

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

THE BUILDING OF A EUROPEAN CIVIL SOCIETY IN THE CONTEXT OF EQUALITY BETWEEN WOMEN AND MEN

THE LEGACY OF FAUSTA DESHORMES LA VALLE

25 September 2015, 9.00 - 16.30

Historical Archives of the European Union

Villa Salviati, Via Bolognese 156, 50139 Florence, Italy

Conference languages: English, Italian (simultaneous translation will not be provided)

■ With the support of:



INTRODUCTION

The Historical Archives of the European Union are organising an international conference in honour of Fausta Deshormes La Valle (1927-2013), unanimously regarded by scholars and experts as one of the mothers of united Europe. A journalist, then an official of the European Commission, Fausta Deshormes La Valle was the founder of the Women's Information Service, which was created in January 1977 within the Directorate General for Information. Under her leadership the unit organised numerous events gathering representatives from the civil society interested in gender equality issues in Europe, including women's organisations, members of the press, television and trade unions, members of Parliaments and local elected officials. Moreover, she launched Women of Europe, a bimonthly information bulletin distributed to women's organisations, women with political responsibilities, journalists and anyone else who requested it. Women of Europe immediately became an "official journal" for women, gathering information on women's and feminist movements in EU member states, as well as on the political and institutional life of the European Community, with a special focus on EC Gender Equality Policy and related debates at the European Parliament. Among the many achievements of the Women's Information Service, one particularly significant example was an awareness campaign that was launched on the eve of the first

European elections in 1979 with the aim of fully involving women in that historic event and of understanding their perspectives on and expectations for the construction of Europe.

For almost fifteen years, the Women's Information Service brought women closer to Europe and Europe closer to women. It became a major instrument in supporting the progressive organisation of a European civil society committed to promoting gender equality, opening new areas of action beyond national borders and finding new ways of campaigning.

Since the beginning of the Nineties, flourishing European women's networks have applied a coordinated pressure on national and European institutions. In this respect, Fausta Deshormes La Valle's personal commitment to the creation of the European Women's Lobby is of particular importance. The Lobby, which was formally established in Brussels in 1990 with co-financing from the European Commission, is to this day the largest coalition of women's associations, with more than 2,000 members from 31 European countries.

CONFERENCE OBJECTIVES

The first objective of the Conference is to highlight how the Women's Information Service and Women of Europe contributed to reducing the gap between citizens and European institutions, which are increasingly seen as bureaucratic structures distant from people's everyday problems. A greater understanding of this experience and of its impact on information, on European policy making and on supporting women's networks could help in finding ways whereby citizens' confidence and interest in the EU would increase, the dialogue between citizens and institutions would be strengthened and civil society participation in the construction of Europe would grow. The second objective of the conference is to assess, twenty years after the end of Women of Europe, the dialogue on gender equality between the European institutions and civil society as well as how women's organisations and European women's networks take part in developing and promoting European gender equality policies and are able to influence European institutions. This is an essential aspect of "participatory democracy", which is emphasised by the Lisbon Treaty as a key element of good European governance.

The Conference therefore aims to analyse successes in and difficulties of achieving these aims, and to identify solutions so that European institutions can better address women's objectives. An understanding of the lessons of the past and of current challenges will allow participants to discover new ways of stimulating the construction of a parity democracy and offering women a better future in Europe.



■ PROGRAMME

This one - day conference will be organised in three sessions. Each session will be opened by a presentation on a specific topic. A moderator will then direct a range of questions to the 4-5 panelists with a view to stimulating debate. The audience will also have the opportunity to participate in the discussion with questions and reflections.

9.00 - 9.30 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

Benedetta Albanese, Equal Opportunities Delegate, City of Florence

Agnès Deshormes, daughter of Fausta Deshormes La Valle

Sara Funaro, Equal Opportunities Councilor, Municipality of Florence

Dieter Schlenker, Director, Historical Archives of the European Union

9.30 - 11.00 FIRST SESSION

From Women of Europe to European women's networks

This session will begin by assessing how the Women's Information Service and Women of Europe contributed to the emergence of European women's networks and helped them in connecting with the European institutions. Two archival collections, "Femmes d'Europe" and "Fausta Deshormes La Valle," will help in illustrating the various instruments used in promoting the networks,. In the light of this, the panellists will go on to discuss: the role of European women's networks, their objectives and strategies for responding to the challenges of today, including EU enlargement; the role of women and gender in the main European civil society networks (e.g. the European Anti-Poverty Network); the role of women's press in the formation and the development of European women's networks; the contribution of new technologies, such as social networks, in promoting the objectives and initiatives of European women's networks.

Introduction

Federica Di Sarcina, eCampus University

Panellists

Paolo Ponzano, Senior Fellow, Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies

Sandra Ceciari, Consultant - Sandra Ceciari Advice, former member of the Secretariat-General of the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR)

Siusi Casaccia, President, Italian Coordination Committee of the European Women's lobby

Anna Frisone, PhD candidate, European University Institute

Moderator

Dieter Schlenker, Director, Historical Archives of the European Union



11.00 - 11.30 COFFEE BREAK

11.30 - 13.00 SECOND SESSION

Influencing European policy making

This session will begin with an assessment of the current dialogue between the European institutions and European women's networks and of how far these are able to influence EU policy making with regard to gender equality policies, making reference to the two aforementioned archival collections. Panellists will then be invited to discuss the following topics: how to strengthen linkages between women's networks and Brussels institutions; whether the European Parliament could play a leading role in this process; what is the position of the organised European civil society with regard to the latest legal developments in equal opportunities.

Introduction

Mariagrazia Rossilli, Expert in European Law and Policies

Panellists

Monika Ladmanová, Cabinet of Commissioner Vera Jourová, European Commission

Pier Virgilio Dastoli, President, Italian Council of the European Movement

Miryam Fuentes, Board Member, European Network of Migrant Women – EnoMW

Maria Lustrì, Member, European network to promote women's entrepreneurship – WES

Moderator

Adriana Cerretelli, European Affairs Columnist, *IlSole24Ore* newspaper

13.00 - 14.00 LUNCH BREAK



14:00 - 16:00 THIRD SESSION

Shaping the Europe of tomorrow: challenges, visions and the way forward

The aim of this session is to reflect broadly on the future of the EU and to discuss: what kind of Europe do women and civil society networks want; how do they see their role in the construction of tomorrow's Europe; how to respond to the economic crisis, its impact on women and on the European integration process; what expectations do the European networks have for the European institutions.

Introduction

Vittoria Franco, Coordinator, Association "Per un nuovo mondo comune"

Panellists

Silvia Costa, Member of the European Parliament

Barbara Helfferich, Director, European Anti-Poverty Network

Stefano Ciccone, Association "Maschile Plurale"

Leila El Houssi, University of Florence

Moderator

Fiorenza Taricone, University of Cassino and Southern Lazio

16:00 – 16.30 PLENARY DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION