



REPORT: FUTURE LOOKING MEETING
HOW DO WE WORK INTERNATIONALLY TO SECURE & ADVANCE
WOMEN'S RIGHTS IN THE POST REFERENDUM WORLD
PERSPECTIVES FROM WOMEN'S ORGANISATIONS

24 AUGUST 2016,
EUROPE HOUSE, LONDON

150 YEARS
Fawcett ▶▶
Equality. It's about time.



EUROPEAN WOMEN'S
LOBBY
EUROPÉEN DES FEMMES

UK NGO CSW
ALLIANCE

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The purpose of the meeting is to build a shared understanding amongst women's organisations looking at how BREXIT has altered the landscape for women's rights and for organisations working for women and girls in the UK as well as those who work internationally. We came together to pool information and create a common action plan.

Zarin Hainsworth OBE, Chair of UK NGO CSW Alliance and NAWO welcomed all to the meeting. An overview of the CSW Alliance was given: The Alliance brings together those organisations across the UK who work domestically or internationally to implement the Beijing Platform for Action and who use United Nations processes such as the Commission on the Status of Women. A panel chaired by Zarin Hainsworth provided us with an overview of the current landscape and issues facing us looking forward.



**JOANNA MAYCOCK, SECRETARY GENERAL
EUROPEAN WOMEN'S LOBBY**

Joanna gave a brief overview of the European Women's Lobby: It has a membership of over 2000 women's organisations throughout the 28 EU Member States and is the largest umbrella of women's organisations in Europe, coming together around a shared vision of a feminist Europe.

At the European Women's Lobby (EWL), we are shocked and dismayed by the outcome of the UK Referendum. British women's rights activists were part of founding our organization and have been at the forefront of successfully demanding a better deal for women in the EU for the past 25 years.

Five decades of EU action have most certainly advanced gender equality on our continent. With pressure from EWL, our members and allies, the EU has put in place laws guaranteeing equal pay for equal work, equality in the workplace and minimum rights to maternity leave. However, despite the progress there is still a long way to go in achieving equality, as we saw in the results of the 2014 Gender Equality Index.

Whilst the EU is far from perfect it is an essential international framework providing legislation, funding and opportunities for feminists to connect and innovate. The EU provides a crucial international space for women's organisations to address inequality and discrimination against women. Future progress towards equality for all women in the EU and beyond can only be achieved through the combined efforts of activists, decision makers and institutions within the EU.

Men and women across Europe are suffering as a result of inequality, austerity and globalization, which has left them feeling angry and powerless. Austerity has been a disaster for Europe, and an even greater disaster for women who

have been doubly impacted by cuts to public services such as schools and access to health services, precarious part time work and unemployment. The situation is even worse for migrant and ethnic minority women; for disabled women; for LGBT women and for younger women.

What is more, women were practically absent from the conversation preceding the referendum as they are also sidelined in the discussion about the kind of Europe we are building. It is not for nothing that women voted in equal numbers to leave the EU in the UK referendum: they could no longer see what the EU – or their own government - was doing to make their lives better, and no one was putting forward that case either. Women's place in a post-Brexit economy needs to be central. We need a conversation about the impact on women of austerity and cuts to public sector jobs, which tend to be mainly held by women.

We are seeing that women who have the courage to speak out: activists, journalists, politicians are being silenced with violence and threats of rape and violence. Jo Cox was murdered for what she believed in. The debate preceding the referendum has bred a climate of fear, hate and violence. Racist attacks have increased since the results were announced. Mainstream parties have tried to neutralise the populists by copying their rhetoric. This has in turn served only to pull the debate further to the extremists, contributing to a terrifying level of racism and hatred of others.

This is not the Europe we want, and we think it is not the kind of Europe most people in Britain want either. It is time for all progressives to stand up and be counted; to unite in fighting for the Europe we want.

EWL is taking action. We are launching an initiative to map the far right political parties and movements across Europe to better understand and expose the misogynist and violent core of their messages and intent. We want to draw from that proposals for actions to counter that, with our progressive allies.

We will work towards our vision for a Europe based on well-being, equality, social justice. We envision a society in which women's contribution to all aspects of life is recognized, rewarded and celebrated - in leadership, in care and in production; all women have freedom of choice, and freedom from exploitation; and no woman has been left behind.

There are so many Issues to consider when it comes to the impacts of Brexit for gender equality and women's rights and we need to be smart in a place of great uncertainty about the terms and the outcomes of Brexit. Here are my initial thoughts:

- **In general an absolute priority must be given to understanding and protecting all the women's rights that have been outlined in EU Law and directives AND transposed into UK law.** Explicit action would have to be taken by the UK government to undo these. Once the UK leaves the EU, this will make it much easier for the UK government to act unilaterally to cut back certain rights. A wealth of information on

EU legislation and action on women's rights is available here <http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/>. It will be essential to create and deepen alliances and early warning systems /vigilance networks with legal practitioners, trade unions, other CSOs, MPs and MEPs. Attention to protect the European Convention on Human Rights and the UK Human Rights Act is needed;

- **UK women's organisations must continue to build and strengthen alliances and networks with European and international women's organisations for solidarity, information and joint work.** EWL and the UKJCW will remain in close contact as they have throughout the past 25 years;
- **Use the frameworks that exist and within which the UK is engaged such as the SDGs** (cf British Council has just launched new piece of research, '[Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women and Girls in the UK: Meeting the challenge of the Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#)');
- **Contribute to the broader fights against the far right across Europe which have a racist and misogynist agenda.** We will be doing a study of the misogynist agendas of far right parties across Europe and using that as a platform to campaign. We need to work in solidarity with other movements in this regard;
- **Set out a clear statement of demands to UK government about the negotiations and ensure that your sisters in Europe know that so we can use them towards our own governments** (including free movement and women's rights). We need to make sure the rights of women are not undermined in the negotiations.



**HANNAH ATKINSON COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER FAWCETT SOCIETY,
JEMIMA OLCHAWSKI POLICY OFFICER FAWCETT SOCIETY**

The motivation for the meeting and campaign is to have a coordinated response to Brexit through a gendered lens. It is important to have a coalition which can use each other's skills working together on an issue effecting all of us.

The initial meeting of the Fawcett Society was attended by over 20 organisations. It was hosted by Jess Phillips MP and chaired by Sam Smethers, Director of Fawcett. The participants discussed ideas and viewpoints and areas we felt we needed to focus on. The following themes emerged: economy, workplace rights, community relations.

It was noted that key things to consider include: intersectionality, include those who voted to Leave, being inclusive, being positive. It was felt that the campaign should have clear targets, leading figures, networks and allies across the general public. Agreement was reached about the launch, length of campaign, short term and long term objectives.

It was decided that the following should be the six objectives of the campaign:

- Ensuring an equal place at the decision making table;
- Guaranteeing no weakening of legislation protecting women's rights;
- Continuing to work to tackle VAWG including FGM, trafficking;
- Prioritising women experiencing multiple discrimination;
- Urgently address racism and xenophobia post-vote and protect migrant women;
- Recognition that creating a more equal society is better for economy.

It was noted that the four main areas of EU laws which may be affected:

- Equal treatment at work;
- Tackling racism & xenophobia;
- Equal treatment for mothers and pregnant women;
- Tackling domestic and sexual violence.

Further to the meeting, 20 organisations have so far signed up to the campaign. By the end of July the campaign was launched and gained coverage in the media including on BBC Radio 4 Women's Hour. There was a selfie social media campaign with information being sent to partners and an estimated 5 million impressions, 1.6 million reach, 900 posts.

The next steps for the campaign are to establish detailed briefings and lobbying activity. This is starting with crowdfunding to pay for a sex discrimination law review to note the difference to this area once we leave. We need to keep an eye on where the law is being affected.

Other key action areas which we hope to work closely with partners who are experts are: EAWWG, migrants right to remain, hate crime, representation in government. We hope to partner more closely with the other organisations and let them take the lead on some of these areas – creating a project plan to assign ownership to different areas is key. We are happy to be collaborating with NAWO. It is important that as a coalition we coordinate activity to use our strengths effectively and get results. If you would like to be involved in the campaign... support, share info – even just a tweet or two all helps.





DR ROBERTA BLACKMAN WOODS MP

I'd first like to thank the NAWO and CSW Alliance for inviting me to this event, and to the organisers for putting this fantastic event together. During the referendum campaign, and in the time since the vote to leave the EU, we have seen a dangerous rise in frightening rhetoric, particularly surrounding immigration. The vast majority of the damaging rhetoric was found online, particularly on social media. This is really important to note; as increasingly social media is not only where people get their news from but also where their opinions are shaped about particular issues.

What have we learned from the 'Leave' campaign and the result of the referendum?

One of the many lessons that we can learn from the referendum experience is that we cannot just ignore the debate around immigration. We need to publicly and boldly challenge racist prejudiced narratives, because if we do not rhetoric can lead to actions. Language is absolutely key to this; the idea of immigrants as "other" which was used to irresponsibly in the referendum campaign has led to a long-lasting impact on the way that immigrants are viewed in the UK, and even a spate of xenophobic attacks. The figures released by the National Police Chiefs' Council showed a 49% rise in hate crimes to 1,863 in the last week of July when compared with the previous year. The week after saw a record 58% increase in recorded incidents to 1,787. This cannot be allowed to continue, and we need to have positive conversations about immigration, whilst also addressing people's concerns.

North East region

In the aftermath of the result, and as we go into the negotiations, I'm going to be focussing on the impact of the referendum on the North East, where my constituency is. Almost half of North East export business is done with members of the EU, supporting an estimated 140,000 North-East jobs. I will be working with my fellow North East MPs and MEPs to mitigate the impact of Brexit, including making sure that employers like Hitachi and Nissan feel confident in their investment in the region.

Impact on women

Of course, one of the things I am sure we are all concerned about is what Brexit means for women and girls. It is predominantly men leading the 'Brexit' negotiations, and we need to make sure that women's rights are prioritised during these negotiations.

There are many EU projects which support women in the UK, particularly related to employment including reskilling, retraining and initiatives to reduce the gender employment gap. I will be holding the Government to account to ensure that these important schemes aren't lost, and I hope that the Government will announce that they will be matching the funding for initiatives like these.

I also expect the Government to enshrine EU laws regarding equal pay and benefits for part time workers into UK law at the earliest opportunity; female part time workers outnumber their male counterparts almost three to one, so this is clearly a very important issue for gender equality in the workplace.

We need all MPs, regardless of whether they voted to remain or leave, to sign up to continue to support worker's rights and women's rights going forward. There is definitely a role for civil society organisations to play in the 'Brexit' process, particularly in terms of advocating for women, and I look forward to discussing this again with NAWO members in the future.

Thank you once again for inviting me. It's clear from the amount of interest in the event today that we share a belief in the importance of women in policy making, and I look forward to working with the NAWO and the CSW Alliance again in the future, and building on many of the issues that have been discussed today, both in Parliament and at other similar events in the future.

KEY ISSUES

After group consultation, it was decided to take a deeper look at these issues

- Migration and Free movement ;
- Work and economic empowerment;
- Violence against women and girls;
- Representation at the negotiation table.

This was followed by a discussion in groups on these issues and feedback from each group highlighting key actions that the group suggest.



MIGRATION

There was wide ranging discussion and a realization that there is often a conflation of different issues. We first sought to explore the different complex and interlocking concepts and realities that are often bunched together under « migration ».

In other words it is important as feminists that we are clear and precise when we talk about migrants, asylum seekers, refugees, ethnic minorities or persons exercising their right to free movement. The amalgam of these groups has really confused matters in the UK and across Europe. Much of the fear and hate that has been unleashed during the referendum campaign, and echoed in other populist campaigns in Europe is actually about racism and xenophobia and should be named as such.

We know that women are doubly impacted by xenophobia and racism and as such need to address that as a central feminist concern. EWL has done some research on violence against refugee women that underscores the multiple discrimination and violence experienced by refugee and asylum seeking women in Europe. We need to recognize racism and sexism and not be afraid to call it that.

Advocacy actions

1. In general an absolute priority must be given to understanding and protecting all the women's rights that have been outlined in EU Law and directives AND transposed into UK law. Explicit action would have to be taken by UK government to undo these. Once the UK leaves the EU, this will make it much easier for UK government to act unilaterally to cut back certain rights. A wealth of information on EU legislation and action on women's rights is available here <http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/>. It will be essential to create and deepen alliances and early warning systems /vigilance networks with legal practitioners, trade unions, other CSOs, MPs and MEPs. Attention to protect the European Convention on Human Rights and the UK Human Rights Act is needed;

2. UK women's organisations must continue to build and strengthen alliances and networks with European and international women's organisations for solidarity, information and joint work. EWL and the UKJCW will remain in close contact as they have throughout the past 25 years;

3. Feminist organisations need to contribute to a more positive framing and narrative on migration and free movement. In particular we should find where we can support the inclusion of the perspectives of women who are refugees, migrants and EU citizens;

4. In terms of free movement, this is something that we have taken for granted, but that will now be one of the key pillars in the negotiation process. And politically highly charged. We need to ensure that the gender dimensions of free movement are not forgotten or ignored. Therefore we will need to develop strategies to ensure that all European women (including UK citizens) who are living in another EU Member State have their rights respected for example

in relation to discrimination; work; care; pensions; health. We will need to assert that these rights are protected throughout the life cycle and for all women. One essential part is to bring the stories of women living in the UK or British women in the rest of the EU are brought into the media and to decision makers.

WORK AND ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

External analysis

- Context of Brexit can be seen as an opportunity for fresh debate to address women's concerns, but there is also a fear that these concerns could be exacerbated/worsen in the current climate
- Important to expand our definition of what we mean by 'work', as official views are often far too narrow
- In defining work we need a rights-based focus on quality work, and recognition of unpaid care work – women should not be forced into the 'gig' economy, or low paid, zero hours contracts etc.
- Changing these perceptions is as much about influencing social attitudes as it is about influencing policy and legislation
- Important to coordinate approach with other aspects of post-Brexit campaigns, particularly work relating to representation at negotiations and migration debate
- Stakeholders must be mindful of the constraints they're operating within, most notably a Government that appears to be willing to dilute/restrict rights.
- Some noted that not being in the EU meant that the Government no longer had the obligation to follow directives to hide behind when pushed to develop progressive policy
- However there was little optimism that the UK Government would build on current protections, therefore the focus of action should first and foremost be on protecting what we currently have

International dimension

- The SDGs – particularly the 'leave no one behind' principle – was seen as a useful tool for framing discussions with Government, though it was queried to what extent this would influence the Government given the lack of action on the SDGs domestically
- CEDAW was also raised as an important tool, particularly as it's binding under international law, and the UK's forthcoming assessment under the UPR
- The current Minister for Women and Equalities, Justine Greening, is on the UN High-Level Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment, which was also seen as a useful opportunity for discussing post-Brexit risks

Priority issues

- Free movement of workers: protecting the rights of Brits working abroad as well as EU nationals currently working in the UK, as well the right to freedom of movement for workers in future
- Just and fair conditions at work: quality employment,

3. Awareness raising at the grass roots level

- Use of social media to keep wider audiences engaged in the process
- Engage with community and grassroots groups to understand what women want from the process – use to inform baselining and gold standard for lobbying
- Create spaces for public service voices
- Use those in local government
- Agree a single # and consistent social media strategy
- Create media messages about the importance of this process that resonate with less engaged groups- work with women in journalism

FINAL NOTICES FROM PARTICIPANTS

1. We need more press coverage and more balanced news in all newspapers.

2. We need to use our existing networks and share the key asks from this meeting with wider stakeholders and other alliances.

3. EWL is working with other stakeholders in all other areas – to stop contagion and sure up what is already good. We need to ensure civil society continues to be active. We can see in some countries in Europe the civil society space is being shut down. In the UK the charity commission interpreted the new lobbying act to prevent civil society being active in the campaigning.

4. We need to understand the pain that people are feeling from both sides and be inclusive.

5. We need to challenge ourselves – who are the leadership we are speaking to.

6. We need to be braver. There was disappointment because our own women's organisations were not bold enough in the referendum campaign.

7. Some people think that equality has been reached - we have it so why bother.

8. Womens Equality Party have a campaign – 100 days of May and their first conference is in Manchester in November. All welcome.

9. NAWO will work with Fawcett and EWL to take things forward.

10. Participants were reminded about the work of the CSW Alliance and invited to become members. NAWO is the secretariat and the packs hold relevant information regarding gift aid and evaluation sheets.

Zarin thanked all participants and speakers and the seminar closed.



Notes and photos will be available from – csw-alliance@nawo.org.uk and zarin@serenecomcommunications.com

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