving a progressive society, cannot be dead yet. As Spanish Prime Minister José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero claims; “being socialist, is being feminist”.**

Whereas our party and member parties are the front-runners on gender equality issues, Europe has equally an important role to play. In setting out EU legislation and the current state of play of

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<sup>17</sup> A strengthened Commitment to Equality between Women and Men A Women’s Charter, Declaration by the European Commission on the occasion of the 2010 International Women’s Day in commemoration of the 15<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the a Declaration and Platform for Action at the Beijing UN World Conference on Women and of the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.



women's position in the EU, I would like to highlight the continuous gender equality approach of the PES, before presenting the remaining challenges.

## 2 | Current situation of gender equality in Europe and Action of PES

### Overview of the EU legislation that influenced gender equality

The European Community is since its birth committed to gender equality through the equal pay reference in article 119 of the Treaty of Rome signed in 1957 that declares the principle of equal pay for women and men for equal work, used at numerous occasions since then by the European Court of Justice to defend equality between women and men on the labour market.

However, if seven directives on gender equality matters were issued from 1975, we had to wait until 1997 and the signature of the Treaty of Amsterdam to see gender equality reinforced in the EU texts and become finally an objective and a mission of the European Union<sup>18</sup>. As of that moment, equality between women and men should also apply to a broader range of issues than for equal pay even if gender equality in employment remains a specified goal with the reiteration of the principle of equal pay for women and men for equal work or work of equal value and as positive action measures to achieve this goal were introduced by the article 141 TEC. It now covers all forms of sexual discrimination in the workplace as well as sex-based discrimination with Article 13<sup>19</sup> concerning general anti-discrimination and also referring to discrimination on grounds of sex that offers legal possibilities for proposing further European legislation.

Finally, the Lisbon Treaty, by including the European Charter of Fundamental Rights in its text is also reiterating the principle of non – discrimination<sup>20</sup> and of equality between women and men in all areas, including employment, work and pay<sup>21</sup>, specifying that *“the principle of equality shall not prevent the maintenance or adoption of measures providing for specific advantages in favour of the under-represented sex”*.

The Directives adopted at European level on equality between women and men are mainly related to equal treatment for women and men on the labour market, as regards to access to employment, vocational training and promotion, and working conditions, and social security, equal treatment between women and men engaged in an activity, as self-employed people, including agriculture. Special attention has been progressively paid to women during pregnancy and motherhood with a directive on the protection of self-employed women during these periods, the introduction of measures to encourage improvements in the safety and health at work of pregnant

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<sup>18</sup> Article 2 and 3 TEC.

<sup>19</sup> Article 13 of TEU, which is article 19 in the consolidated version of the Lisbon Treaty.

<sup>20</sup> Article 21 of the Charter.

<sup>21</sup> Article 23 of the Charter.

workers and workers who have recently given birth or are breastfeeding, a framework agreement on parental leave. A binding legislation at EU level has also been introduced defining sexual harassment and recognises sexual harassment as a form of sex-based discrimination.

In 2001 the Commission issued a first European Roadmap for equality between women and men (2001-2005), presenting the Commission's activities for this period and setting five priority actions for the EU concerning gender equality:

- equal economic independence for men and women;
- reconciliation between professional and private life;
- equal representation in decision-making;
- the eradication of all forms of violence and trafficking in human beings based on gender;
- elimination of gender stereotypes within society;

On 13 December 2004, the Council of Ministers of the EU adopted the Directive implementing equal treatment between women and men aiming at extending the principle of equal treatment beyond the area of employment to the access to and supply of goods and services. Besides, Union's activities are influencing women's daily lives, European laws taking precedence over national legislation, if a more progressive decision is taken at European level.

2006 was a marking year for gender equality in Europe. The Commission issued the second European Roadmap for equality between women and men for the period 2006-2010. This document upheld the five priorities of the previous roadmap adding a sixth one to the main goals of the EU actions in the field of external EU affairs and gender equality. That same year at the Spring Council, EU Governments adopted the European Pact for Gender Equality, which recognises the need to improve gender equality, especially when it comes to the participation of women on the labour market and combining professional life with family life. The Gender Pact also helped to revive existing tools and targets such as the Lisbon Strategy.

Also in 2006, a political agreement was reached in the Council for the establishment of the future European Gender Institute whose Board of Administration was appointed in the summer of 2007 and became operational in 2009.

This series of EU legislative acts and political agreements have given the EU and its Member States certainly a good basis to ensure and promote gender equality. However, as I will present in the next pages, the current position of women in different sectors and levels, shows us that despite Socialist and social democratic continuous work at European level, gender equality is not yet been achieved.

## **Current situation of women in Europe and what the PES does to improve it**

If the Communities legislation on gender equality has made extensive progress since 1957, figures are not reflecting an ideal situation of women in Europe and progress still needs to be achieved to improve this in various areas.

## Women in decision-making positions

The European Parliament Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality's (FEMM) annual report on equality between men and women takes stock and determines any sign of improvement. The 2007 report (Piia-Noora Kauppi, MEP, EPP-ED Rapporteur) and the 2008 report (Iratxe Garcia Perez, MEP, PSOE, PES Rapporteur) highlighted outdated decision-making and behavioural patterns, particularly in the administrative sector and the acute under-representation of women in decision-taking at all levels and urged all parties to initiate specific action to improve the situation. The second report emphasized the positive impact of political quotas.

The 'glass ceiling' continues to prevent women from reaching more senior positions and only a small number of women occupy high posts in business and politics in Europe. Equal participation of women in the political, economical and social decision-making structures is a guarantee for a real democracy. In the current context of overcoming the crisis and implementing a Europe 2020 strategy, PES Women called on the Heads of States and Governments to increase women in top managerial position, based on the Norwegian model with 40% quota<sup>22</sup>.

## Women in politics

### *European Parliament and European elections*

**Women currently represent 35% of the members of the European Parliament.** The 2009 Elections allowed a great increase compared to the 30% before 2009 or the 16% of the 1979 Elections. But the European Parliament fails again to reach parity or even the 40% of women threshold agreed by Member States of the Council of Europe. However, because of the absence of common binding measures to promote the equal representation of women and men in the European Parliament important differences between Member States and political groups exist. As the European Parliament is elected according to national electoral rules, national quotas or parity measures are applied to the European Parliament where they exist (five European countries have introduced quotas by laws, in sixteen countries some political parties have voluntary quotas).

During the 2009 campaign, the PES fully supported the European Women's Lobby 50/50 Campaign<sup>23</sup> endorsed by the Socialist Vice-President of the Commission, Margot Wallström for more women at the top of European politics. As President of PES Women, I took part in its launch on 16 September 2008 and the following International Women's Day we dedicated a conference on '50-50: From quota to parity', which brought together representatives from politics and civil society to stress the importance of this issue for the European elections. We strongly believe that equal political representation is not only a matter of equality but also of democracy.

The percentage of women among PES Group MEPs remained status quo between 2004 and

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<sup>22</sup> <http://www.pes.org/en/news/pes-calls-real-commitment-gender-equality-europe-2020-strategy-setting-targets-and-defining-rig>

<sup>23</sup> <http://5050campaign.wordpress.com/>

2009 electoral results (40%), despite the strong gender equality chapter in the PES 2009 Manifesto. If the ALDE (45%) and Greens (55%) groups registered higher scores of female representatives, the S&D Group is still the group with the most women representatives.

One should note that though the number of women in the EP has partly increased among centre-right parties, the EPP-ED Group is still only registering 33.6% women against 24% for the previous legislature. Jo Leinen (MEP, SPD and S&D Group) proposed a regulation for introducing a parity system, but the EPP-ED Group rejected it.

### **Political parties**

Parity representation of women in politics is not only a right, but a means for social progress. Within the political parties, the PES calls for a balance on the electoral list, in positions within the party and the integration of gender mainstreaming in their programmes and policies as stated in PES Statutes.

*"The aims of the PES are (. . .) to promote equal representation and as a consequence to seek internal equality and equal representation of men and women in our bodies and meetings". Composition of the Congress and the Council: "Neither gender should make up less than 40% of a delegation of a member party or Organization" (article 17).*

Almost all PES' member parties show a proportion of women within their parliamentary group higher or equal to the average proportion of women in the national parliament.

### **Governmental organisation**

In the EU, on average, only one out of four members of national parliaments and senior ministers in national governments is a woman, even if the situation varies across Member States.

Progressive governments give women a better opportunity for equal representation through ministerial posts and by creating portfolios specifically on gender equality. The best example is shown by Spain with the PSOE Government lead by José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, who formed a new government based on gender equality: nine women, of which 2 deputy Prime Ministers, and eight men comprise the cabinet, marking the first time that women are in majority. Other social democratic leaders are equally setting good examples. Recently, Prime Minister of Greece, George Papandreou, appointed twenty five percent of women in the PASOK government. He realises this is a small step in the right direction, but certainly a good step forward. Furthermore, when the recently formed European Commission was being composed and member states failed to present female Commissioner Candidates, Mr Papandreou extended his commitment at European level and nominated a woman commissioner, Maria Damanaki. Also in Norway, led by Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg, the government at ministerial and adviser level as well as the Norwegian Labour Party parliamentary group are gender balanced.

Besides, at European level, our parity campaign was successful too with Baroness Catherine Ashton being appointed High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the only woman in one of the four EU top jobs.



Socialists are fighting hard to have a better gender-balanced representation. The report of Marc Tarabella (MEP, PS Belgium and S&D Group), which was voted early 2010, calls on a new procedure for upcoming European Commissioners nominations based on the principles discussed at the PES Leader's meeting in June 2008. Each Member State should present one male and one female candidate for the President of the European Commission in order to be able to compose a gender equal Commission cabinet.

## **Women in business and research**

Despite a slight increase of women involved in decision-making or appointed to decision-making posts in the EU over the last years, power in the economic spheres is still firmly held in men's hands. Women represent on average almost one-third of business leaders in the EU, but in most countries their share is lower. It is below 25% in Denmark, Finland, Ireland, Malta and Cyprus while it is above 35% in Spain, Latvia and France. As regards to female membership of boards ('highest decision-making body') of the largest publicly quoted companies, the situation is markedly different. In 2009, women represented, on average, only 11% of these board members at EU level. The percentage exceeded 20% only in Finland (24%) and Sweden (27%); it was below 5% in Malta, Italy, Portugal, Cyprus and Luxembourg. Women also represent only one out of 10 board members in European blue-chip companies and 3 % among the leaders of the boards.

## **Fighting violence against women**

Violence at home is considered to be the major cause of death and invalidity of women aged 16 to 44, greater than cancer and road accidents. All forms of violence against women (sexual, psychological and physical) should be considered as a criminal offence in all EU countries and punished severely. Statistics have shown that one in three women will be a victim of violence during their lifetime and 10% will be victims of rape or attempted rape. These facts are totally unacceptable and each of us must act firmly to eradicate this problem.

On several occasions, the PES urged the Commission to strengthen measures to protect women and children against violence and calls for better legislation to tackle the causes, improve prevention measures and victim support, and for awareness-raising and exchanging best practice.

The most recent action was in the context of PES Women one-year Campaign "*My Body, My Rights*"<sup>24</sup>, with one event dedicated to combating gender based violence, which coincides with one of the Spanish Presidency priority during the first semester of 2010.

Also under last legislature, PES strongly fought in favour of continuity of the successful Commission's Daphne Programme which includes the fight against violence in all its forms (sexual, psychological and physical) and provides financial assistance to NGOs involved in helping victims of physical, sexual and psychological violence. The then (MEP, SPD, PES Group FEMM Coordinator) Lissy Gröner

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<sup>24</sup> <http://www.pes.org/en/about-pes/how-does-pes-work/pes-women/my-body-my-rights>



successfully defended the Daphne programme and lead tough negotiations with the Council to launch the Daphne III programme for 2007-2013, increasing its budget to €116m.

Through PES manifesto proposals, declarations on combating violence against women and several EP reports PES Women proposed:

- that EU Member States guarantee asylum to victims of the gender based violence from third-countries, such as trafficking and female genital mutilation.
- to call for a European Year of Combating Violence against Children, Young People and Women.
- the need for proactive and preventive strategies aimed at the perpetrators and those at risk of becoming perpetrators.
- the Commission to establish a legal base to act on gender violence and promote best practices against domestic violence on the member states.
- actions to eliminate customary or traditional harmful practices, including female genital mutilation, forced marriages and honour crimes.

### **Anti-trafficking of women**

In 2006, PES Women launched a campaign *“Celebrate the World Cup – Fight sexual Slavery”*<sup>25</sup> with an anti-trafficking e-petition on 1 March 2006 and organised an event on International Women’s Day (8 March) at the European Parliament in order to collect even more signatures. On 14 March, PES President Poul Nyrup Rasmussen and I presented the first 12 000 signatures of this petition to European Commission’s President José Manuel Barroso, urging him to take action against the trafficking of women. Prior to the 27 April Council meeting (at which the issue of human trafficking was an agenda point), PES Women in cooperation with former Swedish social democratic Justice Minister Thomas Bodström also organized a preparatory meeting for PES justice and home affairs ministers. The meeting enabled ministers from our political family to support each other during the Council discussions and to strengthen the resulting Council conclusions. PES Women presented the final list of signatures (over 23,000 plus nearly 100 000 by the Danish 3F Trade Unions) to European Commissioner for Justice and Home Affairs Franco Frattini on 8 June, on the eve of the World Cup.

### **Domestic violence**

PES Women proposes to encourage and support the EU and its Member States in their efforts to stop domestic and gender-specific violence, including that perpetrated against women of ethnic minorities, through all appropriate EU programmes and funds and respects the 25 November as the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, and yearly marks this day with an event or a statement to raise awareness.

### **Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights (SRHR)**

With the growing conservative backlash in Europe and the rest of the world, the PES expresses its

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<sup>25</sup> [http://www.pes.org/system/files/images/downloads/PES\\_Women\\_EN.pdf](http://www.pes.org/system/files/images/downloads/PES_Women_EN.pdf)

concern about SRHR in Europe. Each person has the right to make choices regarding their own sexuality and reproduction, and the right to proper health care and information concerning family planning and sexuality.

The lack of reliable sexual education is causing severe problems such as teenage pregnancies, high abortion rates and HIV/AIDS. Methods of contraceptives are not used widely enough because of high prices and lack of accessibility and appropriate knowledge. Illegal abortions are still common in Europe and they can cause harmful complications to many women every year. Abortion must not be used as a method of birth control, but it must be an option for all women in all EU Member States. Low abortion rates can only be achieved with proper education and universal access to contraceptives. In 2007, several PES Women members supported Portuguese Prime Minister José Socrates in his campaign to legalise abortion, which was implemented subsequently.

In March 2010, at the occasion of the 54<sup>th</sup> session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) celebrating the Beijing Platform's 15 anniversary as well as assessing its achievements, PES Women gathered with PES youth organization, ECOSY, the Global Progressive Forum and the Global Progressive Youth Forum the PES Gender Equality Ministers, States Secretaries and delegates to call on all governments to reiterate their commitment towards maternal health. The aim was to reiterate the objectives and goals set out in the 1995 Beijing Declaration as there has not been sufficient progress in Europe and around the world on SRHR. Moreover we need to secure women's rights, choice and access to information, sexual education for girls and boys, medical assistance, medical infrastructure, as well as prevention and contraception methods in order to improve women's position within society as a whole<sup>26</sup>. This call launched a one-year campaign in favour of SRHR under the umbrella slogan *'My Body, My Rights'*.



## **Work-life balance, childcare and parental leave**

The PES strives to improve women's participation in the labour market by promoting flexible working arrangements and coordination for both women and men in order to reconcile family life and professional life - which would also help to decrease the gender gap and, address demographic challenges, at the same time.

One way to promote better balance between private responsibilities and professional obligations is through improved childcare services. To support this goal and to improve childcare facilities as a benefit for the whole society, PES launched in 2007 a campaign "Put Children First" stressing the need


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<sup>26</sup> [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//NONSGML+MOTION+P6-RC-2008-0581+0+DOC+PDF+V0//](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//NONSGML+MOTION+P6-RC-2008-0581+0+DOC+PDF+V0//EN&language=EN)  
EN&language=EN Resolution signed by Zita Gurmai

to invest in good quality affordable and accessible childcare in order to put children first and invest in the future and thus for Member States to put forward new legislation in order to achieve the Barcelona targets, especially on high quality and affordable childcare<sup>27</sup> and the development of other care provision, such as the care of elderly persons.

Another way of improving better work-life balance is providing a parental leave for women and men. At present, only a small number of men take parental leave or work part-time, whereas women often have to choose between having children and pursuing the career they want. Working families find it hard to balance their professional and personal responsibilities. Only 62% of women with dependent children are in work, compared to 91% of men, a European Commission's figure shows.

The PES promotes a new model of society in which men should be encouraged to take up family responsibilities, in particular, through incentives concerning parental and paternity leave.



PES members of the FEMM Committee have played a leading role in drafting reports and opinions supporting and promoting policies which enable women and men to combine good quality work with parenthood and other family responsibilities. PES has been pushing for the improvement of existing legislation and this has had a successful result in the adoption by the Commission in October 2008 of a 'reconciliation package' which will seek to improve legislation on the safety and health at work of pregnant workers, on equal treatment for self-employed women, and for better childcare provisions. Edite Estrela, (MEP, PS Portugal and PES Group Rapporteur) has taken the lead on this proposal which is a priority issue. We will seek to extend the minimum length of maternity leave, improve flexibility and payments, and strengthen employment rights, making it easier for women to return to the labour market and remain in their position and for men to share the care taking responsibility.

Also in 2009, when the Czech Presidency of the EU questioned the necessity of the Barcelona targets and women's participation on the labour market, PES Gender Equality Ministers urged the Presidency to secure the extension of the Barcelona targets, the quality of childcare as well as the participation of women on the labour market<sup>28</sup>.

## **Women and employment**

### *Women's employment*

Figures show that the female employment rate increased by 7.1 percentage points over the last

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<sup>27</sup> of 33% childcare coverage for 0-3 year olds and 90% coverage for children from 3-school age.

<sup>28</sup> <http://www.pes.org/en/news/conservative-czech-presidency-faces-defeat-child-care-targets> and <http://www.pes.org/en/news/pes-dont-let-czech-presidency-ditch-eu-child-care-targets>.

decade and reached 59.1% in 2008, which is close to the target set by the Lisbon European Council to reach an employment rate of 60% for women by 2010. This rate varies between Member States, from below 40% to above 70%.

In order to improve this objective, the PES has been promoting new forms of work, the organization of working time and the sharing of tasks and responsibilities, especially recently in the context of the drafting proposals on the Europe 2020 Strategy and the “*way out of the crisis*”. In the PES Women declaration of 25<sup>th</sup> March 2010 on the Europe 2020 Strategy, PES Women calls on 70% of women’s employment, extended Barcelona targets, decrease of 10% of the EU gender pay gap by 2020 and increased number of women in top managerial boards, based on Norway’s example<sup>29</sup>. Besides, in view of the implementation of the gender mainstreaming policy - which means integration of gender aspects in all policies - the PES recommends an integrated approach to equality between women and men in order to foster a systematic approach on the gender dimension and to monitor women’s employment rate in all sectors. The gender mainstreaming is certainly valid for the Europe’s 2020 Strategy and approach on the crisis, which will hit women’s employment on a long-term period. Studies showed that the crisis unveiled an occupational and sectoral segregation and an absence of women in the financial sector; that women will be hit in a second wave of redundancy, when outsourcing services based on temporary and/or short-term contracts will be affected, that female unemployment is expected to rise excessively as public sector budgets – due to tax cuts – are being reduced, that single mothers are at disproportionate risk of poverty, that women are less affected in the fields where the gender gap is smaller in terms of job opportunities<sup>30</sup>, that a danger exists for pregnant women to be reluctant in taking maternity leave out of fear for losing their job.

In order to achieve the elimination of a gender pay gap and the increase and secure women’s employment concrete measures need to be put into place such as:

- Have a thorough gender impact assessment of the economic crisis.
- Improve wages and working conditions in lower paid sectors which tend to be dominated by women
- Enhance women’s positions in Research and Development sector in order to boost 60% university graduates who are women
- Break stereotypes of traditional male/female dominated career choices and encouraging women’s participation in all fields of education and skill development, including new green jobs, ongoing trainings and life-long learning.
- Enhance access to programmes/ finances (microcredit) for women to set up and launch Small and Medium Enterprises
- Improve social protection of short-term contracts, which affects women, especially pregnant women.

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29 <http://www.pes.org/en/news/pes-calls-real-commitment-gender-equality-europe-2020-strategy-setting-targets-and-defining-rig>

30 According to the International Labour Organisation.

- Develop new sources of jobs through the public services sector which is also a powerful tool for reducing poverty and sustaining women's employment. Besides, the EU and its Member States should take advantage of the potential of the European Social Fund to integrate the unemployed into the labour market and to train workers.

### **Gender Pay Gap**

Across the EU, women earn between 15% and 25% less than men in the private sector. Part-time work – which is generally less well paid – is far more prevalent among women: in 2008, the share of women employees working part-time was 31.1% in the EU-27 against 7.9% of men. Women are thus much more likely to be unemployed, discouraged from entering the labour market by the lack of decent jobs, or in lower-paid, low-quality or part-time jobs.

The pay gap, which currently is at 17,4% EU average, is a glaring example of inequality and discrimination and the PES believes that it can only be addressed by following a multifaceted approach, which includes specific policies to address its underlying causes and which introduces specific targets in the framework of Europe 2020 Strategy.

In 2007, in the frame of the *"Gender pay gap, Shut it!"* campaign, PES Women called on European gender equality ministers to push forward in areas such as the elimination of the gender pay gap, increasing the participation rate of women in quality employment and providing better childcare. In regards the good practices set by Belgium and Spain, PES Women calls today for a European Equal Pay Day as well as a decrease by ten percent of EU's average pay gap by 2020.

Fifty years of gender equality legislation in Europe and over a hundred years of feminist movements in Europe, but we are still far from achieving our goal.

## **3 | The Challenges ahead for the social democrats in terms of Gender Equality.**

I will not deny that in the last fifty years the EU has booked considerable progress, but we are far from having reached true gender equality in our parties and in society.

Prior to the 9<sup>th</sup> PES Congress in Prague in 2009, PES Women held its Annual Conference on Feminism in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, debating and reflecting along the same lines as we did at the Congress on progressive societies but focused on this topic from a gender perspective.

As I mentioned several times, Prime Minister José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero's, motto *"I'm a feminist because I'm socialist"*, is an affirmation that a progressive society is not possible without gender equality, which is an excellent example and refreshing approach for building progressive societies and reiterating our values.

Socialists and social democrats have always been the front-runners on gender equality issues.

If we want to remain the front runners, socialist and social democratic parties will need to address topics which on the one hand are important for gender equality and women's rights and secondly which will truly improve the position of women, as Prime Minister Zapatero did in both of his election campaigns.

PES Women launched a deep internal reflection on today's feminism through the lens of social justice, social welfare and solidarity, equality between women and men and human rights, including the urgent need to address violence against women and trafficking with women. At the Congress we urged socialists and social democrats to continue this reflection on feminism and learn from our best practices. This means above all, for us socialists and social democrats launching a broad reflection within our parties, intergenerational, inter-gender, from local, regional to national level, to develop our positions vis-à-vis a European Women's Rights Charter and our coherent vision as PES on such Charter.

The framework of the European Women's Rights Charter should be carried by a platform that is visible, effective, target-driven and has a sufficient budget to ensure that the content is implemented and respected in all Members States. Europe cannot afford having another symbolic non-binding agreement with no impact on the development and implementation of gender equality proposals. Although an adequate platform does not exist at present, several alternative options could be envisaged such as the post-Lisbon Strategy/Europe 2020 platform with concrete targets and follow-up/ implementation monitoring system. The Charter should avoid any overlapping or duplication of existing systems, mechanisms or tools, be it at European or at International level. In other words, it should not replace the Gender Pact nor the Gender Equality Roadmap follow-up, nor should it undermine existing international conventions such as CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women). Gender equality can only be achieved with accompanying legislation, an implementation of rules, incentives and monitoring mechanisms.

We must continue building on what social democrats have achieved, i.e. the political participation and representation of women through the introduction of quotas; some parties starting with as low as 25% of representation on electoral lists, to parties ensuring eligible places for women on electoral lists or even to parties guaranteeing zip systems and real parity on voting lists. In the EU we have only five countries out of 27 that have legislated quotas, which are written in the constitutions and/or electoral laws to target the gender composition of electoral lists; Belgium, France, Spain, Portugal and Slovenia. Unfortunately, even with quota and parity systems for electoral lists, women's representation is not guaranteed and only half of our job is done. In national parliaments women are only represented by twenty four percent. **To achieve women's representation we need a strong women's movement that will fight to campaign for women, encourage and strengthen women's candidates, convince people to vote. We started with convincing women to vote for women and enhance women's solidarity. But we need to go beyond this.**

Women's political representation is not an issue of women's rights and solidarity only; it is an issue of the society, a simple fact of democracy. Isn't it in everyone's interest and also everyone's aim to achieve democracy? Women represent 52% of the EU population or in figures around 250 million women. Not including them either in political processes or in political debates, including decision-making level, is not only neglecting more than 50% of the electorate, but also wasting more than 50% of capacity, intellect and experience. Despite some good examples, I believe that we should always remain vigilant on women's adequate participation and representation, including young women. Younger generations, and I understand their point, are not always in favour of quotas. But we have seen even as recent as the European Election or even for the formation of the European Commission, that women's representation was not as progressive or as guaranteed as we thought and thus equal representation proves to be an ongoing fight. **We should never, including younger women, take gender equality for granted.** We also have to start thinking about the needs of young lesser-educated women, single mothers, women aged between 30 and 45, women without children, women's pension schemes, women's responsibility in an ever more important care sector, the impact of the crisis on women's employment and migrant women when trying to defend and formulate women's rights in today's society.

Today, Europe is working on its strategy on smart, sustainable and green growth for the next ten years; the Europe 2020 strategy. If Europe wants to recover from the crisis that has hit Europe over the past year, it needs to invest in the full one hundred percent of its potential workforce, and thus realise that financial and socio-economic crisis has a different impact on women.

One of the main targets the Europe 2020 should achieve is to close the gender pay gap and increase women's employment to at least 70%. For the pay gap this should happen through a first step of lowering the pay gap by 10% by 2020 and eliminate all other gaps that contribute towards the difference in pay.

As my article shows, we are far from having achieved a gender equal society.

Today, feminism (and thus socialism) in the 21 century is about finding balance in society, including for gender equality. **Gender equality that is not only trying to be pursued by women, but by women and men together who believe that a social and progressive society cannot be a society without equality, and I would even go further a progressive society cannot exist without gender equality. We need more feminist men, such as Prime Minister Zapatero, in order to build and achieve more gender equal societies.**

**Finally, as Marc Tarabella, formulated in his message to the PES Women Conference, let's launch "Femhommism" – the feminism of partnership and the cause of ALL – women and men to achieve true gender equality.**



Queries

02



**A commitment that arises  
from a century struggle**

# Gender and the French Socialist Party



**Ghislaine Toutain**

This article describes the long and eventful quest for equal representation of women in political life, more precisely, in the framework of the French Socialist Party. It analyses the different forms and aims of this quest in different historical periods from 1871 to current times. It examines both the positive and negative sides of the diverse strategies that were used to achieve equal representation, lists the reasons why parity is still not realised and outlines the major areas of concern of current and future feminism.

## 1876 to 1905<sup>1</sup>: The emergence of socialist feminism

The history of the relationship between French socialism and feminism is a very eventful one. In the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, socialist thinkers reflected on and wrote about the position of women in society. They did so, however, in a contradictory manner. While some – like Saint-Simon, Fourier, Engels, and August Bebel – recognized the need for equality between men and women, others, such as Charles Fourier and, above all, Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, denied women any emancipation. «*Women are only fit to be housewives or harlots*», asserted Proudhon. This position was to leave a strong and lasting mark on the French workers' movement.

After the Paris Commune of 1871, which marked the return to life of the workers' movement, the socialist leaders joined the debate. Jules Guesde, Jean Jaurès, and especially Marcel Sembat declared to be in favour of equality between men and women. Jules Guesde, for instance, reckoned that economic independence would be the sole factor of women's true freedom. In 1898, Jean Jaurès declared himself in favour of the right to vote for women.

Furthermore, **women started organizing themselves ever since the beginning of the Third Republic (1871), albeit according to different strategies.** Maria Deraismes and Léon Richer represented the “*bourgeois feminism*”, founded on republicanism, secularism, and anticlericalism. Their struggle was basically carried out in the field of civil rights, with a certain amount of success, particularly in the area of education (e.g. in 1880, public education for women was finally introduced), the right to work, access to professions, and the relaxation of the civil code dating back to 1804 (with an act on divorce being adopted in 1884). On the other hand, the likes of Louise Saumoneau, Elisabeth Reynaud, or even Hubertine Auclert fought for “*socialist feminism*” and demanded the right to vote and political emancipation before civil emancipation.

**Up to World War I, these two types of feminism failed to converge and feminist movements themselves went through alliances, rifts, and dissensions. This was true in particular for the socialist feminist movement, which succeeded in profiling itself during the first workers' congresses,** for instance in Marseille in 1879, where the issue of women was on top of the agenda. Hubertine Auclert held a remarkable speech, in which she challenged male activists on their true adherence to equality between men and women. Despite strong resistance from certain worker activists, the final Congress resolution stated “*that women and men must govern society together and share the same rights*”, and it called for women to be granted the right to work. Hubertine Auclert had thus attempted to lay the foundations for an alliance between feminists and socialists.

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<sup>1</sup> This part draws significantly from a speech by Denis Lefèvre, secretary general of the University Office of Socialist Research (OURS) held during the International Humanistic Symposium in Mulhouse in 1991, titled *Le mouvement socialiste et la revendication égalitaire, la question des femmes*. Also from the work of Frédéric Cépède (OURS) as well as from the book by Charles Sowerwine, *Les femmes et le socialisme*, translation into French of the original English version published by the Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques, November 1978, 285 pages.

The subsequent year was however one of disillusion, with a rift between those who quoted Proudhon and wanted to keep women “at home”, and the followers of the class struggle who believed that women should have the same civil, political, economic, and social rights as men. The latter, however, clearly stated that they did not believe “*the unjust holders of social wealth will ever agree to grant these [rights] to [women]*”. To put it more clearly, only the emergence of a socialist society would bring about equality between men and women.

As pointed out by Denis Lefèbvre (see reference above), socialist women could only rely on themselves. This led to the creation of the Groupe Féministe Socialiste (GFS) in July 1899, at the initiative of Louise Saumoneau and Elisabeth Renaud. The plea the GFS published illustrates the double oppression of women, who are “*exploited on a large scale by capitalism, subdued by men through law and above all by prejudice*”<sup>2</sup>. In 1901, the group began publishing its newspaper: *La femme socialiste*. As a reformist movement, it joined Jean Jaures’s confederation of independent socialists in 1900 but although it was the only autonomous group which defended women as women, and women as workers, as a structure, it was never to succeed. In fact, the GFS dissolved after the 1905 congress, which led to the unification of all socialists.

## 1905 to 1940: The invisible women of the French Section of the Workers’ International (SFIO)

### 1905-1920: The impossible socialist feminine movement

The French Section of the Workers’ International (SFIO), later to become the Socialist Party, was created in late April 1905, at a congress that took place in the hall of the Globe in Paris. Under the pressure of the Socialist International, it was the result of a merger between two political groups: the reformist French Socialist Party and the collectivist Socialist Party of France under the leadership of Guesde. These two parties assembled in turn numerous French socialist movements that had been deeply divided since 1876. At the time of its foundation, the new party made no reference to women’s issues in its final resolution. Not a single woman was appointed in its top ranks, a situation that was to prevail for a long period of time! Exclusively made up of territorial branches, it denied membership to the Groupe féministe socialiste (GFS). This was a severe setback for French socialist feminism, which had attempted to grow since 1880. In Germany, for instance, around the same period, the feminist movement was growing stronger within the SPD.

**Thus, from the very beginning, the emerging Socialist Party set the tone for women within its structures: French socialist women would have to go a long way before accessing equality and parity in their party!** In fact, even though SFIO leaders spoke or wrote about their interest in women’s rights, one has to acknowledge that the Socialist Party was never really interested in these

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<sup>2</sup> Sowerwine Ch., *Les femmes et le socialisme*, op. cit. page 89 of the French translation.

issues. One example of this relates to the issue of women's right to vote, which represented one of the principle demands of the suffrage movements<sup>3</sup> that began to appear in Europe and France before the Great War and during the Interwar Period. Therefore, despite the fact that, in the *Revue de l'enseignement primaire*<sup>4</sup>, Jean Jaurès defended a bill by the socialist group that would have established the women's suffrage, the law was never passed.

A liberal representative by the name of Paul Dussaussoy presented the first bill in 1906 in an attempt to recognize women's right to vote, starting with municipal and cantonal elections. In 1907, socialist Members of Parliament appointed a sub-committee on women's rights. The committee never met. Despite several congress resolutions in favour of women's suffrage, it was not until 1913 that the socialist group in the French National Assembly finally supported the bill promoted by Dussaussoy. Although the bill was adopted in 1919 by the members of in the National Assembly, the Senate did not support it and it died a "*natural death*" in 1922!<sup>5</sup> In fact, up until 1944, the French Senate managed to overturn the bill on women's suffrage on six occasions<sup>6</sup>.

The overall indifference toward women's issues prevented several feminists from joining the ranks of the PS. As a result, women remained a minority among party activists. At the 1906 Congress, only 10 out of 225 delegates were women, and only one out of 214 in 1914! From the early stages of the SFIO in 1905 until the fall of the Third Republic in 1940, women never accounted for more than 2% to 3% of active members, i.e. the lowest percentage in Europe. In Germany, on the other hand, women accounted for 16% of SPD's members on the eve of World War I. Moreover, it was this party that set the first International Women's Day on 19 March 1911, which was widely celebrated in Germany and Austria. This did not happen in France, for no group of socialist feminists was large enough to take up this initiative. **The International Women's Day was first celebrated in France in 1914.**

Finally, in 1913, after eight years without any French socialist women's movement, the Groupe des femmes socialistes (GDFS) was recreated under the leadership of Louise Saumoneau. The GDFS however was not more successful than the GFS in creating a major women's movement, since it operated exclusively on a socialist basis and within the PS. It continued the struggle against the *bourgeois feminists* but it also further deepened the rift between feminists and socialists, which had begun in 1880 and climaxed in 1900 at a congress convened by an independent feminist, Marguerite Durand, who had founded the magazine *La Fronde* in 1893. Weakened by the dissent caused by the

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3 In particular the Union française pour le suffrage des femmes (UFSF), which was established in 1909 and was led by Cécile Brunshvig as of 1924.

4 Jean Jaurès wrote in 1906: "... Especially women workers or the workers' wives, directly or through their husbands and sons, are drawn into the economic life and all the vicissitudes of social struggles. They share, at the forefront, the suffering, hopes, and joys of industrial action. They suffer from social misery in their own flesh and blood, in the heart of their hearts. It is the right of women to politically express the feelings and thoughts that social life arouses in them. The bill that the socialist group will put to the Parliament to establish women's suffrage, or rather to grant women all political and social rights, must not be met with indifference and mockery. This is an important moment in social evolution".

5 It is interesting to recall women obtained the right to vote in New Zealand in 1893, in Finland in 1906, in Norway in 1913, in Iceland in 1914, in Denmark in 1915, in Russia in 1917, in Sweden, Poland, and Great Britain for women over the age of thirty in 1918, in Canada in 1919, in Luxembourg, in Germany (under the Weimar Republic), in Czechoslovakia and Austria in 1919, in the United States in 1920, and in Turkey in 1934. The Portuguese, Belgian, Italian, and Swiss women had to wait the second half, or even the last quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to get political franchise.

6 1925, the Chamber of Deputies passed a bill establishing women's right to vote in municipal and cantonal elections, and in 1927, it adopted a resolution calling the government to speed up the debate on the bill passed by the Chamber in the Senate; the same resolution was passed in 1932. In 1935, the Chamber spoke out in favour of women's right to vote in municipal elections for the 5<sup>th</sup> time.

war between the pacifist minority and a majority backing the «sacred union», the GDFS disappeared in 1917, and did not re-emerge until 1922.

This inability to create a major socialist feminist movement along the lines of the other large European parties can be attributed to a lack of interest from men toward women's issues. But it can also be explained by two other factors, which, for a long time had a huge influence on the history of socialist women: on the one hand, socialist leaders were very suspicious of women's suffrage, as they thought women would not be able to rid themselves of the influence of the Catholic Church and therefore, they would promote conservative stands; on the other, socialist women laid emphasis on the struggle against social and economic inequalities before feminist aspirations, and they therefore put their female identity aside, describing themselves as *"socialists among socialists"*. They therefore followed Clara Zetkin, leader of the socialist women in Germany who, at the conference of the Second International in 1907, reaffirmed the principle of incompatibility between socialism and feminism.

This socialist dogma was to prevail particularly in France. It was further strengthened by the pre-eminence of the *"universalist"* approach versus differentialist theories in the political culture of socialist women, which prevented them from thinking as a *'group'* or *'class'*... And as history would have it, this debate was re-launched in the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century in the context of the vote on the law on parity in politics! This rationale was also followed by Hubertine Auclert, or even Madeleine Pelletier who led the struggle within the party along those lines, though they both campaigned for women's political rights. In fact, they both ran for the general elections in 1910, and got quite encouraging results. Hubertine Auclert even refused to pay her taxes, since she did not have the right to vote.

### **1920-1940: SFIO denies women the right to vote**

Following the Tours Congress in 1920, and the split between communists and socialists, it took some time for the PS-SFIO to rebuild itself. Even if Louise Saumoneau, the only woman to have sat in the Permanent Administrative Committee (CAP - the party's executive body) from 1927 to 1931, reconstituted the GDFS in 1922, it was already too late for a strong feminist movement to establish itself within the SFIO. The GDFS remained a subordinate group to the party, with not more than 220 women members in 1931.

That same year, after several female activists voiced their criticism against the functioning and the role of the GDFS, a debate was held on the nature of the women's organisation and as a result, the National Committee of Socialist Women (CNDFS) was founded. Made up of the same members as the GDFS, the new body followed in its footsteps and its leaders continued to give pre-eminence to party membership over women's struggles, denying their female comrades the right to organize themselves in an autonomous manner. The CNDFS no longer sought to grant women full rights, but rather to protect them against feminist subversion. As Louise Saumoneau clearly put it, *"Feminism is a bourgeois thing"*. Therefore, as pointed out by Laura Frader, professor at the Northeastern University of Boston, socialist women found it more difficult to attract women workers in their groups or even in

the Socialist Party. Meanwhile the “bourgeois” feminists mobilised themselves to defend women’s right to work, against unions and the workers’ movement. The latter were indeed very reluctant, and even hostile, to having women join the labour market, as they feared women would steal away men’s jobs. In addition, they believed that the place of women was at home, and that women had “naturally” less of a fighting spirit than men<sup>7</sup>. This was a feeling shared by many socialist activists, who were little inclined to take interest in the women workers’ problems.

As socialists got closer to power, despite many calls by party leaders such as Léon Blum in favour of women’s right to vote at the beginning of the century, socialist politicians did nothing to change the law and at the Congress of 1935, one fourth of the votes cast were against women’s suffrage. When the Popular Front came to power in 1936, Léon Blum appointed three women as junior ministers: Cécile Brunschvicg for national education, Suzanne Lacore for public health, and Irène Joliot-Curie for scientific research. They never took the floor in the National Assembly. On 30 July 1936, the Chamber of Deputies voted in favour of women’s suffrage for the last time. The government abstained from voting. The Senate never put the bill on its agenda. Thus, Léon Blum himself, a long-standing supporter of women’s suffrage (an item on the SFIO party programme since 1906) failed to fulfil his promise. As Charles Sowerwine points out, “*the CNDFS acquiesced, making no effort to obtain women’s suffrage*” from Léon Blum. The government he formed in March-April 1938 did not include any women.

The Third Republic came to an end in 1940 without the SFIO having succeeded in granting women the right to vote, even under the Popular Front, despite the bills and campaigns to achieve this aim within the party, and even more so outside of it. In 1934, journalist Louise Weiss founded “*La femme nouvelle*”, an association championing equal civil rights for women. For two years “*La femme nouvelle*” launched a number of increasingly spectacular actions, with women chaining themselves on the gates of the Palais du Luxembourg, or laying siege to the Senate.

Some municipalities organized parallel mixed polls to elect additional female municipal councillors: In December 1936 in Louviers, then headed by Mayor Pierre Mendès-France, six women were elected deputy municipal councillors and sat in the council with a deliberative vote.

To sum up, **from 1905 to 1940 socialist women fell victims to a virtual invisibility within the Socialist Party**. The party structures included a very small number of active female members (as mentioned above, in 1931 only 220 women were members of the GDFS), and they did not receive any support from the leadership. During the Interwar Period, not a single woman sat in the Permanent Administrative Committee, with the exception of Louise Saumoneau between 1927 and 1930. Even if their actions were at times counterproductive to the struggle for women’s rights, socialist women did not only help establish socialism in France but they also contributed to create awareness, be it slow and belated, on the need for equality between men and women. Moreover, contrary to social

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<sup>7</sup> Frader L.L., *Femmes, genre et mouvement ouvrier en France aux 19<sup>ème</sup> et 20<sup>ème</sup> siècles: bilan et perspectives de recherche*, Clio 1996.



democratic parties, especially those in Northern Europe, French socialism remained independent from the unions (Charter of Amiens in 1906). We have tried to show that there are indeed specific circumstances to be taken into account in the case of France. These partly account for the fact that more generally, socialist women had but few dealings with women workers.

## **1940-1971: The resistible rise of socialist women**

After a large majority of socialist members of Parliament voted in favour of granting full powers to Marshal Pétain on 10 July 1940 (with only thirty-six votes against), the SFIO went through one of the most severe crises in its history. It did regroup however as an underground movement between May 1941 and May 1943. Although socialist women played an important role in the French Resistance, the party did not always seem willing to take interest in the specific problems they faced, or in their demands. As regards suffrage, the initiative came from General de Gaulle who, in a broadcast from London on 23 June 1942, declared that after the end of the war «*all French men and women will elect the National Assembly*».

### **1940-1958: A persistent antifeminism**

The programme of the National Council of the Resistance (CNR) adopted on 15 March 1944 did not take a stand on the issue of women. It was the Provisional Consultative Assembly of Alger (ACP), which included only one woman, Marthe Simard, in a decree of 21 April 1944 (article 17), that granted women the right to vote and to stand as candidates at all elections. This right was achieved thanks to an amendment put forward by Fernand Grenier (of the French Communist Party - PCF), and carried out after lengthy debates, for as William Guéraiche<sup>8</sup> points out, with the radicals putting up fierce resistance against it. Finally, however, the amendment was adopted with 56 votes in favour and 21 against.

This achievement put an end to fifty years of controversy and delays, which had put France at the back of the pack of democratic nations... All the more so as the preamble of the Constitution of 1946 granted women the same rights as men in all areas, this equality of rights being guaranteed by law.

This step forward, however, was soon to be met with a persistent, latent antifeminism in the political world, especially within the SFIO, which was still very suspicious of women's suffrage, as women kept being suspected of remaining too close to clerical circles. However, faced with a totally new situation, the party quickly had to draw up a political programme for the upcoming elections. Despite its previous positions and stands, it was however little prepared to attract the new female voters.

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<sup>8</sup> This part draws a lot from a study by William Guéraiche for OURS, (book and journal by the OURS n°211, May-June 1993): *La propagande en direction des femmes à la SFIO, 1944-1969*.



So the CNDFS re-emerged after the war under the same format as in 1940. At the Constituent Congress of 11 November 1944, however, the party created a secretariat for women's issues. The secretary of the CNDFS was appointed secretary of the new committee and member of the Steering Committee (the former CAP). Her mission was clearly defined in the statutes: to carry out propaganda and recruitment activities, in other words to increase awareness among women about the socialist thinking and encourage them to join the party. Its founders, Andrée Marty-Capgras, Emilienne Moreau, and Germaine Degron soon realised that women's issues did not fascinate party leaders, let alone grassroots activists. They attempted, however, to both "*acknowledge the uniqueness of women's problems and define the conditions of a true equality within the party as well as in society*". For election campaigns, they wrote leaflets addressed to women voters, in which they analysed their specific problems and laid out their socialist solutions. Their publications include «*Le PS défenseur de la femme et de l'enfant*» ("*The PS as defender of women and children*"), «*Le programme socialiste et les femmes*» ("*The Socialist agenda and women*", or «*Ouvrières: les femmes et la restauration du pays*» ("*Women workers: Women and the rebuilding of the country*").

The election results were disappointing: during the 1945 elections for the Constituent Assembly, the PCF came for the first time ahead of the SFIO. In both the general elections of June 1946 (for the new Constituent Assembly) and November 1946 (for the first elections under the Fourth Republic), the SFIO suffered a serious blow. Besides, it sent only three women to the National Assembly: Germaine Degron, Rachel Lempereur, and Andrée Viennot. In the following year, at its 39<sup>th</sup> Congress in August 1947, the administrative secretaries of the women's committee once again denounced the lack of interest from socialist leaders for the women's cause, despite the fact that they represented 55% of voters. According to them, this partly accounted for the socialist electoral defeats. Although they claimed that women would be more likely to vote for the PS if they were better represented in the chambers of power, the socialist leadership ignored this analysis and re-affirmed the principle of universalism, presuming that equality between men and women, male and female activists had already been achieved. Although they had voiced criticism against their leadership, Irène Laure and Suzanne Collette-Kahn also reaffirmed their adherence to the party's positions, as their elders had done like under the Third Republic!

Once again, the tone was set. **During the period between 1948 and 1958, women's issues were not a priority. The SFIO only showed interest in women during electoral campaigns.** The women's committee did not take action to share power within the PS and during elections. It published bulletins addressed to women, like *La vie heureuse* (1946-47), *La revue de la femme socialiste* (46-47), *Le journal de la femme socialiste* 1955-56, but with little support from the party leadership.

Women activists found themselves isolated within the party and made up a tiny minority in the system. In 1958, women accounted for 16% of SFIO members, i.e. the percentage of women in the SPD... in 1914!

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9 Gueraiche W., *ibidem*, page 6.

The fate of women in SFIO under the Fourth Republic is not just limited to the socialist movement. In the twenty-seven governments that followed, twenty-three had no female representative at all, while the remaining four did not feature more than one! In June 1946, the socialist Andrée Viennot was appointed Junior Minister for Youth and Sports in the government of Georges Bidault. She only held her mandate post for seven months! Another one was Germaine Poinot-Chapuis, who was in charge of Health and Population. She remained minister from November 1947 to July 1948. The governments of Pierre Mendès-France (June 1954 – February 1955) and Guy Mollet, Secretary General of the SFIO (February 1956 - May 1957) did not include any women. Only one woman was appointed Minister in the government of Maurice Bourgès-Maunoury in 1957: the radical-socialist Jacqueline Thome-Patenôtre briefly held the post of Junior Minister for Reconstruction and Housing<sup>10</sup>. When Simone de Beauvoir published *Le deuxième sexe* in 1949, later to become “the bible” of feminist movements in the 1970s, familialism and the pro-birth ideology were triumphant, marking a period of regression for feminism, even in the socialist world.

### 1958-1971: The rise of the «second wave» of feminism

With the arrival to power of General de Gaulle and the advent of the Fifth Republic, the SFIO returned to opposition. During that year, Jeannette Brutelle, a young woman of 28, was elected national secretary for women’s affairs. She remained in office until 1971. Even if she, too, complained about the lack of interest for the women’s committee among party leaders and activists, she made it clear from the very start that the role of this committee was «*to attract as many women as possible to the party*». Therefore, the committee continued to draft leaflets for electoral campaigns. The propaganda work continued to provide a justification for the existence of the women’s committee, but always under the tight control of the party and with very limited financial resources at its disposal.

The socialist women (and men!), however, took part in the growing movement in favour of birth control in the late 50s and throughout the 1960s. Several socialist leaders (among whom Colette Audry, Albert Gazier, and Daniel Mayer) became members of the Honorary Committee for Family Planning that was created in 1960. **The issue of contraceptives and birth control triggered a major debate within French society. Initially, the Catholic Church and the French Communist Party were fiercely opposed to any kind of birth control. In 1964, the Socialist Group in the National Assembly put forward a bill in an effort to abolish the law of 1920 prohibiting contraception<sup>11</sup>.** The presidential campaign of 1965 was a turning point. François Mitterrand, sole candidate for the Left, declared himself in favour of contraception.

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<sup>10</sup> In total, only seven women participated in the government between 1946 and 1974.

<sup>11</sup> This law was voted by a massive majority of 521 votes in favour and 55 against on 31 July 1920 by a very conservative Chamber of Deputies (nicknamed the Blue Horizon Chamber because of its overwhelming right-wing political majority) elected in 1919. The socialists were divided on the issue and only a minority among them voted in favour. The law prohibited abortion and contraception. During the debates, the socialists attempted to separate the issue of abortion from contraception. In vain.

In 1967, after a passionate debate and thanks to the indispensable support of the socialist Members of Parliament, the Neuwirth Act finally legalised contraception in France. It took another five years, however, for the implementation orders to be published in the French Gazette.

With the movement of May 1968, the growing power of a “second wave”<sup>12</sup> feminism and the creation of the MLF in 1970, new claims emerged: for the recognition of free maternity, the denunciation of domestic violence, and the prosecution of rape before the Cour d’Assises. In this new context, it was with certain scepticism and incomprehension that the women’s committee of the SFIO saw the emergence of a “new feminism”, to which it remained relatively alien, although socialist women took part in it.

All in all, the SFIO was not quite open to women throughout this period. Only a few of its female members sat in Parliament, and few women were represented in its top ranks. It was not until the 1970s that feminist voices of protest were heard again in the PS.

## 1971 to 2010: The long and winding road toward parity

At the Congress of Epinay in 1971, the Socialist Party definitely closed the chapter of the SFIO<sup>13</sup>. A new PS then emerged, with François Mitterrand at its helm. A little like in 1905, this event was the climax of a unification process of all the socialists that had left the SFIO and were scattered in a host of think tanks.

The objective was unity and the renewal of a political party that had ran out of steam and had been discredited by its policy in Algeria. **Did the renewal also affect women in the party?** The account of Yvette Roudy<sup>14</sup>, who served as Minister for Women’s Rights in the government of Pierre Mauroy after François Mitterrand was elected in 1981, is indicative of the state of the PS with regard to women in 1971. This is what she said during an interview in 2006: «*When I joined the PS under François Mitterrand in 1971, I discovered the world of SFIO, which I did not know. A small, secluded world where feminism was seen as an avatar of the bourgeoisie... The women’s committee completely ignored the feminist movements that had begun to shake up society after May 1968, and in particular the manifest of the «343 bitches»*<sup>15</sup>. The SFIO chose to ignore this manifest, though it had an enormous impact on French society. At the time also, not a single woman sat in the Socialist Group in the National Assembly (their total number in Parliament was fourteen, i.e. 1.8% of the MPs; it rose to twenty-two, i.e. 2.2%, by 1978).

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<sup>12</sup> Picq F., *Le féminisme entre passé recomposé et futur incertain*, PUF, 2001.

<sup>13</sup> This change of direction was prepared in 1969 during the congresses of Alfortville and Issy-les-Moulineaux.

<sup>14</sup> Before joining the new party in 1971, Yvette Roudy was a member of the Convention of Republican Institutions (CIR), the small party of François Mitterrand.

<sup>15</sup> A provocative text in which the “343 bitches”, among whom artists, academics, and journalists, declared they had had an abortion at a time when it was still considered a crime and was punished by law.

## 1971-2000: The failure of quotas and the parity approach

### 1971-1981: The resistance to quotas

In June 1971, the first leadership of the party born out of the Epinay Congress was a very closed group, and it did not include any women, neither in the secretariat, nor in the national bureau or the steering committee. This was not very encouraging for women... Nevertheless, women brought new blood into the PS. Among them were Marie-Thérèse Eyquem, who presided over the Democratic Women's Movement (MDF)<sup>16</sup>, and Yvette Roudy. Both were determined to change things, as was Colette Audry, who had been a member of the SFIO since the late 30s.

The battle for the quota system then started, the aim of which was to ensure women representation in the top ranks of the party and in elected assemblies, along the lines of the systems already implemented in the SPD and in the social democratic parties of Northern Europe. This tough battle was fought at every party congress, and women were themselves very divided on the issue. A small step forward was achieved at the Grenoble Congress in 1973: although the National Secretariat remained an exclusively male-dominated body, Marie-Thérèse Eyquem was appointed General Representative in charge of relations with the Women's Committee. As part of the reform of the party statutes in 1974 in Suresnes, women succeeded in pushing for a representation quota of 10% in the top ranks and for election candidates. It should be noted that in January 1975, although the Socialist Group in the National Assembly consisted exclusively of men, it was instrumental in the adoption of the Veil Act that legalized abortion in France.

At the Congress of Pau in 1975, two women joined the national secretariat: Marie-Thérèse Eyquem, who was appointed National Secretary for associated organisations, and Edith Cresson, as National Secretary for Students and the Socialist Youth. However, no-one was in charge of women's issues any more! At the Congress of Nantes in 1977, women fought for a 20% quota. They struggled to obtain 15% (although the 10% quota had not been implemented) and they were promised a Convention on women's rights the following year. At the end of the Congress, three women had become members of the National Secretariat: Marie-Thérèse Eyquem and Edith Cresson were re-appointed in their respective capacity, and Yvette Roudy was appointed to the newly created function of National Secretary for Women's Action. The promised national convention was held in January 1978. It issued a «PS manifesto on women's rights», which amounted to an official recognition of feminism by the PS. Capitalizing on this, some activists created a "3<sup>rd</sup> wave" feminist movement within the PS, later to



<sup>16</sup> A political group established in 1962, which gathered numerous women from the non-communist left and championed the integration of women in political life, the legalisation of contraception, and professional equality.

be known as the «G wave», a grouping which consisted exclusively of women. The group, which gathered a very small minority in the party, lobbied for a quota of 50%, but it soon disappeared in 1983.

Despite the difficulties to implement the 15% quota, other activists were already calling for a quota of 30%. This however was not achieved until the congress of Rennes in 1990. Although women had obtained a quota of 20% at the Congress of Metz in April 1979, the list of candidates to the European elections in June 1979 featured 30% women, arguably because the European Parliament was not considered as important as the national elections. In fact, the Socialist group in the National Assembly still did not feature any women after the parliamentary elections of 1978.

### **1981-2000: The battle for parity**

Could one expect things to change with the arrival of the left to power in May 1981? **Out of the 110 proposals in the electoral programme of François Mitterrand, a dozen concerned women. They dealt with professional equality, especially equal pay, access to contraception, or the women's claim for a 30% quota on the electoral lists. To implement them, Prime Minister Pierre Mauroy appointed Yvette Roudy as Minister for Women's Rights<sup>17</sup>.** She stayed in office for five years, during which significant progress was made, notably the social security reimbursement for terminations of pregnancy in 1982 (a decision which reignited the debate on abortion), the Professional Equality Act in 1983, and various campaigns to promote contraception and birth control.

Yvette Roudy did not succeed however on the anti-sexism bill, over which the government clashed with the media and the advertising industry, who regarded the bill as a liberty killer. It should be noted that all these achievements were earned in a context of a receding feminism in the 1980s<sup>18</sup> (more generally, it is this author's opinion that achievements regarding women are never quite fully guaranteed...).

Moreover, during this period women were largely underrepresented in the top ranks of the party. The 20% quota achieved in 1979 was only implemented to a limited extent. Strong resistance remained among the party's officials. The spirit of Proudhon was still alive in the PS in the 1980s! **Between 1979 and 2000, progress in terms of the representation of women in the National Secretariat was slow: 5% at the Congress of Valence in 1981, 10% in 1987, and 20% in 1993, with**

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<sup>17</sup> In 1974, a ministry for women's affairs was created for the first time and was entrusted to journalist and writer Françoise Giroud by the government of Jacques Chirac, upon request of the President of the Republic Valéry Giscard d'Estaing. The ministry was dismantled in 1976 by Prime Minister Raymond Barre.

<sup>18</sup> As Françoise Picq puts it in the article previously mentioned, "the patriarchal society digested these, recreating a balance that absorbed the achievements of the struggle, attempting to offset them or diminish their reach."

women not accounting for more than 30% in 2000 even after the law on political parity was adopted! The same is true for the National Assembly. In 1981, only twenty women, i.e. 7%, sat among the two hundred and twenty-five socialist representatives elected after François Mitterrand won the presidential elections in May of that year. Following the parliamentary elections in 1986, women accounted for only 9% (compared to an average of 5.9%) of the Socialist Group in the National Assembly, and only 6% in 1988 (compared to an average of 5.7%). In 1993, a mere 5.2% of Members the Socialist Group were women (i.e. under the 6% average).

The presence of women in the different socialist governments from 1981 to 2002 was weak, though more women were in the government than in Parliament. Under Pierre Mauroy's government (June 1981- July 1984), five women were appointed cabinet ministers out of thirty-four (15%) and one junior minister out of nine. Under Laurent Fabius' (1984-1986), 17% of the cabinet ministers and 10% of the junior ministers were women. Between 1986 and 1988, during the «cohabitation» years with right-wing Prime Minister Jacques Chirac, the number of women in the government was even smaller: one woman cabinet minister in twenty-eight and three women junior ministers out of forty. Michel Rocard (1988-1991) appointed three women cabinet ministers (10%) and three junior ministers (17%). In 1991, François Mitterrand appointed Edith Cresson as Prime Minister. To this day, Cresson remains the only woman to have held this post in the history of the Fifth Republic. She stayed in office for ten months. Her government did not feature more women than those of her male colleagues (five out of 28 cabinet ministers, i.e. 18%, and one junior minister out of sixteen, i.e. 6%). Lionel Jospin's government (1997-2002) was the most woman-friendly, with women accounting for more than 30% of the cabinet ministers and 20% of the junior ministers. It should be noted that during this period, Sweden and Austria boasted a 26% participation of women in their governments, while Germany had only 5.8% and the United Kingdom just 8.6%, even though Margaret Thatcher was Prime Minister. Nine member countries of the Council of Europe did not have any women in their governments (notably Portugal, Ireland, and Italy).

Faced with such resistance against increased female representation in politics across the French political spectrum<sup>19</sup>, notably by means of quotas, socialist women began to nurture the idea<sup>20</sup> of fighting for parity, a concept that emerged in the Council of Europe in 1989 and was taken up again in 1992 in the Treaty of Maastricht. This idea of parity began gathering momentum within the PS.

It first materialized in 1994, with a list called «chabadabada»<sup>21</sup>, led by Michel Rocard for the European elections in June. This list, featuring an equal number of women and men, raised a certain amount of awareness in political parties, especially in the Socialist Party, and was prompted by a more general belief that the lack of women in politics was anachronistic. As a consequence, in 1996, the objective of parity first appeared in the PS political documents. As a man

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19 At the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the percentage of French women in elected assemblies was very low: 21% in municipal councils, 10% in county councils, 25% in regional councils, 5.6% in the Senate, and 10.9% in the National Assembly.

20 Gaspard F., Servan-Schreiber C. and Le Gall A., *Au pouvoir, citoyennes ! Liberté, égalité, parité*, Seuil, 1992.

21 In reference to the music of the film «A Man and a Woman» (1966) by Claude Lelouch.



aware of this situation, former socialist Prime Minister Lionel Jospin made a bold political move during the campaign for the 1997 parliamentary elections: in the event of a socialist victory, he promised he would take measures to ensure equal representation for women in political life. For the elections, the Socialist Party had already taken steps to ensure that a larger number of women would be elected by 'reserving' 167 constituencies for them: around forty were elected, making up for 17.8% of the Socialist Group, which brought about significant progress in the National Assembly as a whole (10.9% of women compared to 5.9% in 1993).

## **2000-2010: Still far away from parity**

After winning the parliamentary elections in 1997, Lionel Jospin was appointed Prime Minister. As he had promised, he began the legislative process that was to lead to the vote on the parity law on 6 June 2000. This law was preceded by an amendment of the Constitution,<sup>22</sup> therefore allowing Parliament to take measures promoting parity, a prerogative hitherto denied to it by the Constitutional Council. This amendment generated a lively debate in France, pitching the supporters of Republican universalism (the Right and certain philosophers and academics affiliated to the Left) against the Anglo-Saxon "*differentialists*", and opposing two concepts of feminism that seemed irreconcilable. This debate also divided the Socialist Party and the socialist women themselves. The law, however, was adopted by a large majority in the Parliament.

### **The law of 2000 is further strengthened in 2007**

The law of 2000, amended by the law of 31 July 2007, was designed to promote the equal access of women and men to electoral mandates and elective functions. It is known as the Parity Law and is an almost unique legislative act in the world<sup>23</sup> aimed at ensuring the equal representation of women in elected assemblies. It introduces a mechanism by which any given party list of candidates must carry an equal number of male and female candidates. If not, the Prefecture can invalidate the list of the given party. Furthermore, to avoid women being put at the tail end of the lists, the law provides that for every relevant election (be it the Senate, or the municipal, regional, and European elections), men and women must be presented in alternation on electoral lists. The July 2007 law imposes the principle of parity for the election of deputy mayors in municipalities of more than 3,500 inhabitants. The same applies to the vice-presidents of regional councils.

The main weakness of this law is that it does not apply to those districts with fewer than 3,500 inhabitants and that it only concerns elections that are based on a list voting system. For the single member constituency elections, such as the parliamentary and cantonal elections, the law of 2000, strengthened by the law of 2007, provides for additional financial penalties

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<sup>22</sup> Since then Article 3 of the Constitution reads: "the law promotes equal access by men and women to electoral mandates and to elective functions". This allows decision-makers to adopt legal measures in favour of women. Article 4 was amended to make sure political parties commit themselves to ensuring that they will "contribute to the implementation" of this constitutional principle.

<sup>23</sup> In 1994, Belgium passed a law imposing quotas on the electoral lists of all parties and on all elective federal and federate bodies. A law from 2002, called the parity law, aimed at guaranteeing an equal representation of women and men on the electoral lists. In 2007, the Spanish parliament adopted a law imposing a minimum percentage of 40% women at parliamentary, European, and municipal elections.



(deducted from the funds given to political parties as part of the public financing of political activities provided for by the proportional law of 1988 if the difference between male and female candidates is higher than 2%). As to the General Councils, it also stipulates that the substitute candidates should be from the opposite sex.

### ***The implementation of the law and its results at national level: reluctant and insufficient progress***

The law passed in 2000 was applied seven times, that of 2007 twice. **All in all, even if some results are satisfactory, the French political scene, including the Socialist Party, remains largely dominated by men.** Significant progress has been made on the level of assemblies elected on a list voting system. This is the case for municipal councils, where the first elections following the adoption of the law in 2001 resulted in an increase of women's representation from 21.5% to 47.5%. After the municipal elections of 2008, they accounted for 48.5% of municipal representatives in districts with more than 3,500 inhabitants, and for 36.8% of deputy mayors. They make up, however, only 32.2% of the elected representatives in districts with fewer than 3,500 inhabitants, that is, 88% of France's districts. All districts put together, women only represent 35% of the municipal councillors (against 30% in 2001). Moreover, since the large majority of the lists were led by men, the percentage of women mayors is a mere 13.2%.

The same goes for regional councils. The elections that took place in March 2010 confirmed the results achieved at the previous elections, as women now account for 48% of the councillors (47.6% during the 2004 elections, i.e. a very slight improvement). The number of women elected as presidents of regions, however, did not increase. Out of a total of twenty-two, two are (still) women<sup>24</sup>, though as a result of the application of the law of 2007, the number of women vice-presidents should approximately be equal to that of their male colleagues. **At the European Elections of 2009, women accounted for 44.4% (43.6% in 2004) of French MEPs. This positive trend has prevailed since 1999 (43.5%).**

Apart from that, as seen with regard to mayors and the presidents of the local assemblies, the question remains as to the significant presence of women in elected assemblies on the basis of a single-member constituency system<sup>25</sup>, that is, especially the departmental (formerly general) councils, the National Assembly, and, partly the Senate. In 2008, the percentage of men in departmental councils was still as high as 86.9%. At the last presidential elections of June 2007, for the first time, the number of women representatives exceeded the symbolic number of one hundred: 107 (18.5%) women were elected, compared to 71 (12.2%) in 2002. This result, however, is still miles away from parity, and as a consequence, France only ranks 18<sup>th</sup> in Europe, far behind from the European average (of 24%), and 66<sup>th</sup> worldwide. The Senate fares better than the National Assembly, as women now

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24 Marie-Guite Dufay in Franche-Comté and Ségolène Royal in Poitou-Charente, both of whom were already presidents of their regions.

25 The reform of territorial bodies under way in Parliament provided for a plurality voting system for the elections of future «territorial councillors», who would at the same time act as departmental councillors and regional councillors. This voting system is not only inconsistent with the French political culture, but also represents a serious blow to parity. The representation of women in regional councils could then fall from 48% to 20%. Women's associations, the PS, and other political groups are rallying in order to prevent this reappraisal of parity.

account for 21.9% of the Senate since its renewal in 2008. The rise in female representation, from 5% in 1998 to 10.5% in 2001, 17% in 2004, and 21.9% in 2009, is attributed to the fact that a number of senators were elected on the basis of party-list proportional representation. The number of women senators is of 75 (as compared to 60 in 2004).

Despite stricter financial sanctions against political parties that refuse to comply with the provisions of the 2000 and 2007 laws, resistance to parity remains strong<sup>26</sup>. Whereas the parties of the Left (Greens, PS, PCF) are making an effort (albeit insufficient), those of the Right are showing even slower progress on this issue (with the exception of the Extreme Right). And yet, the responsibility of the political parties is to commit themselves to the implementation of the constitutional reform of 1999.

The situation is hardly any better at governmental level. **In France, there has never been an equal government, like in Sweden, Finland, or Spain.** Under the Fillon government in 2007, women ministers accounted for 46% of the Cabinet, in line with an election promise made by Sarkozy when he was still a candidate. During the reshuffle of March 2010, this share dropped to 20% (four out of nineteen ministers), though women held two important ministerial posts, that of Finance and Justice. 40% of junior ministers are women.

### ***The PS and parity today***

It is one of history's little ironies to see that in the first elections that followed the passing of the law on parity in 2002, the Socialist Group in the National Assembly featured fewer women (23 out of one hundred forty, i.e. 16.4%) than in 1997 (sixty-three out of two hundred and fifty, i.e. 25%). In 2007, at the last parliamentary elections, forty-eight women were elected out of a hundred and eighty-seven, i.e. 25.6% in the Socialist Group in the National Assembly, and twenty-seven out of one hundred fifteen in the Senate, or 23.5%. This is a significant increase, and a higher percentage than the national average, but the socialists are still far away from the aim of parity. Similarly, out of the twenty two candidates heading the lists for the regional elections in March 2010, only four were women (i.e. 18%) in France (two elected), and no women were to be found on the lists for the overseas regions! At this level, too, the PS needs to make progress, if only to implement its own statutes, which were revised in 2005 at the Congress of Le Mans. In fact, Article 1.6 stipulates that «... *when setting up lists for incumbent and substitute candidates, one must adhere to the principle of parity between men and women at all levels of the party organisation: national, regional, federal, and branch level. The lists must be composed of at least 40% women. If this condition is not met, the seats are declared vacant up to this proportion. Every steering and executive body, from the national secretariat to the local branches, shall include a (female) secretary responsible for women's rights and representation, both in the society and in the Socialist Party, who will be provided with all the necessary support ...* ».

If in 2003 the National Council that emerged from the Congress of Dijon consisted of 48% women,

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<sup>26</sup> In 2002, the UMP, which appointed 19.9% women, was fined 4 million Euros, and the PS, which presented 6% women candidates, had to pay a fine of 1.3 million Euros.

we can only assume that this is the case today, since the list of the National Council that was issued by the Reims Congress in November 2008 is indeed very difficult to access... The National Secretariat, however, only features twenty-one women out of sixty-six members, i.e. somewhere around 30%. Of course, women accounted for 44% of the National Bureau, but only one out of the eighteen representatives in the Group of Federal Secretaries is a woman. The main two posts in the national administration of the party – coordination and spokesperson – are held by men. Similarly, the nine officials working side by side with the First Secretary are men.

It is true that in 2007, for the first time the PS presented a woman as its candidate for the presidential elections, namely Ségolène Royal. Similarly, in 2008, Martine Aubry became the first woman to be elected First Secretary of the party. No one can deny that women have been increasingly represented in the Socialist Party in the last ten years, and that women who reach such high levels of leadership as Royal or Aubry help the cause of women as a whole; but one must admit that there is still quite some way to go before the French Socialist Party abides by the law it promoted and itself voted in favour of, and before it rises to the level of the larger German, Spanish, or Finnish Social Democratic parties with regard to the implementation of parity.

## Conclusion: The reasons behind the fierce resistance against women representation in politics

At the end of this quick overview of a hundred and forty-four years of struggle by women socialists to be able to be active and visible within their party, it remains quite clear that a major obstacle for women is the fierce opposition of male socialist leaders throughout all generations, and their determination to prevent women from accessing political power for as long as possible, causing the party to lag behind, especially in comparison with Anglo-Saxon countries.

This situation is not a mere coincidence. The French cultural context, like all Latin countries, is marked by the supremacy of the written or spoken Word, which is and must remain the prerogative of men. Men have organised political life in a way that (still) makes it very difficult for women to be active in politics because they are subjected to the time constraints imposed on them by their «double working life», i.e., the lack of balance between professional and family life. Indeed, in all the parties, meetings are long and last until the late hours, and taking the floor is difficult. The life of an activist, be it man or woman, very often demands full availability. Women have had to adapt to the rules of a game established long before them, and they are finding it difficult, up to this day, to change them.

As Eléonore Lépinard<sup>27</sup> underlines in her thesis on *La parité ou le mythe d'une exception française* (Parity or the myth of a French exception), "if there is a French exception at all, it is rather to be found in

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<sup>27</sup> in 2004, Doctoral Fellow of Sociology at the EHESS.

*the exceptional resistance of French political stakeholders to increasing the number of women in their leadership structures, or of the French political system to integrating and institutionalizing the issue of women's rights".* Though this resistance has decreased, even in the parties of the Right that strive to introduce parity, this reluctance is still strong in France.

Moreover, three factors that are very characteristic of French politics have worsened the situation. First, the concurrent holding of several posts (the *cumul des mandats* or 'accumulation of mandates') by men limits the number of posts available to women. Secondly, the French Universalist political approach accounts for the reluctance towards the introduction of quota systems by political parties, even those of the Left, because, until recently, these systems were considered inconsistent with this philosophy by the highest legal authorities of the country. Of course, the French voting system also plays an important role: the list voting system favours parity, while the plurality voting system makes its implementation more difficult.

Three other factors are solely attributable to the French PS, and they also account for its lagging behind. First of all, contrary to other social democratic parties, there were never any women's associations outside the PS (even under the supervision of the women of the party). There has only ever been a mere "women's committee", tightly controlled and "exploited" during elections or when a strong women's movement unfolded in society. As seen above, however, since 1974 the mandate of the national secretariat for women's rights has been consistently extended at each party congress.

Article 8.10 of the PS statutes confirms the existence of a Council of Socialist Women, defined as "*an organisation for the intervention, reflection, and action for women who are members or sympathizers of the Socialist Party. It intervenes on all issues relating to women's rights and their representation in our society*".

For the moment, the composition and activities of this council are unassuming, to say the least...

Another factor is that ever since the congress of Epinay, the party is organised into "movements", in which the activists are split. Most often the loyalty of the activists to one of these movements prevails over the solidarity between women. This attitude has obviously played in the hands of men, who retained control over promoting – or not – women within their movements. Albeit less prominent, this situation has endured in the PS to this day. The absence of solidarity between French Socialist women has also kept them from creating a united front against men within their party, like the Scandinavians for instance. This has created an obvious weakness in achieving equal representation in the top ranks of the party, as well as in the candidacies for various elections.

**Finally, the feminist movements of the 1970s and 1980s did not fight on the political battlefield. Their demands mainly concerned societal issues and the freedom of women to decide about their own bodies: the right to termination of pregnancy, the right to divorce, the right to non-marital union, etc. Only recently the demand for political parity and professional equality was taken up by a feminist movement that has changed a lot in the last twenty years.**

Even if it is now a reformist and no longer a revolutionary movement, **the women's struggle for equality and parity is far from being won. Today, this battle needs to be fought in three major areas: the defence and preservation of rights already acquired, especially with regard to right of women to decide over their own bodies, the extension of political rights towards a democracy based on true equal representation, and the fight against professional and wage discrimination, while taking into better account the aspirations of individuals - both women and men – to strike a balance between professional life and family/private life.**

There is far more at stake here than the women's cause, even if they are the most affected for the time being, because these issues are not only at the heart of the organisation of society and economic growth, but they are also at the heart of much larger issues relating to demography, employment, equality, and social cohesion. In other words, they are linked to the very social project we want to promote.

It must be acknowledged that it was thanks to the Socialist Party - and in particular to one of its leaders, namely Lionel Jospin – that progress was possible, and that the first law on parity<sup>28</sup> was adopted, which began to unlock a system that seemed incapable of change on its own. Moreover, it completed a long period of reconciliation between socialism and feminism, at least on the level of principles.

Today, the Socialist Party must not only pursue its internal transformation and become a truly equal party at all levels of power, but now more than ever, it must also take on an unavoidable task: that of *«reformulating a social contract between sexes»*<sup>29</sup>. In this respect, the drafting of the programme of the PS for the presidential elections of 2012 is an opportunity that the PS cannot and should not miss.

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28 On 1 April 2010, the presidency of the National Assembly filed a bill «aiming to strengthen the demand for parity among candidates to the parliamentary elections». This bill was introduced by socialist MPs, among whom many women. This unique text aims at penalizing parties or groups that do not comply with the objective of parity in the nominations for parliamentary elections by withdrawing all public allocations to a party under Article 8 of the law of 11 March 1988 regarding financial transparency in politics.

29 Picq F., *Le féminisme entre passé recomposé et futur incertain*, Cités 2002/1, n°9, op.cit. p.25-38.

# Gender and the British Labour Party

Pat Thane



The Labour Party supported votes for women from its foundation in 1900 and has since had a stronger record of supporting gender equality than rival parties. Women of all classes have always been actively involved in the party. Both before and after British women gained the vote (from 1918) Labour Party women informed and educated women about political issues and strategy. They influenced party policy especially on welfare issues and family policy, including gender equality in divorce rights and custody of children. In the 1970s Labour led the way in implementing equal pay and outlawing sex discrimination. In the 1990s, influenced by women members, it greatly increased the numbers of women elected to parliament by introducing a system of preferential selection of women candidates. It introduced further equality measures while in office 1997-2010. Many gender inequalities remain, but Labour has contributed more to reducing them than any other British political party.

## The birth of the Labour Party and women's suffrage, 1900-1918.

The Labour Party was founded in 1900. Women aged 30 and above gained the national vote in Britain in 1918; in 1928 they gained it on the same terms as men, at age 21. Some women had been able to vote in local elections since 1869, if they were independent holders of property, i.e. mainly better off widows and unmarried women. They could also stand for election to some local authorities dealing with such matters as education, poor relief and health<sup>1</sup>. Many people, including many women, thought it appropriate for women to deal with these matters, which were thought to lie within 'woman's sphere' of caring for others, whereas the matters of state dealt with in parliament were best left to men. Nevertheless, a sustained campaign by women for the national vote began in the 1850s. From about 1906 it became more militant, as many women became frustrated by the politicians' lack of response to their campaigns, especially among the ruling Liberal Party<sup>2</sup>.

In the same year, **1906, women supporters of the Labour Party formed the Women's Labour League (WLL). The two dominant political parties, the Conservative and Liberal Parties, had large women's organizations since the 1870s, on whom they depended especially for building up support for the parties and organizing election campaigns. Women already played important roles in the political process before they had the vote<sup>3</sup>.**

The WLL was established as an autonomous '*organization of women to work for independent Labour representation in connection with the Labour Party and to obtain direct Labour representation of women in parliament and in all local bodies*<sup>4</sup>.

The members of WLL were committed both to promoting the Labour Party, as the first British political party speaking for the working class, and to promoting the rights of women. Labour was the only significant British political party at this time to support votes for women. It did so as part of its demand for full adult suffrage: votes for all men and women at age 21. Before 1918 about 40 per cent of adult men did not have the vote, mainly because they were not property holders. Hence it mainly excluded working class men, but also some unmarried middle class men. This put Labour women, and men, in conflict with the leading women's suffrage campaigners who were prepared, as a first step, to accept votes for women on the same narrow property basis as the male franchise, though many fewer women than men were independent property-holders. On the other hand, from 1912 a number of Liberal women formed an organization to support Labour election candidates against Liberals and Conservatives because only Labour supported votes for women.

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1 Hollis P., *Ladies Elect. Women in English Local Government, 1865-1914*. (Oxford University Press, 1987).

2 S.S. Holton, *Women and the Vote* in J. Purvis ed. *Women's History: Britain 1850-1945* (London: Routledge, 1995).

3 Rendall J., ed. *Equal or Different. Women's Politics 1800-1914* (Oxford: Blackwell 1987).

4 C. Collette, *For Labour and for Women. The Women's Labour League, 1906-18*. (Manchester University Press, 1989). Thane P., *The women of the British Labour Party and feminism, 1906-45* in H.L. Smith ed *British Feminism in the Twentieth Century* (Aldershot: Edward Elgar, 1990), pp. 124-143. 'Visions of gender in the making of the British welfare state: women in the British Labour Party and social policy, 1906-1945' in G. Bock and P. Thane eds *Maternity and Gender Policies: Women and the Rise of the European Welfare States, 1880s-1950s* (London: Routledge, 1991), pp. 93- 118. What follows on WLL is drawn mainly from these works.



Membership of WLL was about 5000 in 1914. The leaders were mainly middle class, since they had more leisure to organize a movement than most working class women. Some of them were wives of the male leaders of the party. The organization was proud of its cross-class membership and its membership, as of the Labour Party overall, was working class, based in northern industrial areas. WLL leaders did their best to draw in the poorest women and to work in their interests. Miners' wives would walk miles to their meetings. **WLL supported strikers and their families, helping them to hold out in some of the prolonged strikes of 1912-14 by collecting and distributing money, food and other essentials. They asked members' views on key issues of the day and campaigned to promote their interests. For example, divorce reform was an important issue before 1914 and for long after. The law was biased against working people and women, because divorce was expensive and it was harder for a woman than a man to gain a divorce.** WLL recognized that many women were trapped in miserable marriages, sometimes with violent husbands, but could not escape unless the law granted them financial support from their husbands for themselves and their children. No change was achieved before World War 1, but in the 1920s and 30s Labour women campaigned with other women and men to achieve gender equality in divorce, though it remained expensive until further reforms were introduced by a Labour government in 1949.

WLL also campaigned successfully, with their allies in the largely working class Women's Co-operative Guild (WCG), when National Health Insurance was introduced in 1911 that the new Maternity Benefits should be paid directly to mothers and not, as originally proposed, to their husbands. The campaigned along with WCG and other women's organizations for improved maternal and child care, aiming above all to reduce the very high infant death rates. When local authorities were slow to act, **in 1913 WLL established a voluntary mother and baby clinic in a poor district of London, while demanding more state action. These campaigns continued during World War 1, having some impact as the government became concerned about the need to build a strong young generation to replace the men killed in the war. The outcome was wide-ranging maternity and child welfare legislation in 1918.**

The WLL supported women in paid work to improve their pay and conditions and supported women engaged in unpaid domestic and child-rearing work in the home in demanding better housing and social services. It always argued that unpaid work in the home should be valued equally with paid work in the labour market since both were essential to society and the economy and that houses, which were women's workplaces, should be improved as paid workplaces were being improved. They often described themselves as 'the housewives' trade union'. They supported family allowances, from as early as 1907, primarily to enable mothers of young children to stay at home, if they wished, and escape the double burden of long hours of work in and out of the home.

From its foundation the WLL sought to inform and educate women about political issues and political strategy, to help them become politically active and effective, to use the civil rights they had and campaign for more, to seek election or appointment to public bodies and speak in public. It provided a supportive sub-culture which enabled women to be active in the public sphere, to take action to improve their own lives and society more generally.

## Women Voters, 1918-1945

Women gained the vote from age 30 in 1918 at the same time as all men gained the vote at age 21. The main reason for the age difference was that women were a majority of the population and male politicians feared to make them a majority of the electorate. Also Liberals and Conservatives were concerned about enfranchising so many working class men, who were likely to support the growing Labour Party, and sought to counter-balance these by enfranchising older women, who they hoped would be less likely to support Labour.

Partly as a result of the extension of the franchise and its successful participation in the wartime coalition government, and helped by the collapse of the Liberal Party, Labour was stronger after World War 1. It was twice in government between the wars, in 1924 and in 1929-31, but in both cases it was a minority party. In 1924, it had fewer seats and votes than the Conservatives, but ruled with the help of the Liberals. In 1929 it had the most seats but could be outvoted by Liberals and Conservatives combined, which limited its freedom of action. In 1931 it was destroyed by the international financial crisis. However, Labour was successful in local elections between the wars, controlling a number of major cities, including London, by the mid 1930s<sup>5</sup>.

Newly enfranchised women flocked to join the party, about 300,000 by 1930. **WLL branches were re-named Women's Sections of local party branches. Women were guaranteed four places on the party executive in the revised constitution of 1918 and a Chief Woman Officer of the party was appointed to organize the women.** Local Women's Sections held separate meetings as well as attending mixed-sex branch meetings and there was an annual Women's Conference. The women had less influence than this might suggest, however, since male trade unionists dominated the party and were not wholly responsive to women's concerns, but they had some successes especially in health and welfare policy. The women argued that these issues mattered particularly to women since they were more likely to suffer poverty than men, especially if they were single parents or in old age; they tended to have poorer health; bore the burden of looking after the very poor housing that prevailed throughout Britain, and were mainly responsible for the health and education of their children. Labour women campaigned vigorously on all of these issues.

The first Labour government in 1924, despite lacking a majority and lasting only eleven months, introduced a major Housing Act which subsidized the building of publicly owned housing of good quality. It increased unemployment benefits and increased expenditure on state education. **The 1929-31 government included the first woman Cabinet Minister, Margaret Bondfield, as Minister of Labour** and one other woman as a junior minister. This government again improved unemployment benefit and housing despite the acute economic crisis. Through the inter-war years Labour controlled local authorities used their powers to build houses and schools and improved health and welfare clinics<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> Thorpe A., *A History of the Labour Party*, (London: Palgrave, 2001).

<sup>6</sup> Thane P., *Labour and Welfare in D. Tanner, P. Thane, N. Tiratsoo eds Labour's First Century* (Cambridge University Press, 2000) , pp. 80-118.

The Labour women played a large role in putting state welfare on the public agenda in the inter-war years, while also campaigning, less successfully, for equal pay for work of equal value and working with other women's organizations to achieve such legal changes as equal divorce rights and equal rights to custody of children after divorce or separation. Many of them became active in public life. The largest number of women elected between the wars was 15 in 1931 (an election in which Labour did very badly), 13 of whom were Conservatives, one Liberal, one Independent and no Labour women. The largest representation of Labour women was 9 in 1929, when there were 3 Conservative women MPs, one Liberal and one Independent. The total membership of the House of Commons was 615. Women found it difficult to be selected for winnable parliamentary seats. More were elected as local councillors. Many women, not only in the Labour Party, believed that they could be most politically effective by organizing in campaigning associations to press the government for policy change. There were many such organizations in Britain between the wars, including the National Council of Women and women's trade unions<sup>7</sup>.

By the time of World War 2 women were an active presence in British politics and in the Labour Party, but were far from powerful in either. Gender equality was still a long way off. During the war Labour, including the leader, Clement Attlee, were powerful members of the coalition government, in particular developing ideas for full employment and improved welfare services after the war.

## The Welfare State, 1945-1951

Labour for the first time formed a government with a large majority in the election following the war, in 1945. Its promises to improve welfare and work opportunities made a large contribution to the victory. Labour won a majority of women's votes, though there still only 21 female Labour MPs, plus one Conservative and one Independent (the feminist Eleanor Rathbone). It had no obvious commitment to promoting gender equality, indeed it refused to implement a recommendation by an official enquiry in 1946 to introduce equal pay, despite campaigning by women. The government argued that to do so would undermine the drive to reconstruct the economy. Its central commitment was to improve the living and working conditions of working people and reduce social inequality by introducing full employment and building a 'welfare state' on the basis of pre-war and wartime developments in welfare policy. **Women, especially working class women, benefitted particularly from the introduction of the National Health Service in 1948, which brought them free, comprehensive health care for the first time, from improved pensions and other benefits, family allowances, house-building, the introduction of legal aid in 1949 which, among other things, made divorce accessible** and other improvements in health and social services. Successful implementation of the government's full employment policy led to higher family incomes, a narrowing of differentials in income and wealth and more work opportunities for women – many of them staffing the new health and welfare services, though their work opportunities remained very restricted compared with those of men. Labour

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<sup>7</sup> Thane P., *Women and political participation in England, 1918-1970*, in E. Breitenbach and P. Thane eds *Women and Citizenship in Britain and Ireland in the Twentieth Century. What Difference Did the Vote Make?* (London: Continuum, 2010) pp 11-28.

women, and women more generally, were less organized and active after the war, many of them feeling that important objectives had been satisfied in the new welfare state.

Labour had only made a beginning in constructing a new social and economic order when it lost the election of 1951 to the Conservatives who remained in office until 1964. This time eleven female Labour MPs were elected, six Conservatives and no others. There were now 625 MPs in total. Labour seems to have kept the votes of many working class women in this election, while losing the votes of middle class women (and men) to the Conservatives. Labour became bitterly divided on such issues as nuclear disarmament and seems to have lost many more women's votes to the Conservatives during the 1950s, as their rivals reaped the advantages of post-war economic recovery and claimed the credit for rising living standards. In 1955 the Conservatives gave way to campaigns by, mainly middle class, women to introduce equal pay in the public sector, where a high proportion of women worked. Into the 1960s women in the Labour Party and the trade unions continued to campaign for equal pay in the private sector<sup>8</sup>.

## Labour Governments, 1964-70.

Labour was re-elected in 1964 and returned to the project of building the welfare state and modernizing the economy. Again there were few female MPs for Labour, or any, party – 18 Labour, 11 Conservatives, no others – though, at 29 out of 630, a little more than ever before: 4.6 per cent compared with the previous high (1959) of 4 per cent. Women and their families benefitted thereafter from increased house-building, improved pensions and other benefits and in education and Labour again, according to opinion polls, won a majority of the female vote in the next election in 1966. The number of female Labour MPs crawled up to 19, while Conservatives fell to 7, together 4.1 per cent of all MPs<sup>9</sup>.

**Between 1967 and 1970 Labour further developed its welfare policies and also implemented a remarkable wave of liberal legislation. This included the legalization of abortion for the first time in 1967.** This had crucial support from male Liberal and Labour MPs, and was the culmination of a long campaign, led mainly by women in the Abortion Law Reform Association, which was founded in 1935. In the same year local authorities were allowed to provide free birth control services. Divorce was further reformed in 1969 making it easier to obtain. The number of divorces rose sharply thereafter, two-thirds of them initiated by women, despite the fact that women tended to suffer financially after divorce, suggesting that women welcomed the change. Other path-breaking legislation of the period included, in 1967, the legalization of male homosexual relationships in certain circumstances; in the same year, the abolition of capital punishment; and in 1968 extension of the 1965 Race Relations Act, increasing powers to prevent race discrimination.

In 1970, after prolonged negotiations and obstruction by private employers an Equal Pay Act (EPA)

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<sup>8</sup> *ibidem* pp. 23-25.

<sup>9</sup> For these and other election statistics 1918-1997 see D and G Butler *Twentieth Century British Political facts, 1900-2000*. (London: Macmillan, 2000) p. 261.

was introduced. This owed much to the energy of the woman Minister responsible, Barbara Castle who pushed it through parliament before the 1970 election, which Labour lost. It was also influenced by Britain's desire to enter the European Community (EC, now the EU), whose member states were bound by the Treaty of Rome to promote equal pay. Castle admitted that the speed with which the law was rushed through parliament led to many inadequacies. It established the principle that men and women should receive the same pay and benefits where both performed *'like work'*, work rated as equivalent under *'an analytical job evaluation survey'*, or *'work that is proved to be of equal value'*. The law also introduced the principle of *'indirect discrimination'*, where pay differentials were due to conditions or practices applicable to both sexes but adversely affecting one or the other. Compliance was to be voluntary until 1975. Employers found inventive ways to evade the law, such as paying bonuses to men but not to women on the same pay grade. But it was an important beginning and led to some narrowing of gender pay differentials. Research in 1971 revealed that in about 20 per cent of national pay agreements for manual workers discrimination had been removed or was on track for removal. Another study in 1980 found that women's relative pay had increased by 15 per cent across all sectors. Also in 1970, the Matrimonial Proceedings and Property Act gave women an increased share of matrimonial property following divorce, recognizing the wife's non-financial contribution to the partnership<sup>10</sup>.

## The 1970s

Conservatives were in government again from mid-1970-74 and negotiated Britain's entry to the EC in 1973. On returning to government – with just 13 female Labour MPs plus nine Conservatives and one Liberal – Labour **in 1975 took further the unfinished business of the Equal Pay Act by means of the Sex Discrimination Act (SDA), 1975.** This had been promoted throughout the intervening years by Labour and Liberal women in parliament (including in the House of Lords, to which women had been admitted in 1958, and to which they were appointed not elected. This enabled a few more women to be politically influential). It was promoted also by the Women's Liberation Movement which was active from 1968. And the government felt under pressure from the EC to give more attention to gender discrimination.

The new law outlawed discrimination on the basis of sex in employment, education and in the advertising of posts, the provision of housing, goods, services or facilities. It established the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC), headed by a woman, to oversee the implementation of the legislation. It became very active in investigating allegations of discrimination and supporting people, mainly women, bringing legal cases under the SDA. Among other things, the SDA forced the elite universities of Oxford and Cambridge to desegregate their previously single sex colleges. There had always been fewer colleges for women, limiting their access to 11 per cent of Cambridge students, 15 per cent at Oxford. Also medical schools had to end the quotas which had severely restricted women's access to medical training. By the 1990s women were more than half of all medical students.

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<sup>10</sup> McCarthy H., *Gender Equality in Pat Thane ed. Unequal Britain. Equalities in Britain since 1945* (London: Continuum, 2010), pp. 111-113.

**In 1976 Labour passed the first British legislation to criminalize violence with marriage, the Domestic Violence and Matrimonial Proceedings Act.** Serious violence within marriage, mainly against women, had long been known to exist on a significant scale. There were campaigns against it in the nineteenth century. But it had not been regarded as a criminal offence, as violence against the person was in other circumstances<sup>11</sup>. Police refused to intervene in what they regarded as private, domestic conflicts. The issue was very actively taken up by the WLM, who established refuges for abused women and their children and put the issue decisively on the public agenda for the first time. The new law enabled a wife to obtain a court injunction to restrain a violent husband, who would be imprisoned if he violated the injunction. This first law against violence in marriage came just 175 years after the first English law against violence towards animals.

Also **in 1976, the Sexual Offences (Amendment) Act improved the safeguards for victims giving testimony at rape trials, e.g., preserving their anonymity.** Fear that their plight would become public was one of many reasons why women and homosexual men did not report rape to the police. The extent of rape, the lack of support for victims and the fear of many of them of reporting the offence had not previously been discussed in public in Britain. The issue was also brought permanently onto the public agenda by the WLM, who established Rape Crisis Centres where victims could receive counselling<sup>12</sup>. Neither of these laws eradicated domestic violence or rape, which are still all too prevalent in Britain, but they brought them into the open and provided justice and support for some victims. Both laws were subsequently revised and extended.

## **Conservatives in Power, 1979-1997.**

**In 1979 the Labour government was defeated by the Conservatives, led by Britain's first, and so far only, female Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher.** In this election eight Conservative women were elected to parliament, 11 Labour women and no others. Mrs Thatcher and her government were not evidently sympathetic to gender equality. Women voters tended to turn against the Conservative Party while she was Prime Minister. Only three women were appointed to the Cabinet – all in roles within the 'female sphere' such as education and health – during the 11 years of Mrs Thatcher's Prime Ministership and the 18 years until the Conservatives were defeated in 1997. Two women had sat in the Labour Cabinet between 1974 and 1979, also as Ministers for education and health.

The EOC continued and, under strong female leadership, further enforced implementation of the EPA and SDA, partly by funding and supporting women bringing legal cases for discrimination against their employers, including supporting successful appeals to the European courts which were especially effective in setting standards in Britain. These contributed to an expansion of women's opportunities in employment and education and a further narrowing of pay differentials, though large gender differences

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<sup>11</sup> Creteney S., *Family Law in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford University Press, 2003) pp 752-6.

<sup>12</sup> McCarthy, *Gender Equality* p.114.



remained. A European judicial decision in 1983 judging unlawful the exemption from the EU Equal Treatment Directive of employees in private households, businesses with fewer than five employees and partnerships with fewer than five partners forced the British government to introduce a new Sex Discrimination Act in 1986. This outlawed discrimination in all collective bargaining agreements and extended anti-discrimination law to small businesses<sup>13</sup>.

Labour however remained strong in local government in many areas in the 1980s. The Labour controlled Greater London Council (GLC) was influenced by WLM activists and particularly active in funding women's groups and projects. It established the first Local Government Women's Committee to give women a formal voice in decision making<sup>14</sup>. In 1984 the GLC spent almost £8 million on gender equality activities, including setting up working parties on such issues as gender equality in employment and child care. There were similar developments in Edinburgh where feminists were also very active. The Conservative government responded to these and other local activities it deemed too radical by increasing central control over local government and, in 1986, abolishing the GLC. London thereafter had no unified local government until it was restored by a Labour government in 2000. Conservatives were weak in Scotland and feared that similarly aggressive action there would make them even more unpopular. Scottish local government and feminist activity survived. In Edinburgh there was particularly active campaigning against domestic violence.

But during the 1980s public spending on child care and child benefits fell, as did the real value of pensions, particularly disadvantaging women who were the majority of pensioners and more likely than men to be poor in old age. Women were less likely to be unemployed than men as unemployment rose during the 1980s, but they were disproportionately concentrated in low paid jobs and suffered from the government policy of privatization of public services and associated reductions in pay and benefits. The gap widened between the minority of women whose educational and work opportunities were improving and the much larger number for whom they fell. During the 1980s and early 1990s the British government lagged behind other EU members in devising and promoting gender equality initiatives<sup>15</sup>.

Labour, in opposition, developed ideas more in line with the EU trend. In 1987 it appointed a 'Shadow' Minister for Women. 'Shadow' Ministers in the British system are normally opposition counterparts to government Ministers. This appointment was unusual because there was no government Minister for Women. It was intended to signal Labour's commitment to gender mainstreaming, which was supported within the European Commission. Labour promised, when elected, to establish a Ministry for Women with a Minister to monitor a gender audit of all government legislation. **This owed much to organized pressure from women within the party, many of them former WLM activists. The Labour Woman's Network was established in 1988 to promote women's progress within the party. They persuaded the party to agree in 1990 that 40 per cent of all party offices and delegations should be composed of women. In 1993, the party's annual conference agreed an important measure of positive discrimination: that, for**

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<sup>13</sup> *ibidem* p. 115.

<sup>14</sup> Barry J., *The Women's Movement and Local Politics: The influence on councillors in London* (Aldershot: Avebury, 1991).

<sup>15</sup> Lovenduski J., *Women and European Politics: Contemporary Feminism and Public Policy* (Brighton: Wheatsheaf, 1986).



the next election, in half of all vacant and winnable parliamentary seats there should be All-Women Shortlists (AWS). This had strong support from the party leader elected in 1992, John Smith.

John Smith sadly and unexpectedly died in 1994. His successor, Tony Blair, was less committed to gender equality. In 1995 the party downgraded its commitment to a Ministry for Women to the creation of a Women's Unit within the Cabinet Office. Labour won the election of 1997 with a large majority. Due to AWS, an unprecedented 101 female Labour MPs were elected, alongside 13 Conservatives, 3 Liberals and 2 from other minor parties, out of a total membership of 657. Women were now 18.2% of all MPs, 24.2% of Labour MPs. The Women's Unit was established, headed by a woman junior Minister without Cabinet rank. However, the unprecedented number of 5 women were appointed to the Cabinet (from a total of 22) including in Departments outside 'women's sphere': International Development, Northern Ireland, and Trade. The Women's Unit commissioned some useful research but its remit was ill-defined and its influence weak<sup>16</sup>. In 2001 it was renamed the Women and Equality Unit, then in 2007 was absorbed into the Government Equality Office and its role partly taken over by the Equality and Human Rights Commission (see below).

AWS was successfully challenged in court under the SDA by men who aspired to be Labour candidates and felt discriminated against. Labour did not contest the case and dropped AWS at the 2001 election. At this election the number of female Labour MPs fell to 95, while 14 Conservative women were elected, 5 Liberal Democrats and 4 from other parties. Labour then introduced the Sex Discrimination (Election Candidates) Act, which allowed AWS, which was re-introduced by Labour in the elections of 2005 and 2010. In 2005 98 Labour women were elected, 27.7 percent of Labour MPs, compared with 17 Conservatives (8.6%), 10 Liberal Democrats (16 per cent) and 3 others. Women were now 19.8 per cent of all MPs, an all-time high<sup>17</sup>. In 2010 the percentage of all MPs who were women rose to 21.5, increasing in both the Conservative and Labour Parties (see below).

Another very important change by the post 1997 Labour government was the devolution of extensive powers to new elected assemblies in Wales and Scotland, in response to demands for independence in both nations, which had been growing for some time. Women, many of them former WLM activists, organized very effectively in both Wales and Scotland to bring about constitutions and electoral arrangements including systems of proportional representation and positive discrimination which gave women greater opportunities for success in elections compared with those for the UK parliament in London. The result in the first election in 1999 was that 40 per cent of elected members of the Welsh Assembly were female, 37.2 per cent of members of the Scottish parliament. In the elections of 2003 was that 39.5% of members elected to the Scottish Parliament and 50 per cent elected to the Welsh Assembly were female. By contrast only 13.6 per cent of Scottish members of the UK parliament were female. Women have been a higher proportion of elected members for Labour than for other parties in both countries in all elections since 1999. The governments in both countries, have moved to promote gender

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<sup>16</sup> Squieres J. and Wikham Jones M., *Mainstreaming in Westminster and Whitehall: From Labour's Ministry for Women to the Women and Equality Unit*, in K. Ross ed. *Women, Politics and Change*. (Oxford University Press, 2002) pp. 57-71.

<sup>17</sup> Childs S., Lovenuski J., Campbell R., *Women at the Top* (London: Hansard Society, 2005).

equality in employment, public services and other areas since devolution Labour controlled Scotland until 2007, when it lost narrowly to the Scottish Nationalists. It has continued to control Wales<sup>18</sup>.

The UK Labour government since 1997 has moved on a number of fronts to advance social, including gender, equality. This includes measures work-life balance, for example extending women's rights to flexible working to enable them carry out caring responsibilities for children, older or disabled people; introducing paternity leave, though, so far, only for two weeks, though more is promised if Labour remains in or returns to power; the introduction of a minimum wage, which particularly advantages women; increasing the job security and benefit rights of part-time workers, who are overwhelmingly female, and strengthening equality law.

In 2007 the Equal Opportunities Commission, which had continued actively to promote gender equality, was merged with similar bodies (including the Race Relations and Disability Rights Commissions) into the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) which was established to help eliminate discrimination, reduce inequality, to work to implement an effective legislative framework for equality and to raise general awareness of equality concerning age, religion, gender orientation, race, gender and disability. The various anti-discrimination laws had become complex and confusing and it was thought necessary to bring them together into a coherent whole. Also many people suffer multiple discrimination and would be better served by a comprehensive body. The EHRC has commissioned and carried out valuable research in all the spheres of human rights for which it is responsible e.g., on the impact of the economic crisis on each of the groups for which it is responsible and on discrimination in various sectors of employment, including on the experience of women working in the UK financial sector, which showed that women were paid up to 60 per cent less than men and received 79 per cent less in bonuses<sup>19</sup>.

Laws against discrimination have been strengthened and extended by the Equality Act, 2010. This replaces the EPA, 1970, the SDA of 1975 and subsequent extensions, the race relations and other anti-discrimination legislation passed since the late 1960s. The new law is designed to simplify and clarify the complex set of regulations which has emerged. It places a duty on all public bodies to ensure equality in all spheres. Among other things, the Act requires all public authorities employing 150 people or more (e.g., local councils and hospitals) to report on the gender pay gap in their organization, with the aim of removing this. This is also expected of private employers, but will not be compulsory until 2013 and then only for employers of 250 people or more. Secrecy clauses in employment contracts will be banned, so that women can detect and challenge unfair pay. Employers will be allowed to take positive action to appoint suitably qualified persons from under-represented groups e.g., to appoint women to the boards of companies, where they are currently very few. Public sector bodies can include equality clauses in

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<sup>18</sup> *Women and Citizenship* pp. 153-226.

<sup>19</sup> For these and other research reports see: [www.equalityandhumanrights.com](http://www.equalityandhumanrights.com)



procurement contracts, e.g., requiring contractors to train women in areas of skilled work in which they are under-represented, such as plumbing or electrical work. This law has the potential to promote gender equality and other areas of equality. However it was passed just before the 2010 election for implementation in October 2010. Labour failed to gain an overall majority in this election. If – as is not yet clear at the time of writing – the outcome is a minority Conservative government the legislation may not be fully implemented because there is considerable resistance to it in the Conservative Party.

## Conclusion

Gender equality has progressed and women's rights have greatly increased over the past century. In Britain the Labour Party has made a major contribution to this progress, so also has the EU. But equality is still far from being achieved. There is still an average 17 per cent gender gap in pay<sup>20</sup>. Women still carry out most of the child-care and domestic work even when they are in full-time employment. Females are more successful than males at all levels of education, but are still over-represented in low-paid work and under-represented in senior positions. In 2007/8 they were 11 per cent of directors of FTSE 100 companies, up from 8.3 per cent in 2003; only 13.6 per cent of editors of national newspapers, 9.6 per cent of senior judges, 26.6 per cent of top civil servants, 34 per cent of heads of secondary schools<sup>21</sup>.

In the 2010 election campaign, despite the recent passage of the Equality Act, Labour said little about its achievements for women or about the positive role of the EU. Nor were women prominent in the campaign, even leading figures in the party, such as Harriet Harman, the deputy leader, who took a leading role in promoting the Equality Act in parliament and is the Minister responsible for Equality, including gender equality. This was equally, or more, true of the other parties. The proportion of women MPs rose to 21.5 per cent, following the election, an increase from just under 20 per cent in the 2005 election. 81 women were elected for Labour, a little over one-third of the party's reduced total of seats. The Conservatives felt under pressure from Labour's example to select more women and this has been promoted by the leadership, despite opposition in the party. 44 women were elected for the Conservatives, about 14 per cent of their total compared with the previous 8.6 per cent. Eleven female Liberal Democrat MPs were elected, 20 per cent. Women's numbers in parliament continued to progress- slowly. However the number of female Ministers in the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition currently in government was lower than in the previous administration: 4 out of 23 Ministers compared with 5 in the previous government, itself a reduction from 8 until 2009.

Social Democracy in Britain cannot make more women committed to its values, or to the EU, when the only social democratic party, Labour, is so silent about what both Social Democracy and the EU have done for women.

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20 Stop Gap .The Fawcett Society Magazine , Autumn 2008, pp. 10-11.

21 Equality and Human Rights Commission Sex and Power: Who Runs Britain 2008? (London: Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2008).

# Gender and social democracy in Germany



**Christa Randzio-Plath**

Gender equality despite nearly 150 years of German Social Democratic Party (SPD) existence has been a contested subject in the programmatic debate of the SPD. Nevertheless the SPD can register a success story on equality of women and men as on the right to vote, to education, to jobs, to abortion and to equality in general. Legal equality is important but needs implementation: equal access to political and economic power as well as decent work for women is still missing. Missing are also legal provisions for equality in the private sector. Given rising inequalities, dramatic pay gaps and gaps in work life balances equality policies must regain importance for the SPD of today and tomorrow. Empowerment of women, gender mainstreaming and gender budgeting as well as quota regulations and networking have to be part of a strategy to overcome inequality because of gender.

The emancipation of women and gender equality were on the agenda of the social democratic party in Germany early. Since the 18<sup>th</sup> century Germany has been under the influence of the age of enlightenment and the French Revolution, but also democratic evolutions and thus human rights and women's rights. This discussion helped to promote women's voices calling for women's equality and the claim for equal access to education and voting rights including equal access to employment and equal pay despite the fact that in most parts of Germany women were allowed to organise and meet only in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD) was founded in 1863 and from its beginning included those values of equality in its program. But also from its start the ideological conflict on the role of the women and gender equality characterised the political debate because also social democrats felt that the place of the woman is at home. Courageous women like Clara Zetkin and later also one of the famous social democrats, August Bebel, engaged for women's equal rights. August Bebel wrote the famous book *"Women and the Socialism"* in 1883. In view to Marxist traditions in the SPD an ever appearing question has been discussed at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century as well as in the 1970s: Is the question of equal rights for women part of the complex social change which can only be solved together with it or will the women's rights question necessarily follow the solution of the social change? This last position got a majority and made the gender issue a secondary subject supported by the great socialists August Bebel and Rosa Luxemburg. So at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century there was a lot of opposition against women's right to work. **Clara Zetkin and August Bebel promoted women's rights because for them women's emancipation was part of the struggle of the oppressed classes against the ruling classes.**

**The SPD has been the first political party in Germany allowing for female delegates in 1890 and calling for the women's rights to vote at the convention of Erfurt in 1891 and presented a draft legislative proposal in 1895 which was rejected by all other political parties in the German Reichstag. Finally, after the First World War, in 1918 women got the right to vote mainly on the initiative of social democrats.**

## **Gender equality within the SPD**

Since its foundation the SPD has taken into account gender equality and insisted on a safeguard clause for the representation of women in its constitution. To begin with, the SPD did not want to have a women's organisation and SPD women joined the argument that SPD women should not have a special status but should only be considered part of the party. Women were divided and therefore a women's organisation on its own wasn't organised.

The SPD program of 1925 in Heidelberg was much more progressive and called for a representation of female members on the board in relation to the number of female members but did not vote in favour of a women's organisation. After 1945 the discussion started again but women did not fight to get their

own organisation. Already after the Second World War, with the rebirth of the SPD, it created women's committees and introduced a safeguard clause in order to guarantee women's representation in the party executive board with four women. There were also women's conferences but without decision-making power and influence on the decisions of the party conventions or the board. Not even 10% of the delegates of the party conventions were women. But the tension between the interests of the party and the women within the party continued to exist. The SPD by "wasn't at the time so much in favour of equality in view to economic and employment rights and accepted the bourgeois model of the family and the main role of the woman as caretaker in the fundamental programme of Bad Godesberg (1958).

One important example for the relationship between the SPD and the women was the case of the so-called mother of equality in view to the first German Constitution (1948). **Dr. Elisabeth Selbert (SPD) rejected any formulation in article 3 of the German Fundamental Law which reduced the equality of men and women to the right of active and passive voting like the constitution of the Republic of Weimar. She was successful thanks to the active women's organisations and finally the SPD and so the first German constitution in article 3 called for equality for men and women in all areas including political, social and private life.** But she could not enter the Bundestag as a deputy because the SPD did not offer her a safe seat.

The pressure of the autonomous women and the students' movement in the 1960s and 1970s changed the lack of interest in women's rights and discrimination. The SPD realised the underrepresentation of women in governments and parliaments as well as in membership and party functions but also the existing discrimination of women in politics and in society. After long debates and quarrels and even hostile discussions, **the Association of Social Democratic Women (AsF) was founded and held its first conference in 1973 in Ludwigshafen. The AsF was seen as a lobby for the SPD. The AsF understood its role as lobbying for the SPD but also lobbying on women's interests inside the SPD.** The AsF always defined its position as being socialists and feminists and part of the peace movement. The influence of the AsF was limited but helped to change political positions which were not longer accepted by the younger part of the population. In 1988 the AsF finally got through a quota solution for the political representation of women in the party constitution. For the SPD, women's persistent under-representation in political decision-making is a democratic deficit. For the SPD women's organisation, it was clear that change was necessary. The credibility of the party was at stake being in favour of freedom, justice, equality and solidarity. Women's active citizenship and participation in politics and in senior management public administration at all levels should be further promoted. After a long debate which ended in rejecting the quota in the 70s, the AsF recommended the Norwegian example of the 40% representation for women in political responsibilities. The 40% quota and the amendments to the party convention was accepted and has been practiced since then. **The SPD experience demonstrates that women's quota make a difference and increase the decision-making power of women. The share of women in the social democratic fraction of the German Bundestag increased from 5.4% (1972) to 36% in 2009. The share of female members of the German government increased from 20% in the 90s to 40% in**



**the legislature from 2005-2009 when there was a coalition government of SPD and CDU/CSU.**

The same access to political power is also realised on the regional level (Länder). On the local level the SPD women count not more than 29.6% of the local parliamentarians and 20% of the mayors.

Thus, the SPD in contradiction the CDU/CSU and the Liberals has been in favour of the quota and put it through. The new party, the Greens, had opted from its foundation for the quota solution and introduced a parity democracy in its constitution. The SPD on the proposal of its president, Willy Brandt, was the first party to discuss the quota solution but only second after the Green party to introduce it. The quota regulation in the eyes of women has weaknesses because there are no sanctions for non-respect of the quota and the quota only counts for lists of candidates not for individual candidatures. Nevertheless: the introduction of the political quota made of the SPD a party being concerned about the women's equality and contributed to the mobilisation of women. Equality reports at the party conventions evaluate regularly the state of play in view to gender equality. The first SPD female minister, Käthe Strobel, said: *"Politics are too important to be in the hands of men."* Women make a difference by agenda- and issue-setting and insisting on women's rights. On the local level, female decision-makers insist on access to public services for women and children. They encourage greater political engagement by women and make the party aware of necessary strategies to reach gender equality and gender justice.

When the SPD won the federal elections in 1998 the government put aside gender empowerment, implemented the strategy of gender mainstreaming into its internal rules of procedures and made an inter-ministerial coordination necessary. Gender mainstreaming was proposed as a complementary strategy to contribute to gender equality, gender justice and to women empowerment or women promotion programmes. Germany opted for gender mainstreaming as a policy measure for all political areas. This applies also to the Länder level and social democratic governance.

## **Gender equality in law**

Gender equality in law was instrumental for gender equality in Germany. A lot of legislation changed in family, divorce and heritage law, in civil, labour and social law. The legal equality of women is a success story of the women's movements in the 20<sup>th</sup> century including mainly social democratic women. The first women's movement in difference to the second and may be third women's movement was more concrete to improve the situation of the women by political voting and education.

## **Gender equality, equality, anti-discrimination and equality machineries**

Gender equality being a principle of the German Constitution and the reality of equality performance was a challenge for the social democratic women. The Fundamental Law did neither



help to give women the equal participation and access to political power nor facilitate equality in employment. The AsF called upon the social democrats in the German government and the members of the Bundestag to introduce an equality law for the labour market and equality machinery. Thanks to the pressure of the social democratic women, the equality directives of the European Community and the obligation to transpose those directives into national law, German legislation has been adapted in 1980 to equality demands in the labour market (Arbeitsrechtliches EG-Anpassungsgesetz), which was an EU standard but not very progressive in comparison to the Nordic States, the Anglo Saxon countries and France. Finally, the AsF also got the commitment of the SPD and the SPD led government put through an equality law for the public sector in 2001. Equality machinery was introduced on the level of the federal State. A lot of ministries for women equality and delegates for equality have been nominated on the federal, regional and local level. Public awareness and role models, gender studies and conferences gave the platform for further struggle in order to achieve equality. It was important that at this time also on the initiative of social democratic women a lot of the States (Länder) introduced equality laws for the public sector and soft quota regulations.

Without the introduction of quotas in the political life of Germany the political results would have been weak. But quotas are not a solution in itself, are not enough to achieve a parity democracy. Rules and strategies are needed in order to restructure society. Gender equality can only be achieved if *“we create a society with a human face and overcome the male society”*.

## **Economic participation**

Combating gender inequalities in the labour market has been a main objective of the AsF since its foundation. According to positions of the women in the SPD emancipation of women could only be possible with the economic independence of women. Part-time work became a much discussed issue not helping women to earn their living. On the one hand the SPD engaged for full time employment of women on the other hand the it did everything to put part-time and full-time work on an equal footing in view to professional training, pay, promotion and job conditions. This position was due to the fact that most women could only work part-time because child care facilities in Germany were very poor.

The gender gaps in employment rates, unemployment rates, in part-time jobs and insecure jobs were and are a fact. Therefore the engagement for the reduction of the daily working hours and the call for a *“six-hours-day”* became a bible for economic equality of women and men. At the same time the value of female and male work was discussed without any results until today. And despite close cooperation with trade unions neither the valorisation schemes nor the unequal pay for equal work could be changed. Since the 1970s, SPD fought to overcome the disadvantages on the labour market. But despite the higher employment rate of women the level of structural discrimination has increased as well as their risk of impoverishment. 70% of jobs in low wage sector and 80% of part-time work are in the hands of women. Further examples

of discrimination are the tax system and the so-called mini-jobs enrolment. Income levels are not high enough to secure their livelihood. Hence for long the SPD is in favour of minimum salary and an income securing livelihood and a safe future. Women still face disadvantages – a lot has to be changed especially in view to the educational level of women.

Women in the private sector and in business management still are far from not being marginal. Voluntary agreements with the private sector are ineffective and therefore more than ever equality legislation for the private sector is as necessary as incentives for the private sector. The income gap between men and women is considerable on all levels, even on managerial level. Women's participation in active employment in Germany is only big because of so many women in part-time work and mini-jobs.

Gender roles continue to prevail. Women are assigned the primary responsibility for care of the family and men the task of financially supporting the family. Unaltered stereotypes prevail, also in the media. Efforts to eliminate gender inequalities in employment still need more action. A smart economy in the EU means getting more women to work. It is important to narrow the employment and pay gap.

### **Family Policies**

The women in the SPD engaged themselves to modernise family policies and law. For centuries the role of women has been restricted to *children, kitchen and church* (KKK in German language).

The SPD family policies followed the traditional family model in Continental Europe. It was especially popular in Germany after the Second World War and in 1950s when men having been war prisoners came home and women had to leave their workplace. Women were reduced to their role of care-takers in the broadest sense. The German Constitution with its article 3 and the judgements of the Constitutional Court contributed to important legislative changes which made partnership the leading model in the family. But nevertheless the family was under the specific protection of the German Constitution. Family in former time was linked to marriage. Given the social changes family has been redefined as a community of adults and children.

Very important for gender equality have been the marriage and divorce provisions during the 1970s. Divorce changed from a fault to non-fault divorce. The SPD engaged in changing the law of divorce to be based on the principle of broken marriages in view to its grounds and effects. Aside from the rules of maintenance which start from the principle of self-responsibility, spouses are entitled to claim maintenance under certain conditions. The most innovative approach of the SPD which helped women as the main care-takers in their economic position was the introduction of a special adjustment of pension rights (*Versorgungsausgleich*). This helps to compensate for time that has been devoted totally or substantially to childcare and housework. All pension rights and expectancies of

the spouses which increased during marriage are equally divided with the divorce. This improved the situation of women when they reach the retirement age.

SPD women had to work hard in order to change the SPD position in view to childcare facilities for children less than six years and full day schools. The SPD then engaged its policy towards a sustainable family policy aiming at support for families. The main objective was to promote the reconcilability of family and work in order to achieve life plans which include children. A paradigm shift concerned the expansion of an effective infrastructure which supports care and education outside of the family and helps to integrate women into the labour market. Finally the SPD was successful in the Big Coalition by giving all children the right to care facilities and promoted the Nordic Model of parents pay (*Elterngeld*).

Today the SPD is the frontrunner of all political parties to guarantee the right for full day childcare facilities and full day schools in order to promote development chances for children and the conciliation of working life and family life for men and women. Parental leave was another political project of the SPD. Children's welfare is on top of the SPD agenda because public funds expensed for children are an investment in the future and not costs burdening the budgets, as other political parties state. The social democratic family policies call for complex childcare facilities and partnership among spouses. One unresolved issue remains the discrimination of women in taxation policy of married couples which is splitting the difference in spousal income and refuses individual taxing which is mostly the case in all EU countries. This legal provision has an impact on the perpetuation of stereotypical expectations for married women.

Parenthood has traditionally an important long-term impact on women's participation in the labour market. The statistics show that women without children have a higher employment rate than mothers. Because of day care facilities women in Germany are more affected by children than women from other countries.

## **Education and care facilities**

The average educational attainment of women and men is now similar over the entire working-age population. Young women even score more than 50% of upper secondary school education.

On the proposal of social democrats in 2007 the policy of parental allowances became reality as means against role stereotypes of mothers and fathers. The current government wants to subsidise parents who stay at home to care for their pre-school children (*Betreuungsgeld*). Very legitimately, the SPD protests because this policy sends opposing and counterproductive signals concerning care facilities for children from 0-6 years. In comparison to other EU member countries Germany has not a comprehensive and high-quality childcare system and does not fulfil the EU criteria for the conciliation of work and family life which is to offer day care facilities to 90% of the children between 3 and 6 years

or 33% of the children beneath three years of age. Given the fact that Germany has part time schooling as a principle, the lack of corresponding after-school programmes is a problem. More full-time schools are introduced.

## **Women's rights, abortion and §218**

For more than 100 years women fought for the right to decide on their own and claimed to legalise abortion. Illegal abortions were numerous and a lot of women suffered, became ill or even died, especially poor women. Contraception was nearly non-existent. Women of the SPD made the legalisation of abortion and the right for family planning their case and got the support of the party. In the 1970s the women and the SPD supported the campaign *"My belly is mine"* and the right of women to sexual self-determination. The 1970s and 1980s were years of struggles and decisions in order to give women their sexual autonomy. In 1972 in East Germany and in 1974 in West Germany abortion on demand up to twelve weeks of pregnancy has been allowed. The Constitutional Court in West Germany ruled that the law was unconstitutional because of the constitutional human rights guarantees. In 1976 a new law was passed and legalised abortion on demand during the first twelve weeks of pregnancy for reasons of medical necessity, sexual crimes or serious social or emotional distress. Counselling and a three-day waiting period were obligatory. This law was confirmed in principle in 1995 after the unification of Germany so that women now are not punished if the pregnancy is due to rape, medical indication justifies abortion or the women who are willing to end their pregnancy by abortion have attended a pro-birth counselling and respected a three-days delay.

## **Violence against women**

Violence against women was a dark area until the 1970s. Women addressed this violation of human's rights as a political and social matter. The SPD women took the political lead with the women's movement decisively against any form of violence against women. According to studies, in Germany every fourth woman regardless of her social status has experienced domestic violence at least once during her life-time. This violence expresses the persistent structure of a patriarchal society and its conflict solving patterns. Prevention must address the general societal and the individual causes at the same time. The SPD supported houses for battered women, SOS phones and call centres for women and girls in distress on all political levels and contributed to change the public budgets accordingly. Violence still has different faces and the women in the SPD called upon the government to get women specific regulations integrated into the penal code. Actually there are no legal instruments specifically dedicated to violence against women with the exception of marital rape. Sexual harassment at the work place is common and so is violence against migrant women (forced marriages, *"honour"* related violence, trafficking). Social democrats have launched campaigns against domestic violence. New action plans of the federal government also applying for developing countries might help. Further necessities are strict

regulations, awareness-raising in the society, actions and funds on the regional and local level, like the protection of battered women to stay in their homes or get new homes.

## **Women and peace**

The AsF was an important part of the feminist women's movement and the peace movement. This goes back to the very beginning of the activities of German female social democrats who engaged themselves against violence and the First World War and in the resistance against the fascist regime of Hitler. After the Second World War a lot of social democratic women met with women in other European countries in order to fight against rearmament and the Cold war. The AsF called on a ban for weapons of mass destruction. The women participated in peace marches, rallies and public meetings, opposed against the decision of the social democratic government to deploy Pershing II and cruise missiles in Germany and engaged in favour of a nuclear free Europe. The SPD took the same position only at the Cologne Convention. The SPD women followed the tradition of peace Nobel Prize winner Bertha von Suttner, of Alva Myrdal and the women's world conferences in Mexico, Copenhagen and Nairobi. Without peace the women did believe nothing could be changed to the better. This also is a reason that the SPD nowadays can be looked upon as the party supporting gender equality and gender empowerment for Third World countries and the special projects for women and role in development.

## **Equality now**

Women in the SPD declared as their values freedom, justice and solidarity as well as gender equality. They could not introduce a complex approach to gender equality in the Gotha convention (1875). They just got the support for equal voting of men and women. Only the Heidelberg programme (1925) introduced the full gender equality approach due to the engagement of the women but also of August Bebel. After the end of the Second World War, women had to start from zero despite the fact that there were 7 million more women than men in Germany and a lot of women had to accept so-called male jobs. But the revolutionary party programme of Bad Godesberg which transformed the SPD from a class struggle party to a peoples' party neglected the gender issue and reduced the women to the role model of the bourgeois society. Until 1977 and until the framework of orientation in 1985 the question of gender equality was not really a crucial issue on the SPD agenda. Since then not only the AsF but also the party engaged strongly in favour of overcoming traditional role models and gender stereotypes but also strived to enlarge gender equality, reduce working hours for parents with children and offer appropriate child care facilities at an affordable price.

**The Berlin Programme from 1989 and the Hamburg Programme from 2007 are milestones for the SPD equality policies because they stress the necessity to bid farewell to the patriarchal structure of modern societies.**

## Gender equality: challenges and achievements

The economic activities and the employment situation of women have improved in the last 20 years especially because of the engagement of the SPD with majorities in governments on the different levels. The progress can be proven:

- by the increasing employment rates of women,
- by more women opening business,
- by increased activity of women in the public sector.

But there are shadows linked to the achievements of the active employment policies of the SPD. **In Germany the employment rate is nearly reaching the 60% objective for female employment of the European Union's Lisbon strategy for growth and employment mainly due to part-time work and the flexibility of women accepting work at any price. This situation is reflected by the 23% pay gap between men and women.** Equal pay for equal work and work of equal value in line with the EU directives is still missing. This is also due to the fact that female work is underappreciated as work of less value than the work of men. New systems of measurements may contribute to reduce the pay gap and the discrimination of women working. But as long as there are no legal obligations and no sanctions it will be difficult to implement equal pay.

### Current situation of gender equality in Germany

Germany ranks 21<sup>st</sup> in the gender equality ranking of the UNDP assessing education, life-expectancy, health and income, 12<sup>th</sup> in the gender ranking of the World Economic Forum counting education, income and political participation. Nevertheless there is a positive development as far as the employment rate of women is concerned. The employment rates of women increased to 66.1% in the third quarter of 2009 thus lowering the employment gap to 9.7% and for the first time in decades the unemployment rate of women has been lower than for men. Working women are now daily reality but also economically necessary in a country where still in 2006 the majority of the people in a public poll said that women with children should stay at home.

Equality on the labour market does not exist especially in view to the quality of work and level of pay despite the fact that women by far have a better education. The gender pay gap in Germany is with 23% among the highest in the EU (average: 15%). Reasons are manifold. Because of their economic situation, women accept jobs at any price and occupy part-time jobs, limited work contracts or minor occupation involuntarily. Two-third of the minor employment is in the hands of women. Their situation can only be improved with the introduction of a minimum pay and of social security from the first hour of work on. There is also gender segregation in the professional and tertiary education as well as in employment which affects the pay and the valorisation. Besides, there is no equality in the valuation of women's work to men's work. The valuation of women's and men's work has to follow the same criteria. This inequality is especially

crucial for the private sector because in Germany no equality law exists for the private sector like in the public sector.

Critical is also the lack of leading positions for women in Germany. Despite the German government headed by a female Chancellor there is no equality between women and men in the governments, in the parliaments, and especially not in the local parliaments or in the leading positions in the courts, administrations, universities or other institutions. The current power on agenda-setting, budgetary decisions or positioning still largely lies in male hands. But nevertheless the performance is better than in the private sector where no women of the biggest companies is president of the board and only 13% of members in the supervisory boards of the leading companies are women. Therefore Germany is far away from the legal and political progress in the Nordic countries, France and Spain.

Another topic of concern is the growing poverty of women. Tradition, culture and stereotypes have contributed to a gender division of labour that women should be mainly responsible for caring of children, the elderly and the disabled in the family. This still is a state of play. Women taking the unpaid caring responsibilities can only work fewer hours or stop work altogether. Over the lifetime, this caring role reduces women's opportunities to develop skills and build up assets, such as pension. The risk of poverty is especially high for single mothers. 40% of single parents are welfare recipients. 90% of them are women. The insufficient care facilities for children, the tax system and the lack of flexibility in the labour market are reasons. Those women are the last to overcome the poverty trap.

The reconciliation of work life and family life remains one of the issues which have to be tackled in order to overcome inequality. All children must get a childcare facility. The work and private life balance of women cannot be improved if there is no progress. For the equality of women and men the childcare facility problem and the care for dependents is a real challenge. Without more public investment a solution cannot be found.

Freedom, equality, solidarity and respect of human and minority rights are European enshrined in the Lisbon treaty as part of the Charter of Fundamental Rights and they are values of the Left in Europe. Nevertheless violence is the daily reality for women. Every fourth women in Europe experienced at least once violence, mostly sexual violence. This violence has different faces and means physical violence, domestic, psychic violence, structural violence, but also excision, forced marriage, bride burning, widow murdering, girls killings, forced prostitution, forced labour, trafficking of women. The challenge especially of domestic violence does not allow for inertia in the forthcoming decade but obliges the EU to undertake action and promote legislation as well as enforcement and implementation of national legislation in the EU context. Violence is against women's and human rights and also has impact on the economic development of an economy which is not affordable.



Given the existing discrimination and gender inequality everything has to be done to overcome the old role models and traditional thinking. Those who want to live in a human society have to overcome the male society (cf. SPD programme, Hamburg, 2007). Challenges are meant to be solved.

## **Women are the future**

Given the last decades and the prevailing ideology of neoliberal thinking also social democrats put the market, competitiveness and growth first. The credibility of a parity democracy, equality and social justice has to be regained as the brand of the German Social Democracy. The last elections in Germany have demonstrated very clearly that women sanctioned the loss of confidence by not voting for the SPD.

The fundamental values of the SPD need revival and further development. All policies need a gender perspective as well as women's voices in political decision-making and in the public.

Equality between men and women should be crucial in the political programs of the social democratic party's programmes and activities. The parity democracy should be in the centre of reflection and action because progress in the society has to be built upon the integration of both men and women's capacities, competences, knowledge and engagement. This means that equal opportunities are not sufficient. Globalisation has created enormous wealth but at the same time increased inequality and poverty. This development has to be stopped. Globalisation has to serve all people and has to be put under democratic control. The predominance of politics has to prevail over market forces. The market economy should not transform itself into a market society and make the people serve capital. Capital and the economy have to serve the people. Therefore the European democracy and the European social model have to be strengthened and developed further.

**Women are more sceptical towards the European Union and the European integration than men. This prejudice has to be overcome by more transparency and actions.**

Transparency is necessary because very often women are misled on the impact of European policies on national level. For example, when the Euro has been introduced, a lot of member countries had to cut expenditure for social infrastructure in order to fulfil the convergence criteria on solid public finances. Therefore a lot of women have been against the euro. But it has been the individual member state to choose the ways and means to consolidate the budget. Transparency is also necessary to demonstrate the impact of European Law on non-discrimination and equality in the member states.

Gender equality plans and gender equality institutions on the European level and in the EU member states are welcome but not enough. Europe could prove its commitment to gender equality especially by closing the gender pay gap by finding ways and means which have to be coordinated on the EU level and implemented on the national level. It would be crucial to combat violence in a

common effort on the European level. Long enough conferences and discussions are going on. The integration of migrant women remains a challenge. Finally, the financial crisis and economic slowdown should not endanger public investment in social infrastructure, especially childcare. The reforms needed now must make a progressive Europe with equality in life and work a reality.



Queries

03

**Stronger from the past,  
encouraging experiences**

# Gender equality policies in Spain

## The commitment of social democracy



**Soledad Ruiz Seguí and Marta Plaza**

This paper focuses on the evolution of gender equality policies in Spain, reflecting the firm commitment of social democracy to the promotion of effective equality measures. The article is divided into two parts: The first one begins with a historical retrospective on how women mobilised themselves and fought for better representation from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century up to the mid-late 20<sup>th</sup> century. Women went from being subject to obligations to being holders of rights in a country which experienced both two democratic republics and two dictatorships. This section also deals with the Spain which gave rise to the 1978 democratic Constitution, still in force today, and the quantum leap in women's rights achieved through implementation of the equality policies of Felipe González's socialist governments (1982-1996). The second part performs a detailed assessment of decisive social democratic gender policies in Spain from 2004 onwards, under the governments of José Luis Rodríguez-Zapatero, taking into consideration the measures implemented, socialist achievements in the field of gender equality and the challenges still to be tackled. Lastly, to conclude, new proposals are raised with a view to helping foster further progress in this field.

# 1 | Spanish women's achievements in the recent past (19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> centuries)

## Spanish society in retrospective

An account of the victories won in the fundamental and citizenship rights of Spanish women is intrinsically tied to the history of Spain and its social situation over the course of the events that took place.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Spanish population lived mainly in rural areas, the economy being based on agricultural labour. The role assigned to women was that of a wife and mother; marriage was the way out of the family home, and motherhood a woman's chief function. This allocation of social roles did, however, have different consequences depending on the social class to which women belonged. Work in the fields, the factory and the tertiary sector represented the areas open to Spanish working-class women, most of whom would leave work when they married.

It should be pointed out that the working female population at the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century represented 18.3% of workers, providing the productive fabric with a significant labour force. Levels of illiteracy were remarkably high. Only 25.1% of women could read and write in the year 1900 (Capel, 2003).

Employment conditions, an increase in labour and the shift from the countryside to the city in search of work gave rise to a workers' movement which attempted to provide a response to the employment demands of that period, while at the same time becoming aware of the need to get involved in national politics in order to achieve changes in society. **In 1879 Pablo Iglesias founded the trade union *Unión General de Trabajadores* (UGT) and the Spanish socialist party, the *Partido Socialista Obrero Español* (PSOE). Both organisations were identified with the complete emancipation of the working class and the realization of its aspirations, namely of achieving individual liberties and economic and administrative reforms to modernise the production fabric and improve the living and working conditions of the populace. The conclusions of the first PSOE Congress in 1886 already referred to demands for equal pay for all workers of both genders**

**It was not long before working-class women in Madrid joined forces in the Women's Socialist Grouping (*Agrupación Femenina Socialista*) founded by Virginia González, who in 1916 joined the National Committee of the UGT. As early as its 8<sup>th</sup> Congress, in 1905, the UGT had discussed the need to protect pregnant women, taking on board one of the most significant demands of working-class women of the era, namely a call for a change in the law governing female and child employment to prohibit any work being performed in the weeks prior to and following delivery (Nash, 1981). The Congress in 1932 approved a reduction in the affiliation rates for women in order to facilitate their access to the trade unions, given their lower salary levels, a measure which led to a substantial increase in trade unions recruitment.**

The demands of the working class were progressively incorporated within the programme of the PSOE.

An elite of women from the more well-to-do social classes had the opportunity to receive schooling. Even if unable to practise their professions, those who had completed higher education took part in the Educational Congresses held in 1880 and 1892. The latter was of particular note, with 528 of the 2650 registered participants being women. History recalls the involvement of two women who made an outstanding contribution as rights advocates, namely Concepción Arenal<sup>1</sup> and Emilia Pardo Bazán. The latter championed equality of rights in education and in her address attacked the cunning argument involved in allowing women to study, but not to practise their profession: *"one cannot in all conscience claim that the education of women is at present any such thing, but simply house-training, its aim being obedience, passivity and submission"*. (Pardo Bazán, E. 1992). Emilia was in 1916 the first woman to be appointed to an academic chair in Spain as Professor of Neo-Latin Languages at the Universidad Central, an appointment which aroused considerable opposition among both the academic community and students. These two women, Concepción and Emilia, were followed as standard-bearers thanks to the influence achieved by their articles and essays in the incipient turning of the cycle.

The laws of the era were clearly discriminatory, in particular the Civil Code (1889), the Penal Code (1870) and the Code of Commerce (1885). Women were kept in a position of permanent submission to men. They were obliged to obey their husbands, and, without the permission of their spouse, could do practically nothing except draw up a will. They could not work, set up a company, open a current account, be issued a passport or a driver's licence. Without a permit they could not accept or reject an inheritance, act as an executor, defend themselves before the courts or sell or mortgage their property. Women did not enjoy the right of guardianship over their children, and could lose them if their husband chose independently to give them up for adoption. These laws remained in force up until 1970.

Meanwhile, until 21<sup>st</sup> March 1963, husbands and fathers were legally entitled to kill their spouses and daughters if they were caught in flagrant adultery, provided that the action was taken in order to preserve the honour and dignity of the man.

Women began to play a more active role at the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, leading to the first modest advances in their social, working and legal status. **The dictatorship of Primo de Rivera agreed to grant women the vote in 1924, although only in the case of single and widowed women, with married women being excluded in order to ensure that they could not vote against their husband's will.**

**The Second Spanish Republic was proclaimed on 14 April 1931 as a Democratic and Republican State. The laws passed during the Republic significantly improved the position of women. The Constitution in 1931 proclaimed the equality of men and women in Article 40, and granted equal rights to legitimate and illegitimate children, while establishing marriage on the basis of equal rights for both sexes in Article 43. However, suffrage was initially subject to many restrictions in**

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<sup>1</sup> She took part in Madrid, as a delegate at the Faculty of Law, dressed in man's clothing as women were at that time excluded from university education.



**spite of the modifications made to certain articles of the Electoral Act to reduce the voting age to 23 and grant women and priests the right to stand for office.**

Finally, on 1 October 1931 women were given the right both to vote and to be elected, a legislative change defended in Parliament by the Radical Party member Clara Campoamor in a controversial debate. Opposition to granting the vote to women, irrespective of their civil status, was based on fear of the influence which the Catholic Church exerted over them, hence the fact that even the socialist member of Parliament Victoria Kent suggested that votes for women be delayed until they had achieved greater democratic awareness and political responsibility in order to uphold their rights. 1933 saw the staging of the first elections in which women could vote to elect the 472 political representatives, including 5 women. The Right won the election, with 227 seats, and women were blamed for their victory.

One year later, a Divorce Act was passed, and this, along with civil marriage, represented reforms against which the Catholic Church and conservative sectors of Spanish society fought long and hard. Access to education and improvements in working conditions were the priorities on the government agenda. The Civil and Penal Codes were also reformed. Among other issues, women were given the right to share marital property with their husbands, were given guardianship over their children and allowed to maintain their citizenship after marrying a foreign man, while the offence of adultery was abolished. Prostitution was abolished, and abortion legalised in Catalonia in 1937.

On 1 April 1939 the constitutional government lost the Civil War which broke out with the coup d'état launched by General Franco on 17 July 1936. From this point onwards all progressive laws were abolished and replaced with others imposing a new order based on patriarchy and a new social structure which institutionalised the division of labour on the basis of gender.

The repression of dictatorship prevented any further progress towards female emancipation. In the field of education, for example, Franco's regime based its approach to teaching on the most reactionary Catholicism of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, introducing a division of educational content based on gender (Cabrera Pérez 2005). The education of women focused on the household, how to be good mothers and raise children.

The government of the dictatorship is divided by numerous analysts into two periods. The first period is from the end of the war up to the 1950s, and the second is from the 1960s up until the death of General Franco in 1975. The former period was marked by the suppression of women's rights which had been included in Republican legislation, and a return to the laws of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The 1889 Civil Code was reintroduced, civil marriage was abolished, and abortion and contraceptives criminalised. The reform of the Civil Code in 1958 granted the right of guardianship only to widows who remarried, along with the right to give evidence as a witness in a trial.

During the second period, as a result of the introduction of measures to promote a more open economic system, undoubtedly influenced by the impact of tourism, restrictions on women's access

to the job market began to be relaxed. Labour was needed in the service sector, and women took the opportunity this afforded them. Access to education also improved.

Many of the significant circumstances arising during the period were similar to those which took place in all other neighbouring countries: a substantial increase in the population and widespread access to education. With regard to university students, it should be pointed out that while women accounted for 13% during the immediate post-Civil War period (1940-1945), this level had risen to 30% by the 1967-68 academic year.

**The end of Franco's regime and the onset of democracy went hand-in-hand with one of the most profound changes in Spanish society, with consequences for the legal, social and personal reality of women.**

**As highlighted in the study *Mujer, trabajo y sociedad* (1839-1983), two circumstances have defined the profound change in economic activity over the past 30 years: the mass entry of women into the workforce, and their leading role in the service sector, thereby making them more visible in the public arena. During this period the female workforce has multiplied by a factor of 4, as opposed to a rate of increase for men of 1.5. By the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, then, women made up 39% of Spain's active population.**

## **The role of the feminist movement in gender equality progress**

The reforms embarked upon during the 2<sup>nd</sup> Republic assisted the involvement of women, but it was the Civil War which gave them a new limited role within society and acted as the catalyst for female mobilisation. Millions of women identified with the slogan "*women to work*". Various organisations with a socialist leaning were set up, such as the Girls' Union (*Unión de Muchachas*), made up of young members of the Madrid Unified Socialist Youth movement, the anarchist Free Women (*Mujeres Libres*) and the Anti-fascist Women (*Mujeres Antifascistas*), a mobilisation fostered by trade union organisations and left-wing political parties.

More than 40 years later, in the mid-1970s, the death of the dictator coincided with a great upsurge in the feminist movement. The first campaigns staged by the women's movement focused on the sale and advertising of contraceptives and various demands regarding rights to education, employment and against sexual assault. At this time feminism, which had maintained a more social role, became politicised, registering its demands and thoroughly permeating the social and cultural life of the time.

Particular attention must therefore be paid to the invaluable theoretical and research work performed within the university world by academic feminism, serving to give the first women's organisations a structure and provide the necessary scientific foundations for the advances of feminism. Such pioneering associations include in particular the AEMU (Spanish Association of University Women), founded in 1920 and restored to active status in 1953, in exile.

There was in parallel a resurgence of the association movement among women. The first major women's association was the MDM (*Movimiento Democrático de Mujeres* – Democratic Movement of Women), which sowed the seeds of Spain's first feminist movement and arose almost spontaneously among the wives of convicts (including political prisoners) who met at prisons and sought mutual support. In 1967, 1,518 signatures were gathered for a petition to be presented before the Vice-President of the Government entitled "*For the Rights of Spanish Women*", calling for equal opportunities in access to the job market, nurseries, full university access, family planning information and birth control, divorce and a reform of the Civil Code.

The various Women's Studies Seminars which emerged during this period served to revisit the demands and debates of the feminist movement within the context of universities, which had become an open forum for gatherings and reflection conducted with a pluralist approach, involving students, faculty members and women from outside the university sphere. In 1978 the Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona, on the initiative of Judith Astelarra and Marina Subirats, staged the Women's Studies Seminar leading on to the organisation in April 1980 of the *First Patriarchy Studies Conference* (*Primeras Jornadas de Estudios sobre el Patriarcado*). One year later the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid began its first initiatives, setting up a Women's Studies Seminar founded by María Ángeles Durán.

The strength and organisational capacity of women surprised the trades unions and political organisations of that time, as highlighted by the market boycott of 20 February 1975, providing recognition of the mobilising capacity of the association movement, with 17 housewives' associations taking part. Its success led to a three-month suspension of their activities, in what was itself a decisive year: 1975.

That same year, designated by the United Nations as *International Women's Year*, gave fresh impetus to Spanish organisations in presenting a reality quite different from the official version which was at the time still monopolized by the so-called the Female Section (*Sección Femenina*), the controversial women's body which was linked to the patriarchal ideology of the dictatorship. This led to the emergence of the *Madrid Platform of Women's Groups* (*Plataforma de Grupos de Mujeres de Madrid*).

And two crucial events occurred: the *First Women's Liberation Conference* (*Primeras Jornadas por la Liberación de la Mujer*) (Madrid, December 1975) and the *First Catalan Women's Conference* (*Primeras Jornadas Catalanas de la Dona*) (Barcelona, May 1976). These gatherings, as pointed out by Elena Grau, were both democratic and women's forums, giving the women's movement visibility and social force.

The events staged on 8 March 1977 in Valencia, Seville, Malaga, Granada, Bilbao, Madrid and Barcelona under the slogan "*International Working Women's Day: no woman in prison or out of work*" represented a decisive step forward in the struggle for legal victories, which began to see fruit in the *Civil Code Reform Act* of 2 May 1978, which did away with the final traces of marital authority.

At precisely the same time disputes within the feminist movement marked the onset of a process

of structural division and fragmentation. The core issues of the debate focused on dual/single activism and the dispute between the feminism of equality and the feminism of difference. These debates reached their climax at the Granada Conference organised in December 1979 by the State Feminist Organisation Coordination Body, in partnership with the Granada Women's Assembly, an event attended by more than 3000 women. Following this gathering, the women's movement saw its vigour subside at subsequent events, unable to accept the plurality of the movement (Gil Ruiz, 1996).

## **Return to democracy resumed socialist gender equality policies**

### ***The transition years***

The period from the death of General Franco up to 1981 has been referred to by historians and analysts as "*The Transition*". The governing party during these years was the UCD (Democratic Centre Union), a coalition of Christian democrat, liberal, conservative and even social democratic parties, which governed Spain up until the PSOE's electoral triumph in 1982.

The beginning of equality policy in Spain is defined by the onset of democracy. In terms of the legal status of women, the Constitution in 1978 eliminated inequalities in legislation, prohibited gender-based discrimination, and for the first time granted legal equality.

There were numerous feminist groups during the transition strongly championing equality, although their assembly-based structure and the fact that they were mainly quite separate from party activism, which was meanwhile dealing with other priorities, led most of their proposals to be left out of the text of the Constitution. It must in fairness, though, be acknowledged that their demands and criticisms led to the inclusion of a number of changes in the final version of the Spanish Citizens' Charter.

Once the democratic system had been established, along with legislative reform there was a need to have in place public institutions in order to implement equality policies. The Sub-Directorate-General for Women was established in 1977, belonging to the structure of the Ministry of Culture's Directorate-General for the Family. As its name indicates, its operations focused on the family, leading to fierce criticism from the feminist movement.

Subsequently, Act 11/1981, of 13 May, served to recognise the equality of married women regarding the disposal and administration of property held in common and in exercising joint guardianship of the couple's children. Act 30/1981, of 7 July, likewise modified the system governing marriage in the Civil Code and established the procedure to be followed in cases of nullification, separation and divorce.

### ***First boost of equality policies: Felipe González's governments 1982-1996***

The PSOE won the October 1982 election, with Felipe González forming a government. Five months after he took office, the Penal Code was reformed to decriminalise voluntary abortion in three cases: endangerment of the life or physical or psychological health of the mother, where the pregnancy was the result of rape, or if it was presumed that the foetus would be born with serious physical or mental damage. An appeal against this law was brought before the Constitutional

Court by the conservatives of the Alianza Popular (as did subsequently the current Partido Popular), and it was not able to take effect until two years later, when it was declared fully constitutional.

The Penal Code was again reformed in 1989, with offences against the sexual liberty of individuals replacing those previously defined as offences against honour *"on the basis that the legal right being protected was sexual liberty and not honour"*. A number of laws were altered that same year to extend maternity leave to 16 weeks, to create a right to up to 3 years' leave of absence to care for children, and to make it possible in reality for women to join the armed forces.

**Felipe González's government set up the Women's Institute (*Instituto de la Mujer*), by means of Act 16/1983, of 24 October, as an autonomous public organisation, responsible for the legal oversight of equality between men and women, the correction of existing discrimination and the promotion of conditions allowing women to play a full part in political, cultural, economic and social life.** Its first Director was Carlota Bustelo, a leading activist in the feminist movement and the PSOE. *"From Bustelo's perspective, both socialism and socialist women needed to broaden their horizons and the aims they were striving for. Socialism had to add to its support for equality between the sexes the inclusion of the human and political values of feminism for two reasons. First, because, as an instrument for social change, it was closely tied to the women's movement, and could therefore draw global solutions from women's issues. Secondly, in order to be accepted by other non-activist women, who would feel affinity only if the party proved itself to be open to and understanding of the problems they faced"* (Capel,R. 2007:98)

The creation of the Women's Institute is viewed as a turning point in gender equality policy, with a shift in focus towards gender inequalities and the empowerment of women. The law which served to create this institution attributed to it various functions: analysis of the legal, educational, cultural, health and socio-cultural position of women, as an advisor to the government and coordinator of the work of different ministries, while also promoting the provision of services on behalf of women and monitoring legislation and its application. It was an example followed by a considerable number of Autonomous Regions in subsequent years.

The strategic approach established was the drafting of Equality Plans based on the application of specific actions derived from research and analysis of the social and economic situation of women. Two plans were developed during this period, and a third under a conservative government. All included proposals for changes in legislation which were later passed by Parliament. Employment legislation was also adapted in line with the Directives in force in the European Union.

Socialism and gender equality have always followed a common path, as a result no doubt of the large number of women joining the party's governing bodies, allowing them to participate in various levels of government<sup>2</sup>. The Federal Executive Commission, the PSOE's supreme body of representation and governance, began to give greater importance to equality policies by means of a specifically

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<sup>2</sup> Certain initiatives provided input in the drafting of Organic Act 1/2004, of 28 December 2004, on Comprehensive Protection Measures against Gender Violence.

created body which has over the course of the years changed name and status: from the Women and Socialism Committee to the Equality Secretariat, by way of the Federal Women and Socialism Group and the Executive and Federal Women's Participation Secretariats. Its aims included those of expanding the base of the party, raising social awareness about the issues facing women and the need to implement specific policies to remove discrimination, guaranteeing a presence on international forums, creating family planning centres within the public health system, providing social leadership in the discourse on equal opportunities for men and women and heightening the level of training of female activists allowing them to take part in governing bodies (Capel, 2007).

**In 1988 the PSOE's 31<sup>st</sup> Congress approved a minimum quota of 25% of women in the party's positions of authority and electoral candidates. The 34<sup>th</sup> Congress held in 1997 approved representational parity, with gender distribution ranging between 40% and 60%. The contribution of feminist thought to socialism was also recognised. In order to consolidate the principle of parity, percentages were introduced for the breakdown of electoral candidates in terms both of those included in the lists and the set of positions to which candidates could be elected (Astelarra, 2005).**

A long road leading to the endpoint of the demands which female socialist activists had been presenting since the start of the century, helping to include among the manifesto content passed by the various congresses such issues as: equal education, creation of social and childcare services, positive discrimination in employment, guaranteed health care for women and the protection of the most vulnerable groups. All these principles were espoused by the PSOE and implemented during its terms in office.

The governments headed by Felipe González consolidated the so-called *"pillars of the welfare state"*: universal right to health, education and establishment of the basis of the pensions system; rights which addressed all citizens, but which, given the initial position occupied by women, represented greater benefits for them.

Meanwhile, under the almost axiomatic slogan *"what is personal is political"*, representing the most advanced aspects of feminism from the Transition, feminism gradually took shape as a philosophy of life and critical thought, capable of implementing a programme of action and proposing specific and also global alternatives. Feminism, which had first gelled at universities, in associations and class-based trades union organisations, had now taken on an institutional role, becoming a powerful engine for equality policies as the cornerstones of government action.

### ***A gender policies impasse: Conservative governments 1996-2004***

The victory of the Right in the 1996 election led to a mobilisation of feminist groups in response to the possible repeal of rights won through the PSOE's equality policies, since certain initiatives such as the ongoing status of the Women's Institute and the future drafting of Equality Plans had been questioned. This distinct focus took the visible form of the reconciliation of work and family life, focusing on improving the well-being of families in order to prevent women caring for young children



from leaving the world of work. *"The conservatives of the Popular Party (PP) view the family, not the individual, as the core for State intervention, and their improvements during that period (Act 39/1999, of 5 November 1999, to promote balance between the family and working life of employees) did not give priority to improving issues of gender equality"* (Bustelo & Lombardo, 2007: 42). The PP gives voice to the principles of the Catholic Church in its discourse on the family. Co-responsibility and the distribution and sharing of household tasks are seen as a private issue to be resolved by individuals, rather than being for the State to intervene in.

During the period of conservative government, those regions governed by the Socialist party flew the flag of gender equality policy. A particularly prominent role was played by Andalusia, implementing a number of hugely significant initiatives in the field of gender equality: appointment of the first parity-based government, mandatory requirement for all legislation to be accompanied by a gender impact assessment (including the budget), modification to electoral law to introduce parity, and implementation of two plans to eradicate gender violence<sup>3</sup>.

However, not every aspect may be viewed as positive, since alongside the many forms of discrimination which still persist, whether more or less openly, Spanish society is still plagued by the cruellest form of inequality, violence against women. A problem which erupted in brutal form with the murder in 1997 of a woman, Ana Orantes, who took part in a television programme to denounce her situation: married for 40 years and subjected to abuse by her husband, she was living in the same house as her aggressor. 14 days after she reported her situation, her husband burned her alive. The incident led to a considerable mobilisation of feminist organisations calling for a legal response to violence against women.

The conservative government presented an Action Plan against domestic violence (1998-2000) which feminist organisations, trade unions and left-wing political parties declared to be inadequate. On 11 December 2001 the PSOE presented a Bill before Congress which was voted down by the conservative majority of the Popular Party (PP). This Bill was supported by the feminist movement and included comprehensive measures intended to change the patriarchal structures of society (including measures for prevention, awareness-raising, education, health and the media), requiring the modification of numerous laws in force.

## **2 | Social democratic gender policies in Spain from 2004 onwards**

The 35<sup>th</sup> Congress of the PSOE held in July 2000 elected José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero as party leader, and in 2004 he went on to win the general election with a manifesto including a section entitled *"Women. Living together in equality"* serving as the basis for his government's initiatives. A government which was the first in the history of Spain to achieve parity.

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<sup>3</sup> Certain initiatives provided input in the drafting of Organic Act 1/2004, of 28 December 2004, on Comprehensive Protection Measures against Gender Violence.



## Crucial advances in the political and legislative spheres

The governments of Rodríguez Zapatero (2004-present) represent a remarkable quantum leap forward in terms of gender equality, with a belief in parity as a central plank of a new social model focused on the sharing of time, space and responsibilities, fostering fully egalitarian relationships between men and women and placing no limits on the life options or professional interests of any individual.

### **Comprehensive Protection Measures against Gender Violence Act**

As had been promised during the electoral campaign, **the first Act brought in by the new government was Organic Act 1/2004, of 28 December 2004, on Comprehensive Protection Measures against Gender Violence (*Ley Órgánica de Medidas de Protección Integral contra la Violencia de Género*), which was unanimously passed by the Spanish Parliament.** The Act lays down measures for awareness-raising, prevention and detection and intervention in the field of gender violence in various spheres, including education, advertising and healthcare. It also establishes a series of rights enjoyed by women who are victims of violence, including in particular access to information and comprehensive social support. The right to free legal assistance is also recognised, with the aim of guaranteeing that those victims who do not have sufficient resources to bring legal action are provided with a lawyer throughout all processes and proceedings. Mention should likewise be made of the new measures introduced in the legislation to set up courts specialising in gender violence along with various units for the protection of women reporting abuse.

Protection measures were also introduced in the social sphere, with a modification to Royal Legislative Decree 1/1995, of 24 March 1995, approving the revised text of the Workers' Statute Act, justifying absence from work in the case of victims of gender violence, permitting geographical mobility, suspension of an employment contract with the right to return to the same job, or termination of the contract. Provision was similarly made for financial support measures through a modification of Royal Legislative Decree 1/1994, of 20 June 1994, approving the revised text of the General Social Security Act, for those victims of gender violence subject to the right to legal unemployed status if terminating or voluntarily suspending their employment contract.

In the field of institutional protection, two public authority bodies were set up to focus on gender violence. The first of these, the Special Government Delegation against Violence against Women, at the Ministry of Employment and Social Affairs, is responsible among other functions for proposing government policy regarding violence against women and coordinating and supporting all initiatives undertaken in these fields. Meanwhile, the State Observatory on Violence against Women (*Observatorio Estatal de Violencia sobre la Mujer*) was established, as a collegiate body at the Ministry of Employment and Social Affairs. Also of particular significance was the creation of Violence against Women Courts. Lastly, in its additional provisions, the Act introduced a profound reform of the legal system in order to adapt the legislation in force to the framework introduced by the new law.

### ***Right to Marriage between Persons of the Same Sex Act***

Meanwhile, Act 13/2005, of 1 July 2005, modifying the Civil Code with regard to the right to marry, allows two people of the same or different sex to marry, with full and equal rights and obligations whatever the nature of the union. This Act also fulfilled a manifesto pledge, but above all responded to the discrimination based on sexual orientation affecting many homosexual couples. Divorce legislation was meanwhile modified to achieve greater flexibility in the applicable procedures.

### ***“Plan Concilia”***

In terms of reconciliation between work and family life, we would highlight the **Plan Concilia**, passed by the government in 2005 to help improve the balance between workplace and home for more than half a million civil servants. Meanwhile, in terms of the public services dedicated to young children, the government for the first time in Spain passed a National Infants and Adolescents Strategy (2006-2009), including a series of measures intended to protect legal minors and improve the public services available to children.

### ***Effective Equality between Men and Women Act***

Organic Act 3/2007, of 22 March 2007, for Effective Equality between Men and Women, is one of the most important steps taken in the field of equality anywhere in Europe. Its introduction, according to the then Employment Secretary, Jesús Caldera (currently Executive Vice-President of the Ideas Foundation), brought about the shift from formal equality, achieved with the advent of democracy, to material equality. The Act serves to incorporate within Spanish law Directives 2002/73/EC and 2004/113/EC, representing recognition of such fundamental rights as equality of opportunity and distribution of responsibilities, non-discrimination and the prosecution of sexual harassment.

The Equality Act establishes the legal consequences of discriminatory conduct and includes procedural guarantees in order to strengthen judicial protection of the right to equality. It likewise lays down the general operational guidelines for public authorities regarding equality, and the principle of balanced representation among electoral candidates, leading to a reform of the Electoral Act. Measures to foster equality in the media were likewise introduced, along with supervisory instruments for cases of discriminatory advertising.

The Act also addresses the right to equal opportunities in employment, incorporating measures to guarantee equality between men and women in access to employment, in training and professional promotion and working conditions. The most innovative measure in support of the balance between personal, family and working life is the 13 days of paternity leave. This is an individual and exclusive right of the father, recognised both in cases of biological paternity and adoption and fostering. The plan is for the period of temporary leave of absence following paternity to be progressively and gradually extended up to a period of four weeks over the course of six years from the Act's introduction. Maternity leave and leave of absence to care for children have also been improved.

In the corporate field, the new law has introduced an obligation on companies with more than 250 workers to draw up equality plans, to be negotiated with trades union representatives, while also supporting the presence of women on corporate boards of directors.

As for the action of public authorities, of particular significance is the obligation to draw up gender impact reports which must be appended to each new regulation, programme or public initiative. For the first time, the 2009 General State Budget was accompanied by a gender impact report.

As for the new administrative structures created following the introduction of the 2007 Act, we would first mention the creation of the Interdepartmental Equality Committee, established on 19 February 2009, which agreed to develop a monitoring and indicator system to track the evolution of the Equality Act. The law also set up Equality Units which are now operational at each government department and are required to oversee compliance with and effective application of the principle of equality as their main legally established task. Lastly, the Act established a Women's Participation Council as a collegiate body to serve as a channel for institutional participation in such matters.

### ***Greater rights for vulnerable groups***

Royal Decree 615/2007, of 11 May 2007, established the mandatory inclusion within the General Social Security System of non-professional carers, a group which is, according to the Dependency White Paper, 83% female. Their inclusion within the Social Security system gives them status equivalent to registered employees for the purpose of retirement pensions, permanent disability benefit and survival benefit following an accident.

### ***The Ministry of Equality***

At the commencement of the 9<sup>th</sup> Legislature (2008) a Ministry of Equality was established for the first time in Spain, responsible for proposing and implementing government policy in the field of equality, young people and the elimination of all forms of discrimination on the basis of gender, racial or ethnic origin, religion or ideology, sexual orientation, age or any other personal or social condition or circumstance. This Ministry covers first of all the Secretariat-General for Equality Policies, responsible for the Government Gender Violence Delegation, which has the task of proposing government policy to combat violence against women and coordinating and promoting all measures implemented in this sphere. The Ministry also includes the State Gender Violence Watchdog. In 2009 the Ministry was allocated more than 113 million euro in the General State Budget, while an additional sum of more than one billion euro was set aside for equality policies at other government departments.

Alongside this new organisational structure focusing exclusively on equality policy, mention should also be made of the creation of the Delegated Government Committee for Equality Policy and Equality Units at all departments.

A number of Equality Watchdogs have also been set up with the aim of advising, analysing, assessing and disseminating information within the various ministerial departments: watchdogs for

gender violence, equality, the image of women, women in the Ministry of Defence, women's health and women in the Law Enforcement Agencies.

### **Action plans**

The 2008-2011 Strategic Equal Opportunities Plan was approved in 2008. Its aims are: to **redefine the model of citizenship, prioritising gender equality, the empowerment of women, a horizontal gender perspective and scientific and technological innovation at the service of equality**. The Strategic Plan identifies a number of constituent content strands (political and social participation, economic participation, joint responsibility, education, innovation, knowledge, health, image, response to diversity and social inclusion, violence, foreign and development cooperation policy and protection of the right to equality).

Other plans approved during the period include: the National Gender Violence Awareness and Prevention Plan, which operates on three levels: where conflict has not yet risen, when conflict emerges, and lastly arbitration in victim protection processes; the Plan Against Gender Violence in the Immigrant Population, serving all immigrant women irrespective of their official status.

The fight against sexual exploitation perpetrated by international mafias has become one of the Ministry of Equality's priorities in its political initiatives. Particular mention should be made in this regard of the Comprehensive Plan to Combat Human Trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation, passed on 12 December 2008 and covering a period of three years (2009-2011). This plan tackles the problem from four angles: from the gender perspective, as a violation of fundamental rights, as a cross-border situation demanding international cooperation, and as a criminal offence requiring action by the police and judiciary.

The measures included within the plan aim to offer a comprehensive approach in exploring all areas of the problem: awareness-raising, prevention and investigation, education, support and protection for victims, alongside legislative, procedural, coordination and cooperation measures. The most significant initiatives were started up in 2009, but will require a longer period for their implementation and to achieve an impact. The key aspects include legislative reforms, measures to strengthen police prosecution and social support for victims.

### **Sexual and Reproductive Health and Voluntary Termination of Pregnancy Act**

One notable event in 2010 was the introduction of Organic Act 2/2010, of 3 March, on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Voluntary Termination of Pregnancy, intended to afford protection in an essential area of female autonomy, namely the development of sexuality and the capacity for reproduction. The public authorities have established the conditions allowing the decision to have children to be adopted freely and responsibly, providing those who so require with health care, advice and information services. The Act responds to the need to underpin the legal security governing the voluntary termination of pregnancy. The law deals with protection and guarantees for rights regarding sexual and reproductive health in a comprehensive manner, establishing the implementation of a raft

of actions and measures in both the healthcare and educational spheres. It likewise lays down new regulations for the voluntary termination of pregnancy outside the penal code, the aim being, in line with the most typically adopted approach in other countries within Spain's political and cultural milieu, properly to guarantee and protect the applicable rights and interests of women and unborn life.

### ***Equality as a priority of Spain's Presidency of the EU***

During the first semester of 2010, the opportunity afforded by holding the Presidency of the European Union allows Spain to spearhead gender equality policies in Europe, one of the government's priorities during its mandate. The Roadmap for Equality between Men and Women 2006-2010 and the European Pact for Gender Equality constitute the baseline for the initiatives of the Presidency. Given the primordial importance of achieving equality between men and women in the workplace, there is a particular focus on measures addressing gender-based salary differences, part-time working, equal opportunities in the business world and the balance between professional, family and personal life, for both women and men. Great attention is being paid as a priority to the issue of violence against women, with a proposal for the creation of a European Gender Violence Watchdog which, in partnership with the European Institute for Gender Equality would draw up common indicators on gender violence, alongside other tasks. The Spanish Presidency is meanwhile supporting the creation of a European protection order for victims of abuse and a European helpline for victims.

### ***Comprehensive Equal Treatment and Non-Discrimination Bill***

In the near future the government will put before Parliament its Comprehensive Equal Treatment and Non-Discrimination Bill (*Ley Integral de Igualdad de Trato y No Discriminación*). The aim of this law is to guarantee the effective equality of citizens in all spheres, including employment and access to goods and services, on the basis of Article 21 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU, which prohibits all discrimination, in particular on the basis of gender, race, colour, ethnic or social origin, genetic characteristics, language, religion or convictions, political or any other opinions, membership of a national minority, property, birth, disability, age, sexual orientation or identity. This is a horizontal law, and it will therefore require legislation in various sectorial spheres, while promising to position Spain in the avant-garde of the fight against discrimination throughout Europe.

### ***Socialist achievements in gender equality since 2004***

According to the 2009 Human Development Report of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Spain is ranked 15<sup>th</sup> out of the 182 United Nations Member States on the Human Development Index. The same institution draws up a Development Index for gender, with Spain holding 9<sup>th</sup> position in the ranking of 155 countries which provided information for this indicator for the year 2007. Under a new indicator, meanwhile, the Gender Empowerment Measure, which gauges gender inequality in the key spheres of political and economic participation, decision-making powers and the control of economic resources, Spain is ranked 11<sup>th</sup> out of the 109 countries which provided

this type of information. The country has improved its position according to the last three indicators provided in the 2009 Human Development Index<sup>4</sup>.

One of the aspects registering the greatest improvement in terms of the presence of women over the past two years is that of political participation. In 2009 an average of 31% of executive positions within the organisational structures of Spanish political parties were held by women. Since 2008 the PSOE has maintained a level of more than 50% female officers, a figure far higher than the other parties.

In the parliamentary field, the position of women has improved considerably. Organic Act 3/2007, for the Effective Equality of Men and Women, defines balanced participation as a percentage of each gender of no less than 40% and no greater than 60%. Although the percentage of women in both chambers increased following the results of the 2008 election compared with results of the previous parliamentary elections, in Congress the percentage of female members was 3.7 percentage points below the minimum established in the aforementioned Act. In the Senate, meanwhile, the percentage of women was 11.8 percentage points below the minimum required for balanced participation.

Female participation is more balanced in the legislative assemblies of the Autonomous Regions, where in 2009 they made up 42% of the total (INE 2010). In the case of the European Parliament, following the 2009 election women accounted for 35% of members elected to the chamber. 36% of Spanish Euro MPs are women, a figure which stands above the European average.

From a comparative perspective, the participation of women in the national parliaments of the EU-27 countries is 24%, an increase of 2 percentage points compared with the previous legislature. Spain, with its level of 36% of women sitting in the national parliament, is ranked fourth in the countries of the European Union as regards female participation, almost 13% above the EU-27 average.

The government which was formed in 2004 achieved parity, with 50% of the 16 ministerial portfolios being held by women. At present the first and second vice-presidents are both women, while the third is a man, thereby reflecting the importance of gender in the positions closest to the head of government. Following the government reshuffle in 2008, and taking into consideration the most recent appointments, there are now more female than male ministers, with women holding 53% of all government portfolios.

As for employment, particular mention should first of all be made of the improvements achieved in Spain in the proportion of women in the active population over recent years. By the first quarter of 2008, more than half of women of working age were available for work, a landmark figure which has



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<sup>4</sup> Drawn up with 2007 data with reference to 2006 figures.



since then continued to increase. Spain has thus in a very short time drawn close to the rates seen in such major European powers as Germany (54%) and France (52%). This positive trend in activity rates has been favoured by the economic crisis, which has led many women previously declaring themselves inactive to seek employment.

On the other hand, women's jobs have also withstood the economic crisis better than those of their male counterparts. Since the onset of the economic crisis unemployment has risen for both sexes, although at a slower pace among women than men. According to the INE Active Population Survey for the last quarter of 2009, the unemployment rate among men was 18.6%, and 19.1% for women, revealing the convergence of figures which, just a few years ago, presented a difference of almost ten per cent. It is additionally true that the sectors which have best weathered the recession employ a greater proportion of women. Education, health and the social services, for example, are sectors which have become increasingly feminised. *"The fact that women's jobs have better withstood the crisis may also be explained by other factors, such as the higher levels of qualifications among women joining the labour market"*(El Pais 18/01/2010).

**Women have now for some time outnumbered men in higher education. 54.2% of all university students are women (804,514, compared with 678,667 men during the 2006-2007 academic year). The breakdown for female undergraduate and graduate students is 54.4% and 51.8% respectively.**

At the infant education stage, in 2008, Spain provided nursery places for 27% of children aged from zero to three years, whereas in 2004, when the previous government was formed, the level was below 20%.

In terms of the balance between work and family, one key aspect highlighted by the Evaluation Report published in March 2009 by the Ministry of Equality on the application of Organic Act 3/2007, for the Effective Equality of Men and Women, was that, by 2009, over that two-year period, 80% of new fathers had made use of the newly introduced provision for a fortnight's paternity leave.

With regard to gender violence, according to the report on fatalities resulting from gender violence and domestic violence within the context of partners or ex-partners, the number of women who lost their lives at the hands of a male partner or ex-partner over the course of 2009 amounted to 55. Compared with the number of women killed in this way in 2008 (75), this represented a fall of 27%. The data on this great social problem have thus improved as a result of the public policies and legislation introduced over recent years.

## **New challenges in fostering equality**

Despite the major achievements set out above, which have made Spain one of the leading countries for gender equality, there still remain challenges which demand that we continue to focus on improving the existing situation.



These issues would include in particular the so-called glass ceiling, with reference to the limited representation of women in executive and decision-making roles in many aspects of the socio-economic sphere. Improvements can clearly still be made here. In the world of business there is a shortage of women in executive positions, and even at public authorities, where women make up the majority of staff, the effects of the glass ceiling are still in evidence. The limited presence of women on the bodies which take the decisions affecting the economic life of the country illustrates that the full inclusion of women within this field has not yet been achieved. According to the data published in the Active Population Survey for the final quarter of 2009, only 32% of all executive or senior management positions in business are held by women. The Equality Act lays down an obligation, with a view to the year 2015, to foster a balanced presence of men and women on the boards of directors of all companies required to file official accounts. According to the INE official statistics agency, in 2009 women made up 9.8% of members of such bodies of governance, a considerable increase compared with the figure of 2004, when female representation was barely 3%. There can, however, be no doubt that the level is still inadequate.

The position of inferiority experienced by women in the world of work is manifested first and foremost in activity rates (those in or seeking employment), with levels 16 percentage points higher among men (68%, as opposed to 52%). Unemployment rates are also higher among women, although the gap has shrunk considerably as a result of the effects of the economic crisis, which in Spain has had a greater impact on those sectors where men make up the majority of the workforce, such as construction. According to the 2009 Economic Report of the President of the Government presented in December, "gender differences in job losses are explained by the nature of the crisis, with employment being eroded above all in the construction and industrial sectors". Against this background, it is a cause of regret that the reduction in the gap between men and women in terms of unemployment figures has not been achieved as one would have wished, through a reduction in female unemployment, but rather through plummeting employment levels among men.

The greater strength of female employment has been illustrated on the current scenario despite the fact that women are generally employed in much less stable positions, with a less secure contractual status. One need only turn to the rate of temporary employment contracts, one of the characteristics of the Spanish labour market which particularly affects women. In 2009, 28% of women in work were on a temporary contract, a level four percentage points higher than that seen among men.

Meanwhile, the fact that there are fewer women becoming unemployed does not mean that they are better protected against unemployment. According to the Ministry of Employment, only 42% of those unemployed and receiving benefits are women, leading to the conclusion that there are more women not receiving any form of provision or benefit from the public authorities, despite the fact that there are very similar numbers of men and women registered as unemployed. Within this sphere of protection against unemployment, there is another figure which vouches for the

inequality which exists. If one considers the benefits paid to those unemployed, men on average receive 8.3% more. This difference is undoubtedly the result of one of the best known inequalities in the labour market: lower average salary levels among women. Women's salaries remain between 20% and 30% lower than those of men, according to figures from the INE and the Women's Institute. This salary gap is closely tied to such variables in employment conditions as the type of contract and working hours. In the case of women, according to the INE (in its 2009 Q4 Active Population Survey) the proportion of women in part-time employment is considerably higher (78%).

An improvement in policies to balance working and family life and in childbirth support, along with the full development of the Dependency Act (Act 39/2006) represent further challenges for social democratic gender policies. In terms of the family/work balance, it is known that although the number of women in work has doubled over the past ten years, with six out of every ten women giving birth in Spain now having a paid job, according to Social Security figures, motherhood and employment remain at odds with one another. The backdrop to the fact that many women leave or withdraw from the world of work is provided by the lack of policies to achieve a family/work balance, of affordable care for children and the elderly, and of joint responsibility in the home. This is bringing down the birth rate (the average number of children per woman in Spain, 1.32, has risen thanks to immigration, but remains among the lowest in the EU). There is still the need in Spain to dedicate greater efforts to creating 1<sup>st</sup>-cycle infant education places and greater development of the *"Plan Educa"*, to introduce education at age 0-3.

One further gender policy challenge is to increase the effectiveness of policies to combat gender violence. Despite the various measures introduced by Organic Act 1/2004, on Gender Violence, the most repugnant expression of gender violence, leading to loss of life, remains a scourge of Spanish society (55 deaths in 2009). We must continue to intensify efforts here, as the plague of gender violence has not yet adequately been brought under control.

Lastly, despite the fact that women represent the majority of university students, there still remain some significant differences in female participation in higher education in certain areas of study. The highest percentage of female students is thus seen in the branch of Experimental and Health Sciences (60.1%), with the lowest rate in the Engineering and Technology field (27.7%).

### 3 | Conclusions and proposals for progress

The new social model required as the bedrock for all the rights recognised in the Spanish laws must be a model not only offering a critique of those functions and spaces traditionally assigned to women, but also questioning the model of male employment as that of a worker offering unrestricted availability and exempt from any care responsibilities. This social model demands that we value care and reproduction as a social investment for the present and future, and tackle the time deficit facing women. A model which must have joint responsibility as one of its cornerstones, in terms of the right and duty for responsibilities,

household tasks and care to be equally distributed between men and women.

Properly implemented, joint responsibility will allow men and women to balance all the facets which make up and enrich the life of each individual and give quality to our democracy, without any unnecessary strain or anxiety. In order to be in this new social model we must:

- Redefine the relationship between the private and public spheres;
- Redress the excess workload and responsibilities faced by women;
- Continue to work towards more and better jobs for all women;
- Guarantee equal entitlement to Welfare State provisions;
- Develop the principle of equal treatment and restore the strength of laws;
- Check the digital divide.

**Feminism, socialism and equality today walk side by side. We must not, however, along the way lose sight of the various expressions of inequality which percolate society: the feminisation of poverty and of migration, restrictions on liberty and the usurpation of the right to one's own body and to life. We must, in short, maintain vigilance over the regressions being seen in so many places around the globe in terms of women's rights, must not lower our guard nor leave behind all those women experiencing more adverse circumstances. Many of them live in the towns and cities of Spain itself. Any restriction on liberty or dignity affecting a woman anywhere on our planet affects all citizens of our global populace. Because silence, looking the other way, means connivance, and ultimately undermines the value of the progress we have made. Equality in the 21<sup>st</sup>-century is based on legislation, but also demands that we take to the streets to make it an effective reality and respond to the needs of an increasingly diverse and global society.**

The achievement of effective equality as a driving force of Spanish society is the key hallmark of the Socialist Party. In the words of the Minister for Equality, Bibiana Aído, "Equality is not a utopia, it is our goal". In line with this maxim, the Spanish government continues its efforts to extend citizenship rights in the belief that equality policies give impetus to the economic development of the nation, serve as an instrument underpinning democracy, and represent an essential issue of social justice.

During its current term, the socialist government of José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero aims to maintain and consolidate the measures introduced, while also devising all new public policies with a gender perspective and reinforcing mechanisms and structures to make effective equality a reality. This approach ties in with a clear commitment to sustainable development based on a model of economic growth with its foundations in the information and knowledge society, drawing on the productive potential of all citizens with no manner of exception. This new model of sustainable growth will go hand in hand with oversight and continuous reinforcement of the principle of gender equality and an increase in the cohesiveness of Spanish society.

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# An ongoing challenge for Sweden - one of the most equal countries



**Ylva Johansson**

During the last hundred years the Swedish Social Democratic Party has fought for gender equality. Sweden has become one of the most equal countries in the world. Gender equality demands a welfare policy with an extended parental insurance, high quality day-care and full employment for both men and women. Sweden has reached far, but still there are challenges to face before both men and women can be free to form their own lives and not be limited by gender.

For the first time in history Sweden has a female candidate running for Prime minister. In the forthcoming election in September Mona Sahlin, chair of the SAP (Swedish Social Democratic Party), has the chance to be the leader of the first “red-green” coalition government. This is an important step. During the last hundred years the SAP has fought for gender equality. Sweden has become one of the most equal countries in the world. Gender equality demands a welfare policy with an extended parental insurance, high quality day-care and full employment for both men and women. We have reached far, and we can be proud, but still there are challenges to face and overcome before both men and women can be free to form their own lives and not be limited by gender.

As a social democrat I can never accept to keep a low key profile in the debate of gender equality issues. During the last years focus has too often moved from the society and the governmental power, to the individuals or to be clear: the individual woman. Gender equality is not just a question about women’s rights. It is about freedom for both men and women that are stuck in patterns of oppression. It is not only an issue of who should do the cleaning or cook dinner; it is about the whole society. It is about what kind of society and world do we want our children to grow up in. It is about changing the society and dividing the power differently. It is about economic, labour and welfare policies.

## High female labour force participation

Sweden has become one of the most equal countries in the world. The struggle for equal rights for men and women started a hundred years ago among the women’s organisations. The real change started in the 1960’s: Women’s labour was needed and the debate about gender equality issues begun to grow in society. The demands for more reforms in order to promote gender equality got stronger.

One of the most important and fundamental element for a gender equality is the individualized income taxation of spouses which was introduced in the early seventies. This has encouraged both men and women to participate in the labour market. It has been shown that countries with a dual-earner-model have considerably higher female labour force participation than welfare states with other models. In Sweden, the female labour force increased from around 50% in the mid-1960s to 78% today (16-64 years old, SCB, AKU, 2009). In Sweden the labour force participation is also high among women with children and low education.

## High fertility rates

Despite – or because of – high female labour force participation Sweden has relatively high fertility rates, at least in comparison with other EU-countries where fertility has decreased during the last decade. The SAP has during the last four decades consciously implemented family policies to increase gender equality. Not at the expense women’s labour force participation, fertility rates and children’s welfare – but rather to strengthen them. Swedish family policy has made it easier for parents to combine working life with family life by improving both parents’ opportunities to take part in working

life and take care of their children when they are small. Apart from the individual taxation there are two additional important components which have led to the successful family policy: universally and earnings-related parental insurance, and affordable, full day child-care for all children.

## Earnings-related parental insurance

In 1974 the Social Democratic government introduced the earnings-related parental insurance. This insurance was, and still is, universally available for all. *"The Swedish Model"* – that a society and a family have a common responsibility for the childcare – was formed.

The insurance was at that time paid for six months after child-birth, leaving the parents to share insurance as they preferred. The requirement was, and still is, that you have to have worked for 240 days before using the insurance. Parents who do not meet the requirements receive a low flat benefit.

In the eighties the insurance was extended in steps to twelve months and in addition three months with a low flat rate. In the beginning, only a small part of the insurance was used by the fathers. In 1994 one month of insurance was reserved for each parent. In year 2002 the reserved month was extended to two months for each parent. So, since 2002, the total parental insurance is sixteen months, with thirteen earnings-related paid at 80% of previous earnings. Fathers' use of the insurance has increased along with the extension of the parental insurance. But still most of the parental insurance is used by women. Even if an increasing amount of young fathers nowadays share parental insurance 50-50 with the mother, only approximately 20% of the insurance is used by the fathers in general. Women also work more part-time than men. It is difficult for women to compete with men in the labour market; which lead to lower incomes and poorer career chances. Less use of the parental insurance give men poorer relationship with their children.

Therefore a more even sharing of parental insurance must be initiated. If mothers and fathers share the responsibility of the family and domestic work in the beginning, it is more likely that they will make it even in the long-term. Then also managers and HR directors in the labour market have a clear signal: Family matters are of high concern for both men and women.

Changes in legislation, e.g. parental insurance reserved for each parent, have increased men's use of the insurance, but according to me, the improvements go far too slow. Therefore, one of the most important reforms a red-green coalition government intends to do, is to extend the reserved months for each parent in the parental insurance. This is an essential step to take.

## Universally, available and full day child-care

In 1974, a decision was taken to increase the childcare to facilitate for women to work. Since then public day-care has been widely expanded. Today 82% of all children in ages 1-5 participate in publicly financed day-care (National Agency for Education, Sweden, 2009).



During the last four decades, the social democratic governments have implemented a range of reforms to improve the day-care. When I was Minister for Schools, I implemented a new legislation; all public day-care centres have to follow a centrally set curriculum and other regulations. This has improved the pedagogical ambitions. Almost all personnel in the Swedish day-care centres are trained to work with children.

All children have the right to participate in public day-care, even those with unemployed parents. In year 2002, the Social Democratic government introduced low fixed maximum user fees for publicly financed childcare. This abolished most of the regional differences in price and availability that previous had existed.

There is a variety in the forms of childcare such as cooperative run by parents or other organizations or privately run day-care centres. But almost all day-care centres are financed over national and local public budgets.

## Challenges to face

Even if Sweden is one of the most gender equal countries in the world, women are still discriminated – in working-life, in the homes and politics. Women have lower wages, they spend more time with the children than men, and female representation in the boards of the corporations and in political parties are still uneven.

The policy of the present conservative government is a real back-lash for women. The financial crisis has deepened the gap between men and women, between the healthy and those who are ill, between different parts of the country, between those who have their roots in Sweden and those who have their roots somewhere else. And the conservative government has done nothing, except of tax-cuts for the richest, financed by loans. 60% of the tax-cuts have gone to men. The gap between men's and women's wages has increased with approximately 100 euros a month. The conservatives have implemented a flat-rate home care allowance. This is a real trap for women, especially those with low income and poor education. Their position on the labour market will weaken – and of course their future pensions.

**As a Social Democrat I can never accept this.** Our own Social Democratic vision is very different. Our starting point is that we can be stronger together. We have an idea as to how society, what we share in common, can be built up. Not in order to steer people, but to liberate them. The foundation for this is citizen's freedoms and rights, equal for both men and women.

The Swedish model, shaped by Social Democrats, has been shown to work. The model has hitherto been unbeaten in creating equal terms – and because of that a strong development, high growth and jobs. And it has led to greater social mobility and gender equality. Something that is ever more important in a rapidly changing world. Perhaps Sweden is the land of opportunity.

The future is built today. We have reached far during almost a century, but nothing can be taken for granted. The struggle continues. The young generations must be reminded that things in society are often taken for granted can easily be ruined; the track can also lead back if we don't have our minds and political engagement active.

At the end of the day, this is a matter of political struggle.

Women hold the major key to two parts of the answer to fuelling economic growth in the long term:

- The first being the low labour participation rates among the working age population in many advanced countries. A higher participation of women in the labour market will ease the financial pressure on the welfare state. It will also contribute to sustainable pensions.
- The second is to tackle the problem of declining population size by increasing fertility rates. Women should have the opportunity to choose to have more children.

I had the opportunity to lead a working group initiated by PES. The working-group presented a report *"Meeting Europe's Demographic Challenges in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century"* (PES, October 2005) and the result of the report was that women are confronted with a triple bind: they are encouraged to increase – and to continue increasing – their labour market participation; they are requested to produce more children; and, thirdly, they face a growing demand for caring responsibilities. The women often take the most active role when it comes to taking care of children, grandchildren as well as their own parents.

Political policies should therefore aim to mitigate the tradeoffs between these three conflicting demands for women, whilst recognising the necessity for both parents to balance work and family commitment over their entire life course.

The importance of the framework conditions for combining work and care, provided by the welfare state, should not be underestimated. Political policies which enable working parents to combine work and family commitments have a positive effect on fertility rates.

I believe it is our duty as social democrats, to intensify the struggle for an equal labour market. We need to attack the roots of the division of gender in the labour market. Labour, education, tax, family and industry policies must promote labour and business for women – not lead to decreased employment!

A lot of women work part-time involuntarily. Both men and women should have the opportunity to work full time and combine the work with children and family life. A full time job must be a right – a part-time job an opportunity.

Finally, I want to raise seven items that is important to achieve and develop in order to promote gender equality in society:

- Reduction and elimination of gender pay gap
- Universal provision of affordable day-care of high quality, for children below school age and before and after-school care for children of school age.
- Flexible working arrangements so that working parents can balance work and family commitments
- Increase number of women in secure and quality employment
- Encouraging or obliging fathers to take part of parental leave
- Strong social security rights for men and women
- Ensuring that society takes the responsibility for the care of elderly people

**These are important steps on the way to our vision: A society where neither men nor women are limited by gender, not in the labour market or in the society as a whole. The struggle for gender equality is at the farthest out about human liberation.**

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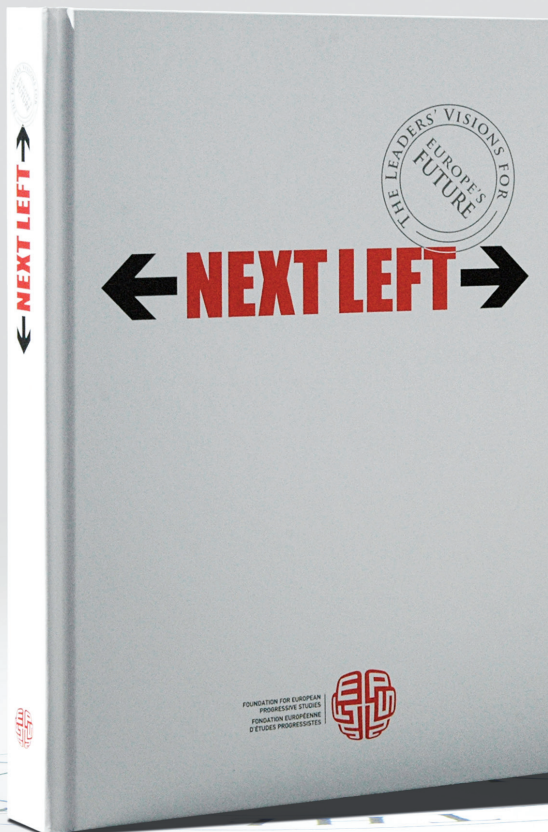
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Queries

04

# Next agenda in a changing society

# “Inhabited by Animals and Beggars”?

## The Case of Hungary



Andrea Pető

This article is joining in the recent public debates about future of social democracy in Europe and answers to the question how social democracy is shaping social imaginary in Hungary. I would like to do so with analysing how gender differences are historically conceptualised claiming that the unresolved conflict of women's participation in social democratic movement is one of the reasons why social democracy is losing its popular support today.



Baudrillard's category of simulacrum was inspired by the paragraph story by Jorge Luis Borges, *On Exactitude in Science*. In this short story Borges speaks about an empire which was so attached to the map of its own, when the empire collapsed nothing remained but the map, the simulation of the land which once was a powerful empire. After the collapse, the land was "*inhabited by animals and beggars*".

This article is joining in the recent public debates about future of social democracy in Europe. Since the European Parliamentary elections of 2009 conferences and publications are trying to diagnose the causes of this recent dramatic decline in popularity. European social democracy is facing immense challenges after a long period of when "*Social Europe*" seemed to be consensual road for the future.

Analysts are explaining the loss of popularity by different factors. Some are linking the crises either to the transformation of the capital into a new form of global free market capitalism or to the transformation of the state especially the welfare state provisions or to the transformation of the concept work itself. More paranoiac and elitist explanations are blaming the conservative parties "*stealing the cloth*" of the social democrats by integrating their core values into their programs while at the same time depriving it from its political transformative potential. These changes in the situation of social democracy are all connected to changes in social imaginary: the emerging cult of the individual is undermining the collective responsibility for social cohesion, communitarian units (*Gemeinschaft*) are replacing society (*Gesellschaft*). **Social democrats in Europe tried to regulate global free market capitalism with social democratic values such as solidarity with a mixed success. We can not identify one or two factors which caused the declining popularity of today but rather the story of social democracy needs to be retold and re-narrativised for a new start. In this article I would like to answer to the question how social democracy is shaping social imaginary in Hungary and I would like to do so with analysing how gender differences are conceptualised in social imaginary.**

My starting point is Tony Judt, who in his analyses on future of social democracy pointed out that nobody ever forecasted the end of the roaming 1920s era, and it still ended among horrible circumstances.<sup>2</sup> Therefore he concludes, the only factor which can save social democracy in Europe, where by now the original social democratic values were mainstreamed largely without their home parties, is "*a social democracy of fear*". This fear for him means:

*"Rather than seeing to restore a language of optimistic progress we should begin by reacquainting ourselves with the recent past. The first task of radical dissenters today is to remind their audience of the achievements of the twentieth century, along with the likely consequences of our heedless rush to dismantle them".<sup>3</sup>*

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1 <https://notes.utk.edu/bio/greenberg.nsf/0/f2d03252295e0d0585256e120009adab?OpenDocument>

2 Judt T., *What is Living and What is Dead in Social Democracy?* *The New York Review of Books* Vol.56. no.20. December 2009 accessed on 8 January 2010 at [www.nybooks.com](http://www.nybooks.com)

3 Judt T., *ibidem*.

So let me start this difficult endeavour to get to know more about our “recent past” with including another factor, namely gender into the analysis, trying to explain why social democracy is losing attraction as social imaginary today. I would like to expand the analyses of the “recent past” where Tony Judt stopped: to the post WWII period and I would like to focus on Hungary. I am claiming that the unresolved conflict of women’s participation in social democratic movement is one of the reasons why social democracy is losing its popular support today.

Is social democracy on its way to become a simulacrum in Hungary? Will social democratic imaginary disappear from Hungary? In the case of Baudrillard the empire vanished and the simulacrum remained. In the case of Hungary, and the countries who felt at the wrong side of the Iron Curtain in 1945, the simulacrum is disappearing and the reality, namely the problems are remaining.

Answering to this question about the creation of the simulacrum we have to go further back in time following the suggestion by Tony Judt examining “our recent past”.

**Social democracy as an ideology was conceived by the founding fathers (and not by mothers) as a response to the problems of men who were employed reregulating the relationship between the state, capital and citizens. Women’s movement was founded as an appendix to the “main movement” extending the argumentation of class struggle to the oppression of women by men stating that without political, legal, educational emancipation the socialist program can not prevail.** The Hungarian Social Democratic Party in principle demanded equally suffrage for both men and women. But the fight for women’s rights was not on the priority list of the male party leaders. Moreover the party leadership did not support the women’s separate mobilization following Clara Zetkin, who supported women’s right to vote but she denied that women’s question as a separate issue exists. She claimed that women’s issues such as maternal leave, breast feeding allowances should be demanded by the social democratic movement as a whole<sup>4</sup>.

The publication of Hungarian social democratic journal: *Nőmunkás* (Female worker) was received with resentment by the male dominated trade union and party. The former was afraid of the cheaper female workforce snatching paid employment from men therefore started unionization of women, while the latter saw a threat in separate women’s movement representing particularism against the unity of universalist movement. In *Nőmunkás*, László Rudas, (1885-1950) pointed out as far as the fight for suffrage is concerned “*We, proletarian women (!) it should not be our aim (the gaining the suffrage A.P) for us there is no women’s movement, there is no separate movement, but one movement, the movement of the proletariats, the socialism*”<sup>5</sup>. Before WWI the short lived cooperation between the liberals and the

4 Aranyossi M., *Lázadó asszonyok. A magyar nőmunkásmozgalom története 1867–1919*. Budapest: Kossuth, 1963, 34.

5 Rudas L., *Polgári és proletár nőmozgalom*. In: *Nőmunkás*, 1906, április 24. Idézi Kovács, M. Mária, *A magyar feminizmus korszakfordulója*. In: *Café Babel*, 1994, 4: 180.



social democratic women was considered as a “bourgeois” influence by the party leaders. The social democrats argued with equality while liberals (and conservatives) with difference: in this equality however gender differences were subordinated to the “main aims” of the movement.

Women who became political agents in the 20<sup>th</sup> century with the introduction of general suffrage changed how politics was played forever as sexual difference was introduced into politics.<sup>6</sup> The question is how the introduction of difference changed the universalist social democratic party aims.

I can bring up in lots of other examples from the interwar period how the sexual “difference” was subordinated to the universalist party aims in the Hungarian social democratic party.

Anna Kéthly, who was charismatic female leader of the social democracy much before the rise of successful female politicians from Scandinavia, editor of the *Nőmunkás*, nearly never stood up for “women’s rights” publicly outside the employment issues. At the same time the female politicians who were elected to the Budapest municipal on a social democratic ticket were ghettoized in the section on social policy which at the same time offered them a site for political training.

After WWII half of Europe was occupied by the Red Army which had serious consequences for gender politics and for the mobilisational potential of the social democrats. After 1945 the sexual difference in the countries under Soviet occupation was framed in the equality discourse.<sup>7</sup> In that frame there were two alternatives: the social democratic and the communist handful of home grown and couple of hundreds returning from emigration from the Soviet Union. In 1945 the Social Democrat Party realized to their amazement that the communists, who in the interwar period were working under illegal conditions, had used their party to popularize themselves, now came out of hiding and demanded that they would be the single political representative of the working class.<sup>8</sup> The Social democrat women’s movement, apart from its well built network and good working relations with the trade unions, also had conscious politicized women members. The Social Democrats after 1945 were proud that their female comrades “work with much greater agility than the average man”.<sup>9</sup> The fact that it had state administration experience who worked in the Budapest municipal social policy section, actively took part in shaping social policy cannot be forgotten either. In the winter of 1945 the Social Democrat women’s movement had the most radical program as far as gender equality is concerned; they were not bound by the tactical cautiousness that was so characteristic of the communists at that time. In their program the social democrats made a confident stand for the

6 Pető A., Szapor, Judit, *Women and the Alternative Public Sphere: toward a Redefinition of Women’s Activism and the Separate Spheres in East Central Europe*, in *NORA, Nordic Journal of Women’s Studies*. 2004. No.3. Vol. 12. pp. 172-182.

7 Pető A., *A Missing Piece? How Women in the Communist Nomenclature are not Remembering*, *East European Politics and Society* Vol. 16. No. 3. Fall 2003 pp. 948-958.

8 More on this see Pető A., *Hungarian Women in Politics 1945-1951*, Columbia University Press, *East European Monographs Series*, 2003.

9 *Archive of Institute of Political History, Budapest (further PIL)* 283. 20. 7. p. 268.

political and legal emancipation of women, equal pay for equal work, and furthermore, in accordance with broad social democratization, for the complete emancipation of women in the political and cultural spheres.

For the social democrat women's movement two factors were to prove vital in their loss of social influence and to the failure of this promising program. Their resistance was worn down by continual friction with the communists and on the other they proved vulnerable when faced with new politicizing methods introduced by the communist. The traditional Social Democrat political culture based on democracy, which the communists were so jealous of, was rather a disadvantage than otherwise when it came to the struggle for the mobilization of the workers, especially the young ones and the winning over of the peasants. On the 1<sup>st</sup> May celebration in 1945 the social democratic women were marching together with men wearing white blouse, dark skirts and red tie, while the communist women were marching separately from men wearing red and white dotted headscarf. This difference in style and appearance was reflected in how sexual difference was handled by these parties. With the merge, which in practice was a take over of the social democrats by the communist, the necessity of politics was victorious over the mission of progressive politics. György Marosán (1908-1992), the legendary social democratic leader turned to be loyal communist responsible at that time for the women's section in the party, who often solved conflicts that came up in women's meetings with consciously masculine gestures – by slapping the table, or shouting depending on the situation – recognised the essence of the matter:

*"Somewhere in the neighbourhood a new type of person is forming, someone who runs factories, a politician, a statesman, a soldier: the socialist woman. What will men who are very left wing, at least verbally, do if ten years on from now a woman appears who does not wish to remain a servant?"<sup>10</sup>*

The end of the social democrat women's movement by merging with the communists in 1948 is perhaps one of the reasons that this question has still not been even asked why politically engaged women were subordinated to the class struggle. The construction of dominant masculinity was never questioned and the sexual binaries of man and woman remained fixed categories used in political mobilisation and in identity politics. The simulacrum was constructed and it was only a question of time when it will fall into pieces as the map of the empire in the story by Borges while the problems of gender inequality continued to exist.

During the "statist feminist" period the ideological anti-feminism of the communist emancipation policy was based on the concept of class struggle. As Miglena Nikolchina pointed out anti "statist emancipation" arguments fell into a rhetoric trap as far as gender equality is concerned because it defined the workplace as a site of equality.<sup>11</sup> In the private realm gender relations were continued to be dominated by traditional representations and expectations of femininity and masculinity.<sup>12</sup> Although

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<sup>10</sup> PIL 283/20/24, p. 102.

<sup>11</sup> Pető A., *Hungarian Women in Politics, in Transitions, Environments, Translations: The Meanings of Feminism in Contemporary Politics* eds. J. Scott, C. Kaplan, D. Keats, Routledge, New York, 1997, pp. 153-161.

<sup>12</sup> For more on how gender operated during statist socialism see: Nikolchina, Miglena, *The Seminar: Mode d'emploi Impure Spaces in the Light of Late Totalitarianism*, in *differences* 13(1): 96-127 (2002).

the initial communist project was to change radically this realm and included hostile attitudes to sex as well as the idea of abolishing the family as the early days of the Bolsheviks did. This radicalism was quickly relinquished and the small bourgeoisie values were adapted by the communist party and the simulacrum was covering the movement. On the level of official party ideology: it was assumed that gender equity has been achieved and women's problems have been resolved with the help of a well developed state subsidized child-care system, paid pregnancy leaves, up to three years infant care, etc. **And the official ideology had its theory of gender ("in so far as women are like men, they are equal"), the private sphere had its verbalized dichotomous gendered norms ("boys do not cry"). The place where real but unarticulated redefinitions of gender happened was the work place which functioned as a nexus of the official and the private. The emancipated attitudes of women during communism became a matter of habitual practice learned during paid employment but remained largely without a language which might have shaped political mobilisation by gender. The result is a lasting transformation of the "praxis" of femininity which will play an important role in 1989.** If working women did not get very high in the professional and political hierarchies, they tended to perceive this as their own choice. This rhetorical strategy as a heritage of the statist feminist period is acting against addressing structural discrimination even today. From that point of view, women seem to blend easily in their environment so more difficult to address them and this partly explains the decrease of women's membership and active participation in politics in general and in the social democratic movement in particular.

In Hungary in the transition process of 1989 the historical social democratic party was also re-founded together with the other "historical" parties. As a rule the more the party was historical the fewer women were in there in (the historical Round Table debate which redefined Hungarian citizenship after the collapse of communism) and the less sensitive the party was to the issue of difference.

At the end of the Cold War the victorious neo-liberal system got into Eastern Europe which also opened up space for the deep conservatism of the Hungarian society which survived the 50 years of statist feminism unchanged. In 1989 it was the former communist party which got into the market of political thoughts with a group of well trained female politicians however their presence did not change the dominant masculine identity politics of the party. **As the time passed the MZSP (Magyar Szocialista Párt-Hungarian Socialist Party) failed to attract young female members because the difference discourse can not be successful mobilization frame in a universalist frame especially when other alternatives emerged. The revival of the conservative and extreme right wing mobilised women in the framework of politics of motherhood<sup>13</sup>.** In that framework the politics of motherhood women could find structural support for securing the family. The rhetorical frame of maternalism by the victorious conservatism is not questioned by the liberal "new feminism" of the

13 Pető A., *Die Marien in der Sonne (Die Apokalyptischen Madonnen)* In J. Laakso (ed./Hg.), *Frau & Nation / Woman & Nation. In Finno-Ugric Studies in Austria 5*. Wien: LIT-Verlag 2008. pp. 137-174. and Pető A., *Anti-Modernist Political Thoughts on Motherhood in Europe in a Historical Perspective in Reframing Demographic Change in Europe. Perspectives on Gender and Welfare State Transformations. Focus Gender. Band 11*. Lit Verlag, Berlin, 2010. pp. 189-201.

young generation who believe that they alone are the source of their own success and they refuse to pay for the failures of others or acknowledge that these are structures factors causing discrimination neither by the uncertain MSZP which in principle staged itself as the successor of the social democratic values. The categorisation for “men” and “women” as political agents worked in the early 1900, but it remained unresponsive to the political and intellectual shift towards developments of identity politics from the 1960s. The simulacrum of social democracy attracts the elderly voters with nostalgia but it does not work for the younger ones who are moving towards other alternatives.

As a consequence in the social democratic movement women necessarily are ghettoized into the women’s section where they are also fighting for the same agenda of women’s difference but in a framework which does not offer them visibility or the acknowledgement of gender difference. The members, middle aged and older, white women are as unfit for coalitional politics as were their fore-mother, the social democratic women in between 1945 and 1948 without the threat of dissolving themselves in the agenda defined by others. And today these “others” are numerous. Therefore coming up with a feasible strategy for the future is not easy. The social democrats are advocating socialist internationalism in an era where the alternatives are polarized around the axis of cosmopolitanism. They are advocating “women’s politics” when the identity politics of the 1980s is already a part of history textbooks. **In Europe women’s demands has changed during the past century: emphasis moved from needs to rights, not independently from the success of the social democratic movements earlier and within this from the restricted right to parity in selected areas to the larger right of self-determination. This crucial shift was not made in Hungary, the “patriarchal bargain” the loyalty to men as a key to self fulfilment was replaced by “party bargain”: the loyalty to the MSZP which the women were unable neither to modernise nor to transform. As it is often the case with simulacrums.**

Returning the issue of simulacrum which frames my contribution to gender and social democracy to this volume we can not expect a popular impact of social democracy in the future if the internationalism and universalism, the two key corner stones of social democratic movement will not be reconceptualised This new start should lead to the formation of a new language and a new self definition. I would not go as far as Tony Judt claiming that “social democracy” as a term has not relevance (everybody is a democrat nowadays and social is a too wide concept to attract anybody). Therefore what remained for him is the “fear” from worst to come as a mobilisation force. In that case we can only hope that parties claiming social democracy as a heritage will learn from the past mistakes and reconsider its position to difference. Otherwise social democracy really becomes a vanishing simulacrum in a land “inhabited by animals and beggars”.



# “Deeds, not words”

## The Left and advancing lesbian rights in the context of feminism and LGBT rights in the EU



**Maite Morren**

This paper will focus on the role of the Left to improve the situation of lesbians and by extension other vulnerable groups in the EU. The debate is framed in the wider context of lesbians within the feminist movement and in particular, EU policy regarding LGBT rights. The evolution of LGBT rights in the UK, Belgium and Spain helps to support the argument that the Left has overall been supportive of lesbian/LGBT rights. The main conclusion is that advancing lesbian rights in the EU can only be done in a multilayered way: by advancing women's rights, by tailoring certain policies to the specific needs of lesbians (e.g.: in healthcare), and by ensuring that LGBT people are not discriminated against. In all three areas improvements are necessary, but it is in LGBT rights where most work still needs to be done.



*"I came to socialist politics through struggle in my everyday life, and not a theoretical struggle which needs to be explained in order for people to understand how they are shit on, but a real daily struggle which is visible, all pervading and manifests itself through intimidation, violence, discrimination against me as an individual." (Birch, n.p.)*

As this statement by gay left wing activist Mark Asthon demonstrates, the message of equality that lies at the core of left-wing politics matches the goals of the gay liberation movement. However, those who have been overlooked often are women. **The question what the Left has done to advance the rights of lesbians in the EU is relevant for many reasons, as in terms of lesbians' visibility, employment, political representation and civic rights there is still much to improve on throughout the EU.** The evolution of LGBT rights in the UK, Belgium and Spain supports the argument that the Left has overall been supportive of lesbian rights. Furthermore, the debate will be framed in the wider context of lesbians within the feminist movement and EU policy regarding LGBT rights.

## **Feminism, lesbians, the Left and LGBT rights**

**Women's rights and lesbian rights are inextricably connected. Without the emancipation of women it is doubtful there would be a lesbian movement to speak of. Furthermore, from the days of the Suffragette movement, at the beginning of the past century, lesbians have been active in the feminist movement. (Holton, 202; Marsh & Thorpe, n.p.)**

It is no coincidence that lesbian politicians who are openly out are almost always from left wing parties. Indeed, in Western Europe left wing parties (social-democrats and greens) and ethically progressive liberal parties have been at the forefront of pushing for LGBT rights. In the next section we will look at the positive impact made by the Labour government in the UK (1997-2010), the 'purple-green coalition' comprising social democrats, greens and liberals in Belgium (1999-2003) and the Zapatero government in Spain (2004-...).

In Eastern and Central Europe the situation was more complicated, with communism stifling civil society and isolating the region, while massive societal changes were taking place elsewhere in the world. Furthermore, it was believed that ' [i]n a perfected socialist society, lesbianism and gayness would, it was believed, eventually disappear' (Tatchell, 31). Censorship also ensured that 'homosexuality did not exist officially' (Kowalska, 1).

## **The UK Labour government (1997-2010)**

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1 LGBT: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender.

2 The term 'lesbian feminism' as such refers to one particular current (1970s-early 1980s) within the feminist movement, which stressed that heterosexism and oppression are intertwined. The implication is made that women in heterosexual relationships are less 'pure' feminists and that men can bring no contribution at all to advancing women's rights. Moreover, people's sexuality would be seen as a conscious choice and not a natural given (Phelan, 46-47). It is therefore safe to say that 'lesbian feminism' is a school of thought many lesbians who are feminists would not identify with.

The progress made on LGBT rights since 1997 is certainly something Labour can be proud of. It has been argued that EU legislation and the influence of European courts sped up the progress (Robinson, 187; Wilson, 196). In 2000 the government lifted the ban on LGBTs in the army (Bedell, n.p.). The following year the age of consent was lowered to the age of 16 and was hereby made equal to the age of consent for heterosexuals (Bedell, n.p.).

In 2003 the infamous Section 28 was repealed (Bedell, n.p.). Section 28 certainly deserves some further explanation. UK LGBT rights organization Stonewall describes Section 28 as prohibiting 'local authorities in England and Wales from "promoting" homosexuality. It also labelled gay family relationships as "pretend" ' (Stonewall2010b, n.p.). Strictly speaking 'Section 28 never applied directly to schools, only to local authorities', but its existence as such was enough to cause confusion and scare teachers 'about what they could and could not say and do, and whether they could help pupils dealing with homophobic bullying and abuse' (Stonewall2010b, n.p.). Section 28 made life for gay teachers very difficult and hampered schools' possibilities to tackle homophobic bullying.

In 2005 there was another breakthrough, as civil partnerships between same-sex partners were officially recognized (Bedell, n.p.). In 2007 discrimination in goods and services was put to an end with the 2007 Equality Act (Equality Act, n.p.).

In 2008 the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Bill was approved, which provides equal legal recognition for the children of same-sex parents and removes existing barriers to lesbians accessing safe, regulated fertility services (Edemariam, n.p.). All in all, the Labour government certainly made a positive contribution to LGBT rights in the UK.

## **Belgium's purple-green coalition (1999-2003)**

The 1999 federal elections brought about huge changes in the Belgian political landscape. For the first time in 40 years the Christian Democrat party CVP - currently called CD&V – was not in government (CD&V, n.p.). This was seen as a great opportunity by the purple-green government coalition (social democrats, liberals, greens) to push for a more ethically progressive agenda, including advancing LGBT rights.

And so they did. 2003 was the year when same-sex marriages were officially possible in Belgium, making it the second country in the world, after the Netherlands, where same-sex couples could marry. The approval of gay marriage paved the way for approving gay adoption and a revised anti-discrimination framework. (Cavaria, n.p.)

Only 50 years ago, such developments would have been unthinkable. Especially in deeply



Catholic Flanders country, where it was commonplace that priests urged churchgoers to vote Catholic (Schampers, n.p.).

The combination of the Christian Democrat party being in opposition for the first time in 40 years and the governing left-wing and liberal parties being eager to deal with ethical issues allowed for great progress in the area of LGBT rights.

## **The Zapatero government in Spain (2004-...)**

The example of Spain is inspiring for many countries in the EU that are facing difficulties with tackling homophobia. Spain went from dictatorship under General Franco (1939-1975) , with homosexuals being put into 'correction camps' and subjected to torture and persecution to being one of the most progressive countries in the EU when it comes to LGBT-rights (Keeley, n.p.). Add to this the powerful role of the Catholic Church in Spain and the overall picture of the country's progress on LGBT rights truly becomes impressive.

The PSOE government led by Prime Minister Zapatero pushed for immediate reform. Only one year after assuming power, gay marriage was legalized in Spain (2005). Other reforms involved granting same-sex couples the right to adoption and improved anti-discrimination legislation (PSOE, n.p.).

## **The situation of lesbians in the EU**

It is very hard to get a clear picture of the position of lesbians as a separate group throughout the EU. There is a lack of comparable data and in some countries, such as the UK, most of the repressive legislation of the past was geared at punishing male homosexual behaviour. As the legend goes, Queen Victoria refused to approve legislation that criminalised homosexual behaviour (1885), unless references to women were removed. She did not believe women would be capable of such '*ghastly behaviour*' (Slapper, n.p.). The anecdote does point out where one of the key problems lies with the situation of lesbians: a lack of visibility.

In some cases this is not problematic, as the problems faced by lesbians do not require a separate solution specially focused on them as a subgroup. For instance, an employment issue such as the gender pay gap can be dealt with through advancing women's rights. However, there are policy areas where it is very clear that a strategy specifically aimed at lesbians is required. Given some alarming statistics on cigarette smoking and alcohol use there is a need to focus on lesbian health (Gruskin, 1). In addition, mental health problems, especially among young lesbians require attention and most likely linked to a lack of visibility and positive lesbian role models in the public sphere. Take the following data from Belgium, where research from Ghent University shows that 33 to 45% of all young Flemish LGBTs (<26) considers suicide (Cavaria, 2). The research is particularly alarming when the results regarding girls under 26 is taken into account. (Cavaria, 2). Of this group 25% of the lesbian

girls claimed to have attempted suicide, as opposed to 5,4% of the straight girls (Cavaria, 2). If the psychological well-being of young gay people is already so bad in a relatively gay-tolerant region as Flanders, then one can only be concerned about the psychological well-being of youngsters in regions where there is no legal protection at all. Another healthcare issue is visitors' rights in hospitals. There have been cases of people not being allowed to visit their partner in the maternity ward, as they were not seen as family.

Although it is hard to get a clear picture of the situation of lesbians in the EU as a subgroup, much can be said about the EU's achievements and shortcomings regarding LGBT rights as a whole.

## EU achievements on LGBT rights

In more than 80 countries worldwide homosexuality is a criminal offence (Economist, n.p.). The punishments vary from prison sentences to the death penalty. The worst offenders are countries in the Middle East, Africa and Asia, whereas North America and Europe provide for the most protection. Arguably, the EU has a good track record on gay rights.

In this section an overview of the main legal measures taken by the EU will be given. Article 13 of the EU Treaty and the Employment Directive are of particular importance. The new member states had to adopt this legislation, along with the rest of the *acquis communautaire*.

Firstly, the *'unacceptability of discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation'* is specifically mentioned in the most important EU document, its Treaty (ILGAEurope2008a, n.p.). Indeed, Article 13, which entered EU law with the Treaty of Amsterdam (1997), gives the Community the ability to *'take appropriate action to combat discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation'* (ILGAEurope2008a, n.p.; Kowalska, 2).

Secondly, all EU member states *'have agreed to ban such discrimination in employment by the end of 2003'* with the Employment Directive that was adopted in 2000. On 2 July 2008 the European Commission proposed a new single horizontal anti-discrimination Directive (ILGAEurope2008b, n.p.) However, *'[i]n order to become EU law, this proposed Directive needs to be adopted unanimously by all EU Member States'* (ILGAEurope2008b, n.p.). It is mainly Germany that is opposing the comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation.

Furthermore, in 2000 the EU has adopted the Charter of Fundamental Rights, which mentions sexual orientation as a prohibited ground of discrimination, making it the first international human rights charter to do so. (ILGAEurope2008a, n.p.).

Next to these binding measures there are the non-legally binding resolutions by the European Parliament, which carry some political weight, such as the 1994 Resolution on equal rights for

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<sup>3</sup> Vinke J., *Suicidal acts and ideation in homosexual and bisexual young people: a study of prevalence and risk factors*. 35 *Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology*, 494-500, 2000.

homosexuals and lesbians in the EC. A latest breakthrough, dating from June 2010, is the development of a toolkit, prepared by the Council of the European Union in consultation with civil society organisations, that outlines what the EU should be doing abroad to defend the human rights of LGBT people abroad (Intergroup, n.p.).

## EU shortcomings on LGBT rights

The main problem with current EU anti-discrimination legislation is that there seems to be *'a hierarchy'* of minorities in the EU, with *'some vulnerable groups enjoying better protection than others, without any possible explanation as to why this difference in treatment is there in the first place'* (Kochenov, 10).

In the early 1990s gay rights activist Peter Tatchell remarked that there were *'[t]ensions and contradictions within the [European] Commission over how to respond to demands for lesbian and gay equality'* (Tatchell, 19). Although it would even be possible to counter discrimination against LGBTs on the grounds of this discrimination *'contradicting the EC's goal of creating an obstacle-free internal market'* the Commission chose to emphasize that it *'has no legal power to outlaw anti-homosexual discrimination'*, as this would be in conflict with *'the laws and values contained in the cultural traditions of the different member states'* (Tatchell, 19). Imagine the same argument being used to defend long-standing *'traditions'* of sexism and violence against women, racism and anti-Semitism. This imbalance is even reflected in EU legislation. For instance, if the Employment Directive protects the rights of LGBTs in the workplace the question arises why protection from discrimination should be limited to the workplace for LGBTs if the scope of the Race Directive is much wider (Kochenov, 10).

In 2008, the Commission gave in to the lobbying of MEPs, civil society and trade unions to provide for *'a single horizontal anti-discrimination Directive, covering the grounds of age, disability, religion/belief and sexual orientation'* (ENAR, 1). This would do away with the current inconsistencies. However, it remains to be seen whether key member state Germany will be convinced to support comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation, although the criticism from NGOs such as Amnesty International and from key EU officials is rising. To put it in the words of Belinda Pyke, head of the European Commission's anti-discrimination department: *"German businesses - please ask why it's impossible for Germany to support the non-discrimination directive"* (Retmann, n.p.)

A second problem with the EU's LGBT policy is that homosexuals couples are still considered inferior to heterosexual couples. The EU is hereby lagging behind on the UN, as the judgments made by the European Court of Justice (ECJ) offer less protection to homosexual couples as those made by the UN Human Rights Committee (UN HCR). Compare the judgment of the HCR in *Young v Australia* (2000) with the ECJ decision in *D v Council* (1999). In *Young v Australia*, the UN HCR judged that *'the partner of an Australian veteran, was entitled to a government pension'*, as *'there was no legitimate reason*

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4 The Directive is also known as the 'EU Directive Establishing a General Framework for Equal Treatment in Employment and Occupation or Council Directive 2000/78/EC (Council2000, 16).

5 The body of common rights and obligations which bind all the Member States together within the European Union. (EU Glossary, n.p.)

to deny same-sex partners the government benefits offered to heterosexual couples' (Kochenov, 14). By contrast, the ECJ found in *D v Council* that a Swedish man in a civil partnership was not entitled to family benefits by his employer in Brussels, whereas he would have been entitled to those in Sweden. The underlying reasoning was that the Court did indeed find a legitimate reason to discriminate, which is that *'partnerships between persons of the same sex registered in one of the EU member states cannot be comparable to marriage between a woman and a man'* (Stonewall2010a, n.p.). In other words, LGBT-partnerships are second-rate compared to heterosexual marriage.

Thirdly, the EU has failed its LGBT-citizens in that it could have done more for LGBTs in the new member states during the accession procedure. Although much has improved in legal terms in the new member states thanks to the accession procedure, such as a ban on the criminalization of homosexuality and the equalization of the age of consent, the motor behind this change was the determination to join the EU and not a change in attitude of the public opinion or even the political establishment (Kochenov, 14; Smiszek, 45). The accession states had to meet the Copenhagen criteria, such as human rights and respect for and protection of minorities and adopt the *acquis communautaire*. However, in 2002, almost ten years after the Copenhagen criteria were put in place, the European Commission *'annual reports on the progress of the accessions countries'* only mentioned discrimination based on sexual orientation *'briefly and cursorily'* (Swiebel, 1). At that time the Commission held firm *'that the accession states already fulfill the political criteria despite the persistence of discriminatory provisions in their Penal Codes'* (Swiebel, 1). The result of this ambivalent attitude is evident today, with official homophobia rife in many of the new member states. For instance, in Latvia the Parliament initially *'refused to amend national legislation in order to outlaw discrimination based on sexual orientation'*, which would be required according to the Employment Directive (Kochenov, 15).



## Conclusion

Despite great improvements in the situation of lesbians in the EU, which are partly to attribute to the efforts of left wing governments - such as those in the UK, Spain and Belgium – gaps are remaining. Firstly, knowledge of the situation of lesbians in the EU is incomplete, due to a lack of comparable data. There is much more data to be found on gay men and on LGBT people as a whole. Furthermore, lesbians *'invisibility'* is not only evident in the area of research, but also in society as a whole. Another

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6 *"An American company might decide to locate its European headquarters in the United Kingdom. Staff from various EC countries would probably be seconded to the new headquarters. While in the UK, [LGB staff] would be rendered vulnerable to discrimination and prosecution because of their sexuality in the following ways: a) They would have no legal protection against anti-homosexual discrimination in the workplace [...] b) The male personnel could be liable to prosecution under the criminal law if they have sex with other men, unless both aged 21 or over and their sexual acts occur in a private dwelling behind locked doors and windows, with no other person present in any part of the house. (Tatchell, 56-57).*

7 Tatchell quotes Daniela Napoli" (Tatchell, 19).

8 Council Directive 2000/43/EC (Kochenov, 10).

9 European Network Against Racism.



serious problem, which could be linked to a lack of positive role models is the high rate of depression among young lesbians. Moreover, in certain policy areas, such as healthcare, medical research shows that there is a clear need for a specific policy on lesbians.

The main conclusion is that advancing lesbian rights in the EU can only be done in a multilayered way: by advancing women's rights, by tailoring certain policies to the specific needs of lesbians, and by ensuring that LGBT people are not discriminated against. In all three areas improvements are necessary, but it is in LGBT rights where most work still needs to be done. The frontline of the gay rights struggle in the EU is not only in Eastern and Central Europe, but also in the older member states, where young LGBT people feel isolated and where homophobic bullying at schools is near to epidemic (Hunt & Jensen, 2).

*'Deeds, not words'* was the slogan of the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU), founded by Suffragette leader Emmeline Pankhurst in 1903 (Hughes, n.p.). When the words of legislation are laid down, it takes a long time for people's attitudes to change and for the real-life experience of LGBT people throughout the EU to improve. And once progress has been achieved, we should never rest assured that the situation cannot deteriorate. Europe's totalitarian past is not *'dead load which by itself time will bury in oblivion'* (Arendt, iv; Mazower, 12). To neglect Europe's dark past of oppressing minorities would be foolish, as liberty is far too precious. Safeguarding rights and freedoms that have been dearly fought for: there certainly is a task for the Left in Europe.



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# Biographies



**Dr. Zita Gurmai** *PES Women, President*

She is MEP, President of PES Women, Vice-President of FEPS and was invited by the French Parti socialiste to be in charge of the rights of women in their national committee. She started her professional carrier in the business sector and got involved in politics later when she was elected member of the Hungarian National Assembly. She was one of the leading figures of the Hungarian Yellow Scarf Movement aiming at changing the governmental policy on gender issues. She is the chairwoman of several organisations, such as Women in Public Life Foundation, Our Future is the Europe of the New Millennium Foundation and the Women for changes movement. She has published numerous books including literature and technical, environment protection books. These include among others: Guide to the EU, Women's book, Environment and development, Water from the hills, Women also can do it, Where is happiness nowadays?



**Ylva Johansson**

Member of the Swedish Parliament and Spokesperson for Welfare policies for the Swedish Social Democratic Party. Ylva Johansson was born in 1964 in Huddinge, Stockholm, Sweden. She is educated teacher in Mathematics/Physics. She got elected Member of Parliament (1988-1991), representing the Left Party. Later left the Left Party and joined the Social Democrats. She was a teacher at Matteus School in Stockholm (1992-1994). She was appointed Minister for Schools, post she held from 1994 to 1998. In 1998 she had to leave the government because she fell in love with her future husband the Minister of Finance, then she became Investment Manager/Business Developer for Telia Business Innovation. From 1999 to 2000, she worked as a self-employed consultant. She became Deputy Managing Director and Managing Director for Att Veta AB (2000-2004). In 2004 she reentered government as Minister for Elderly and Health Care (2004-06).



**Maite Morren**

Maite Morren graduated in 2008 with an MSc in European Studies at the London School of Economics and Political Science. She also obtained a BA and MA in English and Dutch Linguistics and Literature and an MA in International Politics at the University of Leuven. So far, her main topics of research have been globalization studies, human rights and migration and asylum policy.



**Andrea Pető**

Prof. Dr habil. Andrea PETŐ is an associate professor at the Department of Gender Studies at the Central European University where she is teaching courses on social and cultural history of Europe. Her books include: Women in Hungarian Politics 1945-1951 (Columbia University Press/East European Monographs New York, 2003), Geschlecht, Politik und Stalinismus in Ungarn. Eine Biographie von Júlia Rajk. Studien zur Geschichte Ungarns, Bd. 12. (Gabriele Schäfer Verlag, 2007). Presently she is working on gendered memory of WWII and political extremisms.



### **Marta Plaza**

Marta Plaza graduated in BA in Political Science and Administration at Complutense University in Madrid. She studied one academic year at the University of Utrecht, The Netherlands. She also holds a MBA. She has worked as a research assistant and researcher in Public Opinion Projects at the Centre for Sociological Research and the Unit for Compared Policies from the Superior Council for Scientific Research, both in Spain. She has also worked in the Technical Office of Research Support of the Spanish National Distance Education University and has collaborated on various projects of the Spanish Foundation for Science and Technology (FECYT). At present she is Research Assistant at the Ideas Foundation in the "Policy, Citizenship and Equality" Area, with special interest for research in gender issues. She has a long research experience on gender policies in Spain.



### **Christa Randzio-Plath**

Professor Dr. h.c. Christa Randzio-Plath is a lawyer, consultant and lecturer at University of Hamburg and College of Europe, Hamburg. She started her professional carrier as editor, but later became tax-lawyer at the Oberfinanzdirektion, Hamburg. She was Deputy Chief of Cabinet at the Council of Europe in Strasbourg for two years. In 1989, she was elected member of the European Parliament, where she was first the Chairwoman of the subcommittee on monetary affairs, then became Chairwoman of the committee on economic and monetary affairs. She has been member of the executive committee of Hamburg SPD and Chairwoman of Social Democratic Women Hamburg for several years. She was also appointed to be the Vice-President of the Socialist Women International. She is currently Chairwoman of SPD Control Committee and President of the Marie-Schlei-Association, a non-governmental organisation giving financial support to women's projects in third world countries



### **Soledad Ruiz-Seguín**

Soledad Ruiz Seguín was born in Ceuta (Spain) in January 1962. She is expert in accounting and business and also obtained the Degrees on Social-Labour University Expert; European Gender Policy University Expert; and Gender-based Violence University Expert. From 1988 she was a public officer at the Employment National Institute. In 1996 she was elected responsible for "Women" in UGT, a Trade Union at Spanish national level. She was responsible for the development of equality policy in this organization. Something to highlight from this period is the negotiation, on behalf of the Spanish Trade Unions, the historic "Framework Agreement on Parental Leave", which gave way to the European Council Directive 96/34/CE of 3rd June, regarding the above-mentioned agreement. In the same way, she was responsible for the negotiation of Agreement 183 and the Recommendation about maternity to the International Labour Organisation (ILO), approved in 2000. Since 2004-2008 she was appointed Director of The Women Institute of Andalusia. During the development of this task, she participated in the elaboration and processing of two Draft Bills in the field of Gender: Law 13/2007 of 26<sup>th</sup> November on Integrated

Prevention and Protection Measures against gendered violence; and Law 12/2007 of 26<sup>th</sup> November on Promotion of Gender Equality in Andalusia. In 2008 she was appointed the first General Director of Gender Violence in Andalusia, and amongst her competences, she was responsible for the coordination of all policies in Andalusia targeted at eradicating gender-based violence.



### **Judit Tánczos**

Born in Budapest, Hungary, she graduated at the Faculty of Law of ELTE University (Budapest) in July 2008, and spent her Erasmus semester at K.U. Leuven, Belgium. She took part in the Refugee Law Clinic of the Hungarian Helsinki Committee in Budapest, and worked as an intern for the Progress Lawyers' Network in Brussels in 2007. She specialises in human rights, migration law, labour law and social law. Besides Hungarian, she speaks English, French and

Dutch. She started working for FEPS in August 2008. As a Junior Policy Advisor she is in charge of justice and home affairs, constitutional issues and gender issues.



### **Pat Thane**

has been Professor of Contemporary British History, Institute of Historical Research, University of London since 2001. Her publications include: *The Foundations of the Welfare State* (Longman, 1982 2nd ed. 1996); *Old Age from Antiquity to Post-Modernity*, co-ed with Paul Johnson (Routledge 1998); *Old Age in England. Past Experiences, Present Issues* (Oxford University Press, May 2000); *Britain Women and Ageing in Britain since 1500*, co-ed with

Lynne Botelho (Longman, 2001); *The Long History of Old Age* ed (Thames and Hudson, Getty Museum, LA, 2005); *Britain's Pensions Crisis: History and Policy* co.ed. with Hugh Pemberton and Noel Whiteside. (Oxford University Press/British Academy, 2005); *Unequal Britain. Equalities in Britain since 1945* ed. (Continuum, 2010); *Women and Citizenship in Britain and Ireland in the Twentieth Century. What Difference did the Vote Make?* co-ed with Esther Breitenbach (Continuum, 2010); She is a convenor of History and Policy ([www.historyandpolicy.org](http://www.historyandpolicy.org)).



### **Ghislaine Toutain**

She has been head of external relations at the Fondation Jean-Jaurès Directrice (FJJ) since 1998. Assistant of Pierre Mauroy at the Senat and at FJJ. She initiated the "Women to women" seminars in 2000, and has organised them for the past ten years. She has been also co-organiser of the French-German Forum since 1999 together with the Friedrich Ebert Foundation. She was councillor in extraordinary service at the French Conseil d'Etat

between 1992 and 1996 and was also responsible for the international section of the socialist weekly magazine "Vendredi" from 1988 to 1995. Ghislaine was MP from 1981 to 1988.



## PUBLISHING SUPERVISOR



**Dr. Ernst Stetter** *FEPS Secretary General*

Ernst STETTER, born in 1952, is *Secretary General of the Foundation for European Progressive Studies (FEPS)* since its creation on 30<sup>th</sup> January 2008. He is an economist and political scientists, and a regular commentator on EU affairs in media. Mr Stetter studied at Universities of Tübingen and Heidelberg in Germany, focusing his research on the issues such as: international trade, finance, economic, development and social policies. In 1976 Mr Stetter started his professional career as a lecturer in economics at the DGB Trade Unions' Centre for Vocational Training in Heidelberg. In 1980 Mr Stetter obtained his Ph.D. in political sciences for his dissertation entitled "The Association of ACP countries (Lome I and Lome II) with the European Community and the STABEX-System". From 1980 till 2008 he worked for the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) in various positions, among them: as a Director of the Paris Office from 1997 till 2003 and the Brussels office from 2003 till 2008. Mr Stetter has also been co-editor of the FEPS "Next Left" book series.

## MANAGING EDITOR OF QUERIES



**Dr. Ania Skrzypek** *FEPS Policy Advisor – Managing Editor of Queries*

Ania SKRZYPEK, born in 1979, is *Policy Advisor at the Foundation for European Progressive Studies (FEPS)*. Ms Skrzypek holds a Ph.D., which she obtained cum laude at the University of Warsaw in March 2009, for the thesis "Cooperation of the socialists and social democratic parties in a uniting Europe. From Liaison Bureau to the PES. 1957 – 2007." As a researcher in comparative politics, she specializes in the political history of the European Union, party political systems across Europe, and labour market and social policies within the Union. Therefore in FEPS she is in charge of the "Next Left" and the "Social Europe" projects. Prior to obtaining her Ph.D., Ms Skrzypek studied at the Faculty of Journalism and Political Sciences at the University of Warsaw, Poland and at the Freie Universität in Berlin, Germany. From 2003 till 2009 she was a younger researcher at her Alma Mater in Warsaw, lecturing in social sciences and in sociology of organizations, and from 2004 – 2005 worked as a scientific coordinator of the research group of "Sociology and Social Psychology" of the Faculty of Journalism and Political Sciences of the University of Warsaw. Before joining FEPS in May 2009, Ms Skrzypek served two terms as a secretary general of ECOSY – Young European Socialists, for which position she was elected twice by the Congresses in 2005 and in 2007. Ms Skrzypek published several Polish and international works, including books and, more than 30 articles and comments. Within FEPS, MS Skrzypek has also been a co-editor of the "Next Left series "Renewal of Social Democracy – Contributions to a pan-European Debate", Brussels 2009 and editor in chief of the 1<sup>st</sup> issue of the FEPS Scientific Magazine "Queries", Brussels 2010.





## *The next issue, the next challenge*

Dear Readers,

It is a great pleasure to present to you herewith the second edition of the FEPS scientific magazine "*Queries*".

Only three months ago you were holding in your hands or clicking on the historical '*first ever*' issue, which was published under the theme "*Next Left, Next Europe*". It reads 'holding or clicking', as the first number was released in two forms: a hard copy one (which were sent out to all the FEPS contacts) and a fluid book. However the idea is to now focus and in the future on the e-version, which is considered as an adaptation to modern times: both easier to distribute and undoubtedly more environmentally friendly.

The mission of "*Queries*" as FEPS quarterly publication is to become a European reference point as a periodical in which different, intriguing questions on the future of our continent and our community are posed. Its task is to inspire an intellectual debate, to dare to propose a new vision. This is why editors see all the reactions that "*Queries*" have provoked so far as an important, encouraging signal and wish to reiterate herewith a sincere invitation to all, who wish to contact us on the matter or contribute with the texts to the future issues.

This second issue entitled "*Queries: The next wave of emancipation*" mirrors one of the key contemporary debates on equality, particularly focusing on one aspect – gender. Starting with a historical overview, the distinguished authors outlined the chronological evolution of different national emancipation movements' agendas. They were described in both national and the European context, in regards to the field of economic, social and political rights. An interesting aspect is the link between the feminist aspirations and the general socialist agenda, which in many cases did not exist to begin with. Later it was developed in parallel, and only in fact at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century did it become a coherent, indispensable part of the left's programmes across the continent. What is more, the state of play seem to vary – depending also on the post-war history of the respective social democratic party. Naturally, the authors expose in the same time the issues that still have not been tackled or not yet combated, such as discrimination in the European labour market, women's rights to chose about their health and bodies, stereotypes and prejudices in politics, not to mention still existing women's trafficking and gender based domestic violence. These together with the new dilemmas, brought along by an era of globalization, constitute what can be seen as a *new agenda* to stand, mobilize and fight for. The question that the authors leave the Readers with is therefore also, how to make these ambitious goals the integrated key targets within the renewed programme that all hope to see social democracy delivering in the nearest future.

Dr. Ania Skrzypek

FEPS Policy Advisor – Managing Editor of *Queries*