

EWL news february - april 2008

- **EWL participated in the 2008 UN Commission on the Status of Women (25.02-07.03)** on the priority theme '**Financing for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women**' and review theme '**Women's Equal Participation in Conflict Prevention, Management and Conflict-Resolution and in Post-Conflict Peace-building**'. 5,000 participants attended the CSW from civil society, international organisations and governments across the world, at which 240 events were organised. UN Secretary General, Ban Ki-Moon opened the session by launching a system-wide programme on violence against women. EWL organised a side event on "Gender Budgeting: A European perspective".
- Karen Serres, EWL Board member (representing COPA) is chairing the **working group** of the **Advisory Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men** on the **revision of Directive 86/613**, relating to equal treatment of self-employed, agriculture (assisting spouses) and the protection of self employed women during pregnancy and motherhood. This Directive has not been updated since adoption in 1986. The main issues relate to ensuring that a mandatory social security protection coverage is guaranteed in each Member State and that each partner in a shared business (self-employed sector/agriculture) are given legal joint ownership and joint responsibilities. This is crucial for women who remain unprotected while providing an essential role in ensuring the viability of the self-employed business and who are left without a legal status as well as limited if any, social security protection (in terms of maternity leave, pension rights, sick benefits, etc) in situations of divorce, separation and on the death of her partner. EWL contributed to the working group; the Advisory Committee is expected to comment on the proposals of the working group in March.
- **EWL submitted a contribution to the Commission's consultation on Active Inclusion**, a strategy that aims to reach those furthest from the labour-market. A set of principles will be subsequently developed around three pillars of the strategy, namely, decent income, labour-market strategies and quality services. In its contribution, EWL stresses the urgency of ensuring that socio-economic policies are developed in a holistic way to avoid the development of a two-tier society in which key policies will be developed alongside 'marginal' systems which would maintain and tolerate that some people, primarily women, remain on the margins and excluded from their contribution to and share in the distribution of wealth. Active inclusion must be part of the broader socio-economic political framework of the EU – notably the Lisbon Strategy.
- **EWL meeting with OSCE Special representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings**. EWL representatives met on 13.03.07 with OSCE Special representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and Anelise Gomes de Araujo, adviser in Office of the Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings in Brussels. In the meeting experiences was exchanged and further cooperation on the issue of trafficking in women for sexual exploitation, with a special focus on the demand, discussed.
- **New EWL Policy Officer** Amandine Bach was appointed on 1 March, to work on the second phase of the project "Equal Rights, Equal voices: Migrant Women in the European Union". Amandine will also be in charge of migration and intercultural dialogue issues. To contact her: Bach@womenlobby.org
- **Reconciliation of work, private and family life**. The European Women's Lobby submitted a contribution to the European Commission Consultation on measures relating to reconciliation of work, private and family life in light of the current consultation process between the Commission and the Social Partners with regards to future legislative proposals. The paper highlights the position of EWL on ways to improve current legislation on maternity, paternity and parental leave.
- **EWL action in support of women's sexual rights in Lithuania** - In Lithuania, a proposal of an anti-abortion law presented by the conservative parliamentarians threatens the possibility for women to access abortion services. It is proposed to bring it up for discussion and voting in the spring session of the Parliament. The adoption of the proposal would mean an important backlash for the country and for women's rights placing Lithuania among three other countries in Europe (Ireland, Malta, and Poland) with the most restrictive abortion law. The women's movement in Lithuania protested against this threat to women's sexual rights and call for support. EWL sent a letter to the Lithuanian government and encourage women's organisation to join this action.
- **Lobbying to support sexual rights** – The EWL urged the members of the Parliamentary assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) to support a resolution on access to safe and legal abortion in Europe, which was successfully adopted on 16.04.08 (see European News section). The EWL sent two lobbying letters to the members of PACE. The first letter was written

together with the Planned Parenthood International (IPPF). A day before the vote EWL sent another letter emphasising the gender equality and women's human rights perspective of the issue.

- **EWL Executive Committee meeting** – The EWL Executive Committee met on 2 April 2008. Discussions focused on the future EWL campaign on parity democracy, preparations for the upcoming Board of Administration and General assembly and internal matters.
- **Myria Vassiliadou, EWL Secretary General, was elected in the Management Committee of the Social Platform** on 15.04.08. This will allow the EWL to be more involved in the Platforms activities and to strengthen the gender equality perspective in this forum. The Platform General Assembly also amended its Statutes and internal rules to introduce a mechanism to ensure gender parity within the Management Committee. The EWL supported the amendment and welcomes it wholeheartedly.
- **Campaign on the strengthening of the United Nations Gender Equality Architecture (GEAR Campaign)** – The EWL is member of the European working group of the GEAR campaign, which met on 3 April 2008. The working group discussed further strategies to move the much needed reform of the United Nations in relation to the gender equality architecture ahead, including the discussion of letters to the future French Presidency and other decision-makers and the setting up of a website. For more information, please contact Cécile Gréboval at the EWL Secretariat: greboval@womenlobby.org
- **The Nordic-Baltic Network for support and assistance to women victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation** will meet for their 4th regional network meeting in Tallinn in May 2008. The regional inter-agency network was set up in the framework of the Nordic-Baltic pilot project, coordinated by the EWL. The upcoming meeting will serve as a connection point for the Network, to exchange information and assess the progress made in the work to ensure the best possible support to women victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation. The Nordic-Baltic pilot project aims to strengthen cooperation and develop activities to support women victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation in the Nordic-Baltic region, and to strengthen the gender perspective in policies and actions against trafficking. More information about this project [here](#).
- **EWL responded to the European Commission public consultation on the future of the EU budget calling for a gender budgeting approach** to the EU budget reform. Seizing the opportunity to 'Change Europe', the EWL shows how and why a gender budgeting approach is crucial to democracy, transparency and accountability. The budget is not merely a financial instrument but a mirror in which political priorities are reflected including the commitment to equality between women and men. The EWL contribution contains two sections: firstly, an explanation of what gender budgeting is and secondly, responses to the questions posed in the Commission's consultation paper from a gender budgeting perspective. The EWL contribution is available [here](#). The Commission has extended the deadline to **15 June** to respond to the public consultation, see more details [here](#).
- **EWL supported the PICUM-ENAR-Solidar joint statement on the Employer's Sanction Directive** in relation to the Proposal of a directive providing sanctions against employers of illegally staying third-country nationals, that aimed at reminding EU Ministers of the crucial need to follow a human rights-based approach in taking forward the proposed EU Directive providing for sanctions against employers of irregular third country nationals. Read the press release [here](#) and see the full statement [here](#).