



EUROPEAN WOMEN'S LOBBY | ANNUAL REPORT 2006



FIFTY YEARS OF EUROPEAN UNION:
Fifty Fifty for Women and Men?

WHO WE ARE

CONTENT

Founded in 1990, the European Women's Lobby (EWL) is the largest alliance of women's non-governmental organisations in the European Union bringing together 4,000 member organisations in Europe. Our influential voice makes a significant difference as we work together to achieve equality between women and men in all areas of public and private life. We are actively addressing issues of economic and social justice for women, women in leadership and decision-making, women's human rights, violence against women, and women's diversity.

EWL works within democratic, open and transparent procedures of communication, decision-making and accountability, including financial accountability.



EDITORIAL



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BULGARIA
LIANA BALABANOVA,
 Bulgarian Coordination for EWL

What have been the most important changes for Bulgarian women over the last 50 years? A lot has changed since 1947. Between 1947-1989, Bulgarian women were expected to be excellent mothers, wives and workers – the so-called “shock-worker of socialist labour”. This image was visible everywhere: in kindergartens, schools,

universities, companies. The model was clear (but very difficult to follow as it was impossible to be excellent in all areas), and all Bulgarians had to stick to it – almost everyone got married at the same age (between 23-26 year old), had two children and worked in full-time jobs. After the collapse of communism in 1989, everything changed. The lack of security

2006 A YEAR OF COMMITMENTS

For the European Union 2006 was a year of commitments in the area of equality between women and men. Although there was no really groundbreaking step, decision-makers in the different institutions adopted strategies and documents, which will potentially make a difference to the life of European women.

A Roadmap for Equality

The first of these is the **Roadmap for Equality between Women and Men** adopted by the European Commission in March 2006. We welcome this text which shares a common vision with the Roadmap, which was developed by EWL in 2005 as a model for the Commission's own Roadmap. The official Roadmap recognises that gender inequalities persist and that access to resources, rights and power are unequally distributed between women and men. It also acknowledges the role played by the unequal sharing of care and domestic work between women and men combined with unbalanced tax and benefit systems in disadvantaging women. Another positive aspect of the roadmap is that it sees gender equality as a necessary condition for the achievement of the EU objectives of growth, employment and social cohesion and that it recognises the necessity of a dual approach combining both gender mainstreaming AND specific measures.

The priority areas defined by the Commission for its action for the next 4 years go beyond the area of employment as they cover 1) the economic independence of women, 2) reconciliation of private and professional life, 3) equal representation in decision-making, 4) gender-based violence and trafficking, 5) the promotion of gender equality outside the EU and 6) the elimination of gender stereotypes in society. However, the differences between the EWL vision and the Commission's strategy become very explicit in relation to the kinds of actions that EWL would like to see undertaken. They include comprehensive and binding measures in the areas of violence against women and women in decision-making, or concrete commitments in relations to issues such as gender budgeting, while the measures foreseen by the Commission remain rather weak. What is lacking in this strategy is a reallocation of and increase in human and financial resources to support these new commitments for women's right and for the mainstreaming of a gender perspective throughout the activities of the European Union.

Another challenge in the implementation of the Roadmap is the relationship between the national and European level. We recognise that this Road Map to a large degree focuses on activities at the level of the European Commission itself. However, in many instances, the Member States have an important role to play, for example for the management of the many programmes that are mentioned in the Roadmap as tools for its implementation. For the moment, it is unclear what mechanisms will be put in place to hold the Member States accountable.

in the labour market and high levels of unemployment (particularly of women) as a result of privatisation meant that the model totally changed. Bulgarian women slowly but surely began to see themselves as independent human beings who had to rely on themselves to work harder than in the past and to fight for their careers. In the mid 1990s Bulgaria speeded up

the process of EU membership negotiations. The transposition of EU legislation started. At the same time strong women's organisations were established and the women's movement was born. Bulgarian women's NGOs have been very active in the process of democratisation and harmonisation of legislation and transpositions of the EU Directives/Law in the areas

of protection against domestic violence as well as in drafting a Gender Equality Act. The Anti-Discrimination Act was established as a result of the pressure these organisations put on government.

2006 A YEAR OF COMMITMENTS 2006 A YEAR OF COMMITMENTS

 Despite those shortcomings, EWL was particularly pleased to see that a number of initiatives were included in the Roadmap:

 Communication on the Gender Pay Gap in 2007; Support for the achievement of the Barcelona targets for the provision of childcare through the European Social Funds and a Communication on Gender and Development Cooperation.

The EWL membership really hopes that this Roadmap will be both a real motor for change and an effective way of strengthening equality between women and men and gender mainstreaming in existing Commission policies. One of the EWL future priorities is the monitoring of the implementation of the Roadmap, in particular by the European Commission.



2007, European Year on Equal Opportunities for All

EWL and its member organisations were actively involved in the preparations for the European Year on Equal Opportunities for All. The Year, launched at the Berlin Equality Summit of January 2007, concerns the six grounds of discrimination contained in Article 13 of the European Treaty: **sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation** with a strong recommendation to integrate a gender perspective in all activities. Actions during the Year are organised around the four themes  Rights, Representation, Recognition  Respect. These themes are all extremely relevant to those working for equality between women and men

More information about the Year:

www.europa.eu/employment_social/eyeq/index.cfm

What is the main benefit of EWL membership for the Bulgarian Co-ordination?

The Bulgarian Women's Lobby became a member of EWL before Bulgaria became a member of the EU, which shows how important it is for us to be involved in European movements. EWL makes it possible for us to exchange and share expertise and experiences

with women from the rest of Europe. The successful implementation of new legislation mentioned before would not have happened without the support of EWL. The main benefit of membership of EWL is for us to be able to play our part in lobbying the EU to create policy for real equality and ensure women's human rights and it also helps us to keep up to date with new trends in the women's movement.

What are Bulgarian women expecting from EU membership in general and in particular in relation to gender equality?

In general, Bulgarian women expect economic and political stability. In terms of gender equality, they expect full recognition of women's human rights and policy providing equality through establishment of

2006 A YEAR OF COMMITMENTS 2006 A YEAR OF COMMITMENTS

Governments sign a Pact for Gender Equality

Another commitment made during 2006 was the adoption by all European governments of the **European Pact for Gender Equality** in March 2006. EWL lobbied all EU governments to make sure that they endorsed this text. This document highlights issues that need to be addressed by all Member States in relation to equality between women and men, in particular:

- M** Measures to close gender gaps and to combat gender stereotypes in the labour market;
- P** The promotion of a better work-life balance in particular
- T** The implementation of the existing European childcare targets and the creation of care facilities for other dependants;
- B** Better governance and better implementation and monitoring of gender mainstreaming. The Gender Pact actually does not foresee specific measures but it does give a higher profile to gender equality and it is a political commitment made by all European countries, which will be closely monitored by EWL and women's NGOs.

A New European Institute for women's rights in Lithuania

Finally, in 2006, important steps were taken towards creating a **European Gender Institute**. EWL worked closely with the European Parliament Committee on Women's Rights, as well as with the European Commission, to ensure a stronger political role for the future Institute, for instance in relation to supporting gender mainstreaming in EU policies and securing a role for civil society within the structure of the Institute. Although the rather limited budget of the Institute (52.5 million **E** for the period 2007 to 2013, the proposed budget of the future Fundamental Rights Agency being 163 million **E** for the same period) will not allow for indepth action, **E**WL hopes that it will really be the champion of women's rights within EU bodies. The Gender Institute should start its work during the second half of 2007 and will be based in Vilnius, Lithuania.

gender equality mechanisms; social policy to eradicate women's poverty; the empowerment of women and women's participation in the decision-making process.

WHO CARES? WHO CARES? WHO CARES? WHO CARES? WHO CARES?

■ **Care Services for All Women and Men in Europe**

■ Women have careers, jobs, professional responsibilities, and at the same time women continue to be in large part responsible for the care of their children, housework and care of dependents. One way out of this «double life burden» for women lies firstly in changes in the gender division of work, leading to an equal sharing of caring tasks between women and men secondly, social and employment policies and the provision of services also have a central part to play. **The lack of affordable, accessible and high quality care services in the EU is part of the problem and is a major obstacle to women's full participation in all aspects of economic, social, cultural and political life.** This gap results in a lack of real choice for women to reconcile work and family life. It also reveals the persistence of gender stereotypes that continue to underpin and reinforce the division of reproductive responsibilities and labour between women and men, both domestically and within society at large.

■ At the EWL Board of Administration meeting in May 2006, the European Women's Lobby officially launched its **“Who Cares?” Campaign**, which focuses on the provision of affordable, accessible and high quality care services for all dependants and people with additional support needs, available to all women and men whatever their financial situation. With this Campaign EWL highlighted the responsibility of the State to provide publicly funded care services, in particular at a time when Europe is facing important demographic and economic challenges. EWL also makes recommendations in relation to labour market issues and policies for the reconciliation of private and working life.

■ As part of the Care Campaign, EWL developed a **Position Paper on Care** that touches upon the range of interdependent issues that need to be addressed when tackling the subject of Care in European societies and equality between women and men. During the EWL Care Campaign an e-petition was launched on the EWL website and the EWL General Assembly Seminar of October 2006 was dedicated to this issue; the Manifesto on Care adopted by EWL GA outlines the main demands and recommendations of European women to the EU, national governments, local administrations and social and civil partners.

What has been the most important change for German women in the last 50 year?

Until 1990, two German states existed. In the Federal Republic of Germany, an important step towards equality in marriage was taken by a reform of the German Marriage and Family Act in 1958. Just as important was the new

divorce law of 1977 by which the principle of guilt was abolished and replaced by the principle of entitlement to divorce in case of irretrievable breakdown of marriage. From 1968 on, the women's movement achieved the most important changes in attitudes and thinking which, among many others, led to quota regulations for elections, to a more liberal abortion law,

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The main issues highlighted by EWL are the following:

1) Gender stereotypes and care

Caring for others in society continues to be institutionally and systemically supported by the expression of religious beliefs, conservative education and public policies as a service offered 'naturally' by women to society and an 'obligation' of women to care for the well-being of others. EWL calls for a European Union where both women and men are equally considered as carers and full actors in all areas of public and private life.

2) The economics of care / women's care gap

Women spend more time in paid and unpaid care of dependents and people with additional support needs than men do. EWL calls for a European Union where affordable, accessible and high quality care services are available to all women and men and provided primarily by the public sector, available in urban and rural areas and taking into consideration the human rights, independence and empowerment of the care-recipients. Private sector employers, employer organisations, occupational organisations and trade unions must demonstrate a concrete commitment to sharing the responsibility for the provision of widespread and high quality care services to complement the material, financial and human resources provided by government.

3) Quality work and quality care services

Care services as an employment sector is overwhelmingly female, assumed to be of low value with low skills required and is usually low paid with limited career prospects. This has a detrimental effect on women as well as on care-recipients, reinforcing inequalities and gaps between women and men in employment, pay, pension and social protection. EWL calls for a European Union where informal workers and professional carers have equal access to quality work and ongoing career development and where all dependents enjoy quality care services of their personal choice.

4) Domestic migrant care workers

In order to overcome the lack of care services, increasing numbers of migrant women are employed as domestic workers. These women are sometimes undocumented and often under-paid, therefore making migrant female labour in the care sector vulnerable to exploitation and abuse. EWL calls for a European Union where migrant care workers enjoy decent work and full human rights, regardless of legal status.

5) European Union policies and care

EWL calls upon the EU and Member states to improve legislation regarding maternity, paternity and parental leave, including making the parental leave period non-transferable and shared between parents, entitling women on maternity leave to an income equivalent to full salary and adopting a directive on paternity leave. The EU and Member States must now adopt policies that support informal carers, including measures which compensate the carer for the impact that their caring role has on their professional duties.

a broad appreciation of women's careers, a public discussion on violence against women and relevant legislation. During the 1980s, equality units and officers were established at all levels in government and in universities and other institutions. For women in the German Democratic Republic, the most important and at the same time most dramatic change took

place when the two German states were reunited in 1990. In West Germany women and men had had equal access to education, to vocational training and to the labour market. Because of a high employment rate (92% in 1989) and comprehensive childcare facilities, women had been able to secure their life independently of their husbands.

With the reunification, women in the eastern part of Germany have gained a lot of democratic and liberal rights but, on the other hand, they lost this status of economic and social independence.

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The EU must also ensure that future European policies relating to social services recognise the specific status of care services and their vital role for society and gender equality.



This graph shows the weekly working hours broken down according to gender and part-time work and reveals the fact that women working part time still do more working hours than men working full time.

Source: Fourth European Working Conditions survey, European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions 2007

This graph shows the difference in the amount of hours spent caring for children between men and women in the different EU Member States.

Source: Fourth European Working Conditions survey, European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions 2007

Germany is a big country with a federal system and the Deutscher Frauenrat is a powerful organisation. In this context, what is the main benefit of EWL membership for the DF?

For the DF the main benefit of its membership in the EWL is the possibility to participate in all political activities at European level. Considering that over 60%

of Germany's legislation is directly related to European legislation, it is an absolute necessity to lobby both the national and the European decision makers. EWL is the best platform to exchange experience in the struggle for women's rights and to undertake joint actions with women's organisations from all Member States aimed at achieving gender equality in all areas.

In your opinion, what will be the impact of the German EU Presidency 2007 on gender equality?

Gender equality is not among the main priorities of the German EU Presidency Programme. Nevertheless, the Programme highlights the fact that Europe represents more than economic efficiency and market economy and that European integra-

MIGRANT WOMEN: OUT OF THE SHADOW? MIGRANT WOMEN

 2006 saw a shift in EWL's agenda, with immigration as one of the political priorities following a decision by its member organisations. The rapid development of a common immigration policy at European Union level requires a keen level of gender monitoring so that women, for once, are not left out at the end of the process. But, as it stands for the moment, migrant women tend to remain invisible and therefore inexistent in European Union Justice and Home Affairs.

 Despite the Treaty requirement that the European Community should “eliminate inequalities and promote the equality of women and men in all its activities”, in practice the European Union fails to integrate a women's perspective in its activities on immigration. However multiple discrimination experienced by migrant women is beginning to be recognised. One example is the recent Roadmap for Equality between Women and Men, where the Commission promises to promote “gender equality in migration and integration policies in order to ensure women's rights and civic participation, to fully use their employment potential and to improve their access to education and lifelong learning”. We hope that this new trend will result in positive action for migrant women in Europe. In 2006, EWL actively worked to advance the legal, economic and social independence and fundamental rights of migrant women in the EU.

The Common Framework for the Integration of Third-country Nationals: Empowering migrant women in the European Union

There is currently an important debate in the EU on legal migration and the integration of third-country nationals. Through the integration framework, Member States have called for a policy to give third-country nationals living in the EU the same rights and obligations as EU citizens.

In March,  EWL published its position paper on the integration of third-country nationals in the European Union. It condemned the persistent discriminatory practices experienced by migrant women, the dependent legal status under family reunification schemes, the application of personal status law of the country of origin which can expose some immigrant women to serious violation of their fundamental rights, gender-based violence, unemployment and discrimination in the workplace and their invisibility in decision-making positions.

tion also has a social dimension. The Programme expresses a belief in the need to improve the compatibility of family and working life for men and women as well as the integration and training for women from immigrant families.

The National Council of German Women's Organisations has asked the German Chancellor Dr. Angela Merkel:

- to ensure that equality between women and men as defined in the Draft Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe is not removed;
- to pay special attention to the professional careers of young women;

- to support the implementation of the principle of equal pay for equal work as defined in the Treaty of Rome 50 years ago;
- to consider gender-specific differences in the implementation of all measures of integration policy

N: OUT OF THE SHADOW? MIGRANT WOMEN: OUT OF THE SHADOW?

Fundamental rights for undocumented migrant women

Because they do not have a valid residence permit, many undocumented migrant women face are in precarious and stressful situations and their basic fundamental rights are denied. At European Union level, official debates concerning undocumented migrants and “illegal” immigration focus on the Commission’s proposal – the **Return Directive** – to develop European standards to return “illegal” third-country nationals to their countries of origin “in accordance with fundamental rights”. In the current context of security and border control, a mild and gender neutral approach to human rights and fundamental freedoms was predictable.

Yet, by taking this approach the EU fails to consider an important aspect of the migration process: the decisions for women to migrate are mostly based on ‘push’ factors closely related to gender, such as the feminisation of poverty, oppressive gender relations, sexual violence and more generally, political and cultural structures and practices in the country of origin that violate women’s human rights.  WL is very concerned that at no time, a return policy should put women at risk of their rights being violated and/or any threat to their lives when back in their country of origin.

Equal Rights, Equal Voices – Migrant women in the EU

EWL started a project for and with migrant women activists during the autumn 2006 with the support of the European Programme on Integration and Migration (EPIM) launched by the Network of European Foundations for Innovative Cooperation. The project included a European Seminar on 19-21 January 2007 in Brussels gathering migrant women leaders within migrant women NGOs across the EU.

 The project aimed to provide a starting point from which migrant women living in the EU begin to voice their own experiences and to advocate their rights to European decision-makers.

RITA IZSÁ
International Romani
Women's Network (IRWN)

What has been the most important change for Romani women over the last 50 years?

One visible achievement is that the situation of Romani women (by Romani, we mean the Sinti, Gypsy and Traveller) is now discussed at international level and is part of the international human rights agenda. However, the problems of Romani

women are often articulated by men, who still dominate power relations. Another achievement is that it is now broadly recognised that Romani women suffer from at least double discrimination. We welcome the specific reports prepared about the situation of Romani women, especially the report from the European Parliament. We welcome the fact that Romani women

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Persecution is not gender blind – monitoring European asylum policies from a gender perspective

EWL continued to monitor European asylum policies throughout 2006 and paid particular attention to the transposition into national law of the Qualification Directive. A fact sheet, entitled “Asylum in the EU – What is the Qualification Directive and why is it important to women?” was produced as well as a letter addressed to the Interior Ministers of the Member States seeking information on the type of measures that will be put in place at national level to ensure full implementation of this Directive with regard to specific provisions for women. The Directive, which sets out criteria to qualify for a refugee in the EU, is particularly interesting for women for a number of reasons: firstly, it makes explicit reference to sexual violence and acts of a gender-specific or child-specific nature, secondly, it recognises non-state actors as agents of persecution and thirdly, it provides a framework that allows for a gender-sensitive interpretation of the grounds for persecution. This last article provides a basis upon which EU gender guidelines can be developed. Indeed, there is a need to establish EU gender guidelines which would assist officials when assessing claims by women based on the real exposure to gender based persecution in the country of origin. EWL will continue its work on this issue in 2007.

Violence against Women and Trafficking: The fight continues

Violence against women continues to be the most fundamental and globally spread violation of women's human rights. When we include all forms of violence against women, 45% of all women in Europe have been subjected to and suffered from men's violence. In a previous report, EWL showed that every fifth woman in Europe has been subjected to violence from an (ex)partner, having her fundamental human rights violated by a man in her closest and most intimate social environment – her own home.

The core of the EWL work in this area is the European Observatory on Violence against Women (VAW), which has been working since 1997 as a network of independent experts in the field of violence against women from across Europe to monitor emerging trends in legislation and policy. In 2006, additional funding enabled EWL to expand and build up its Observatory and to bring the different national experts together to share their knowledge. Currently, thirty countries are represented through experts with immense experience and different backgrounds in the field of violence against women: the 27 EU Member States plus Croatia, Serbia, Turkey and Ukraine. The Observatory, who met in Budapest in May 2006, worked collectively in a mapping exercise of policies, legislations and measures to prevent and combat VAW in Europe.

have been able to pursue academic studies and show their talents in influencing today's Europe and its policies in the right way, both at national and European levels: Livia Járóka and Viktória Mohácsi are for example Members of the European Parliament. It is also good to witness that there is a growing number of Romani women, who dare criticise the patriarchal

traditions of some Roma communities, which is often confused and considered part of Romani cultural heritage. However, besides positive developments, we also have to mention the sad negative trends, such as the rediscovery of the practice of coercive sterilisation of Romani women in several countries, which we wrongly thought and hoped had been buried with the communist

regimes and that of the increasing unemployment rate among Romani women.

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Recent developments in EU policy regarding equality for women and men that occurred during the first stage of the Observatory's mapping exercise (May-November 2006) inspired us to include relevant questions regarding national policies. In March 2006 the European Commission published its "Roadmap for Equality between Women and Men 2006 - 2010". In this, and strongly influenced by EWL's previous work, the European Commission commits under section 4: (Eradicating Gender Based Violence And Trafficking) to support Member States (MS) and NGOs in their efforts to eradicate gender based violence (...) encouraging Member States to establish national action plans".

Not surprisingly, the most pressing issue emerging from the exchange between Observatory experts during the working seminar was the need for coherent and uniform national policies on violence against women, as well as the urgent need to fill the existing void in EU legislation regarding violence against women. Consequently, during the discussion and exchange that took place in Budapest, it was considered important to develop with the experts of the European Observatory on VAW the main characteristics, criteria and conditions of future National Action Plans to combat violence against women (NAP), to examine what exists as good/promising practices and to start a discussion on the suggested minimum standards or core principles at the base of a national action plan for combating violence against women. Regarding the situation of existing NAPs to combat VAW, the first data from our mapping exercise indicate how crucial and necessary this work is and demonstrates how important and useful it is for governments to avail of the expertise of NGOs in policy development and the monitoring of the NAP.

What is the main advantage or benefit for the IRWN of EWL membership? The International Roma Women Network is a new and proud member of the European Women's Lobby. At this stage we are getting to know other members, making contacts and building alliances. We hope that our motions will be welcomed and be considered as all women's

business. We, Romani women, desperately need the support of non-Roma, this is how we can show the world that human right's violations committed against Romani women is a serious issue, which should be a general concern for our society and not described as problems for Roma alone.

What are your expectations for the future in terms of EU gender equality policy for Romani women's rights? Although there are some good and detailed surveys about Romani women, we need more data, disaggregated by sex and ethnicity so that the exact situation can be ascertained and progress can be measured. We hope that the European Union will

INTERVIEW WITH YAKIN ERTÜK UNITED NATIONS SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR

What is the main obstacle / challenge you meet in your role as SRVAW ?

I would like to respond to this question by focusing on constraints at three levels:

1) the nature of the Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council, of which the violence against women mandate is part of; 2) the perceptions with respect to violence against women; and 3) the global economic and political environment.

1 *While the violence against women mandate of the Special Procedures is one of the most effective and powerful mechanisms available for human rights protection of women; like the other mandates, it does not have the necessary infrastructure to efficiently discharge its responsibilities particularly in the area of follow up. As it is well known, Special Rapporteurs are independent experts who work on a voluntary basis, therefore must rely on a strong support system. In this regard, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights provides the mandate holders with secretarial services, the level of which is dependent on the contributions of member states.*

Another problem related to the procedures of the mandate is access to countries. Not all governments show the same willingness to facilitate a rapporteur's visit and often human rights concerns may be most severe in these countries. On both grounds close collaboration with civil society is important, as they are the critical link between these mandates and their implementation on the ground. Civil society can lobby for the country visits of rapporteurs and play a critical role in the follow up to the recommendations that emanate from the rapporteur's country mission. Needless to say, civil society is also an important source of information in bringing specific cases to the attention of the complaints procedure of the mandate. Reliable information on human rights violations enables the mandate holder to engage in a constructive dialogue with the government concerned in seeking remedy and protection for the victim.

2 *At a substantive level, cultural relativist claims over women's lives as well as a worrying trend towards singling out certain types of violence and certain cultures as the source of the problem, are particularly problematic. The former undermines the universally agreed human rights standards, in particular the principle that States*

should not invoke any custom, tradition or religious consideration to avoid any of their obligations with respect to the elimination of violence against women. The latter compartmentalizes women's rights on the basis of a superficial division between "traditional" and "modern" cultures. As a result, violence against women is often de-linked and treated in isolation from gender inequality and other forms of hierarchical systems. The implications of such discourses are obviously alarming for all women and jeopardise the possibility of a joint and concerted effort to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women.

3 *Human rights, development and security continue to be an aspiration for the majority of the world's population today. The gap between the haves and the have nots is ever increasing. The distance between the incomes of the richest and poorest country was about 3 to 1 in 1920, 35 to 1 in 1950, 44 to 1 in 1973 and 72 to 1 in 1992. Widening disparities, conservative political trends, monopolisation of global power, Islamophobia, increased conflict, violence, HIV-AIDS among others, characterises the world today. The neo-liberal era, particularly after 9/11, has created a disabling environment for constructive di-*

urge Member States to collect such data. We also believe it is crucial that Romani women are included in the planning and implementing processes of policies, laws and strategies addressing or affecting their situation. We hope that EU funding programmes will include such criteria. Moreover, we would welcome the EU Institute for Gender Equality establish-

ing a unit dealing with Romani women. We hope that the 2007 European Year of Equal Opportunities for All will help to further promote Romani women's rights

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dialogue among nations. This not only makes multilateral decision making difficult but it also empowers fundamentalist and militant nationalist claims over women.

What are the major success stories /progress you see in combating VAW since the Beijing Platform For Action, more than 10 years ago?

Perhaps the most important success story is the fact that violence against women is finally on the agenda as a human rights concern. Focusing on violence, its causes and consequences has been a viable entry point to advance women's human rights as it has made particular manifestations of violence visible while at the same time, by linking diverse experiences of different women's groups, it mobilized and brought women into a transnational movement. Identifying the problem as a human rights violation has not only transformed the gender biased language of the human right's discourse but it has also led to a shift of focus from the victimisation-oriented approach to

violence against women to one of empowerment. While the former sees women as weak, vulnerable and in need of protection, in the latter approach, women are seen to be subjected to violence not because they are vulnerable, but because of a gender order that privileges male violence through the normative and institutional formations of societies. However, there are other areas where the human rights discourse has not yet been able to reach its full potential. Of particular concern is the fact that rights are still very fragmented and hierarchical in their implementation, although not in theory and what is being done in the area of human rights is still pretty legalistic. We need to add a political economy perspective to rights discourse in order to ensure that the holistic vision inherent in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is not sacrificed.

How do you see the importance of NGOs as partners in government policies to prevent and combat VAW?

Without demand from civil society, no government will take significant and sustainable steps to combat violence against women. There is a strong tendency for governments to put women's concerns aside because of "other priorities", therefore, it is important that NGOs have access to decision making and consultation mechanisms at all levels. NGO activism is also essential for continuously monitoring national as well as international action with respect to the violence against women and the gender equality agenda. Despite the fragmentary trends and the conservative encroachments on women, it is also a fact that women around the world are continuing to engage in international equality regimes and transnational solidarity networks. This is a very empowering process and has been a major source of change over the past three decades, and will continue to be so.

SPAIN
MARTA ORTIZ
 Spanish Coordination for EWL

What have been the most important changes for women in Spain over the last 50 years?

The two most important events over the last 50 years have been the recognition of equality of opportunities in the Spanish Constitution in 1978 and Spain joining the EU in 1986. The entry into the EU meant that European directives on equality

between men and women were transposed into national law and then implemented. In addition NGOs had access to funding through the Structural Funds gender equality programmes, which have helped to develop democratic structures. In addition, The Women's Institute and the Programme for Equality between Men and Women were established and policies

INTERVIEW WITH YAKIN ERTÜK UNITED NATIONS SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR



Preventing trafficking for sexual exploitation and helping the victims

In 2006, EWL was involved in 2 transnational projects on preventing trafficking and providing assistance to victims. The project **Promoting Measures to prevent Trafficking for Sexual Exploitation**, jointly coordinated with the Coalition Against Trafficking in Women (CATW), has supported women's NGOs working in 14 countries to campaign and raise awareness on trafficking and sexual exploitation. Several national campaigns included poster projects some of which you can see in this report.

The second project is the 3-year pilot project, **Setting Standards and Developing Assistance for Victims of Trafficking**, which aims to strengthen victim support in and between the Nordic and Baltic countries.

Preventing trafficking and raising awareness

As part of the trafficking prevention project a conference was organised in Zagreb in June 2006 on the **Prevention of Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation in Conflict and Post-Conflict Situations**. Representatives from 14 countries of the Western Balkans and neighbouring countries met for 2 days to discuss how to strengthen human rights for women in all areas and to design both short and long-term strategies in working against trafficking and sexual exploitation.

Participants highlighted the fact that they live in societies in which women are treated as a minority and that they must struggle for their human rights, which are too often violated. They describe the ways in which UN, NATO and other troops, police and foreign presence promote prostitution, trafficking and other forms of sexual exploitation, creating an infrastructure for future sex tourism in the Balkans. It is clear that women are exposed to real threats to their safety at all levels. Some of the threats are for the basic survival related to job loss, loss of social rights, as well as lack of any positive vision for the future.  conference participants agreed on a set of Resolutions, which have been disseminated widely as the voices of women in the Region outlining the actions needed and the need for cooperation.

of positive action were adopted. Another major change has been the increased participation of women in the labour market. What is the main advantage/benefit for CELEM to be a member of the EWL? The main advantage for us is the genuine relationships and links we have been able to establish with women's NGOs from other European countries. In ad-

dition membership of the EWL gives us a way by which we can lobby European Institutions to promote women's rights and issues of common interest. In Spain, What has been (or what is) the most difficult fight or the best victory for equality? The most significant battles include the partial legalisation of abortion which recog-

nises a basic right of freedom of choice for women. It also ended the criminalisation of women and professionals working in this area. The Violence Against Women Act, The Equality Act (which is currently before Parliament). At the moment our most difficult challenge is for women's NGOs to be recognised as partners in Civil Dialogue.

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Setting standards and developing assistance for victims of trafficking

In 2006 the activities of the 3-year pilot project, which aims to strengthen victim support in and between the Nordic and Baltic countries, really took off the ground. The project, coordinated by EWL, aims to set up a Regional Nordic-Baltic Inter-agency Network, incorporating public agencies and NGOs who work with, support, and protect women who are victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation (VOTs). National teams, representing NGO service providers, key government agencies and additional resource persons have been identified in each of the 8 participating countries.

This Nordic Baltic network is working to develop a regional programme to ensure the legal, social economic, medical and psychological care, safety and protection of women victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation. International standards established in the Council of Europe Convention against Trafficking in Human Beings and the UN Palermo Protocol served as a starting point to define the standards of assistance that would be valid for all eight participating countries.

In 2006, two seminars were held (one in Riga and one in Copenhagen), bringing together all the national teams for discussion and planning ways to advance the work to provide victim support in the countries in the region. The situation in the different countries involved varies greatly as do the different priorities for the individual countries as identified by the participants in the network.

The assistance process includes several steps in line with the international standards. It starts with identification and also includes shelters and service-pack assessment, reflection delay and residence status, witness and victim protection guarantees, it also covers ways to organise safe returns for women who want to return and compensation mechanisms.

More detailed plans to improve refuge facilities in the Baltic countries began to emerge during 2006 and the exchange of expertise between service-providers in the eight countries have proven invaluable.



In 2006, the European Women's Lobby decided to undertake a review of its work to reflect on EWL's goals, policy priorities and working methods. This step was taken for two reasons:

- the recent increase in membership from 15 to 26 National Co-ordinations with more new national Co-ordinations likely to join in the future;
- the changing political climate in the EU which may result in EWL changing its priorities both within the EU and globally.

For us a strategic review process means taking time to review and reflect, after 15 years of operation, so that we can look ahead and plan the future of the organisation with a clear understanding of our goals, priorities, working methods, human and financial resources in light of the new and emerging challenges and opportunities. This new strategy represents the European Women's Lobby's renewed commitment to achieving equality between women and men.

EWL works towards a Vision of a peaceful and democratic European Union built on a culture of respect for human rights, in Europe and globally, where women and men have equal access to and responsibility for their personal integrity and choice, social, cultural and economic resources, political decision making and caring and family roles.

The mission of the European Women's Lobby is to work to achieve equality between women and men, to promote women's empowerment in all spheres of public and private life and to eliminate all forms of violence against women.

EWL brings together women's non-governmental organisations across Europe and works through democratic processes with its members for the mainstreaming and monitoring of a feminist gender equality perspective in all areas of European Union policy and for the achievement of parity democracy at all levels.

EWL carries out its work within a feminist analysis and based on the following values:

- ☛ **Equality** – between women and men in all areas of public and private life
- ☛ **Respect** – for difference and diversity
- ☛ **Parity** – in relation to democratic political decision making
- ☛ **Freedom** – for all women to decide for themselves on all matters of personal/physical integrity and choice
- ☛ **Peace** – Promote a culture of peace
- ☛ **Empowerment** – of all women
- ☛ **Cooperation and consensus building** – as our approach to difference and conflict
- ☛ **Accountability** – to each other, to those we represent and to funders
- ☛ **Openness and transparency** – in relation to communication and working methods
- ☛ **Independence** – from any religious or political affiliation

The EWL Strategic Plan is set out in four goals:

Goal One:

to hold national governments and European Union institutions **accountable** for fulfilling the existing commitments that they have made to protecting and promoting women's rights through:

Goal Two:

to **accelerate the pace of change** within the European Union towards achieving equality for women

Goal Three:

strengthen our membership structures and communication systems in order to support a **growing and fully engaged membership** so that more women are actively involved in securing their rights, in developing civil society and in creating a peaceful and democratic European Union

Goal Four:

create alliances and partnership with women's groups across Europe and globally and engage with international institutions

The success of this Strategic Plan will depend largely on the commitment and engagement of the member organisations to strengthen our structures and our systems and the commitment and professional skills of the Secretariat.