

## UWE General Assembly 2008

Report on EWL  
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In 2007 and 2008 EWL was recognized as one of the main coordinations defending the rights of European women and struggling to eradicate sexist discrimination. During this year, termed “European Year of Equal chances for all”, and in the debate about flexisecurity, EWL succeeded to have an active dialogue with the European Commission and with European politicians.

Its membership expanded with two new national coordinations, from Slovenia and Romania. Poland was admitted as observer.

The new General Secretary, Myria Vassiliadou, joined on October 1<sup>st</sup> 2007. Her impressive background includes university professorship on gender issues, the direction of the Mediterranean Institute on Gender studies, and mission as expert on gender issues with the European Commission. Since she joined EWL has been able to present and to defend difficult projects to be financed by the European Commission.

To improve the process of communication with national coordinations and European-wide associations, the last General Assembly held in Borovets (Bulgaria) adopted a new format with the introduction of thematic groups proposed and managed by member associations. This first experience proved successful and it will be renewed during the next 2008 General Assembly to be held in Lyon (France) in October.

In the line of the protection of women’s rights, a seminar was organized in Potsdam (Germany) on the relationship between religion and women in Europe, religion being sometimes used by fundamentalist believers to oppress women in the name of religious practices that are not part of the dogma.

EWL with the Nordic Baltic project is fighting trafficking of women for sexual exploitation. The defense of migrant women remains a concern of EWL and seminars have been organized in Bruxelles and Marseille on the subject.

The Roadmap of the European Commission for Equality between men and women has been launched in March 2006 for the period 2006-2010. EWL in 2005 had established its own roadmap to highlight the needs and priorities of women in Europe. There are many convergences between the two roadmaps especially concerning the need for economic independence of women, the conciliation between work and family/personal life, the equal representation of women and men in decision making, the promotion of equality between women and men beyond the borders of the European Union.

However EWL stressed that this goes beyond employment (the main field treated by EU) and equality should be extended to all areas of social life. Hence the active lobbying of EWL calling on EWL and its associations for more actions. Comparing the actions of the European Commission and actions in the field, the conjunction of positive actions leading to more efficiency;

The concept of “flexisecurity” used since 2007 to meet the demographic changes and their impact, should be considered carefully in order to avoid inequality of treatment between men and women in employment as women can be confined to non remunerative services in the name of flexisecurity to make their paid jobs available for men.

In 2007 EWL led a project for migrant women called “Same Rights, same voices: migrant women in the European Union”. A seminar and workshops were organized in Bruxelles and pilot projects will follow in different countries.

Violence against women has been a concern of EWL for many years. A new European legislation on the subject is necessary. EWL reorganized its structure with a new branch, Center on Violence against women (VAW) including the former observatory against violence but extending the action with lobbying for legislation and other actions.

The Dialogue initiated with associations thanks to the thematic groups will be pursued. The themes treated by the five groups demonstrate the main interest of the member associations. There are:

1. women and decision making
2. Women and enterprise
3. violence against women
4. Prostitution and trafficking
5. gender and conflict prevention.

Women and decision making is also a theme of the Road map and the elections to the European parliament in 2009 give actuality to the question. The Lobby issued a statement no democracy without parity and a campaign is launched to encourage women to stand in this election, lobbying and tools for action are support for this campaign.

Our UWE member associations are invited to get involved by presenting candidates, campaigning, lobbying and voting for women

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