

Gender in EU. The Future of the Gender Policies In the European Union

Regional Conference, Warsaw 28 October 2009, 10.00-16.30

Multimedial Center „Foksal”, Foksal 3/5

New term of the European Parliament (2009-2014) and the European Commission starts in the year of the fifth anniversary of the EU membership of the countries from Central and Eastern Europe. There have been a new internal dynamic within the European Union as well as conservative trends and backlash together with growing euroskepticism. Some commentators indicated even that there is an European identity crisis which is developing in old and new EU member states. The state of developments in the field of gender equality and gender policies at the EU level was regarded as not satisfactory. After the so-called “Gold Age” of the 1990s when most gender equality initiatives were adopted such as directives on equal treatment of women and men and community framework for gender equality there has been a kind of stagnation. The European Commission under the leadership of Jose Manuel Barroso preferred not to change the status quo and not to propose a new more progressive strategy. Until 2009 the EC was not able to present a proposal of a new complex antidiscriminatory directive, finally it announced it but under the strong pressure from the European Parliament and NGOs community from the EU member states. The Women’s Rights and Gender Equality Committee in the European Parliament led by a conservative Anna Zaborska was also unwilling to take more progressive steps. Despite the first declarations the European Institute for Gender Equality which was supposed to start in 2007 to support the EU institutions and EU member states in promoting gender equality and combating sex discrimination has not begun its activities yet.

The impact of the EU accession on the gender equality is perceived slightly as ambivalent. On the one hand, gender equality issues became addressed in the political and administrative practice due to implementation of gender mainstreaming strategy. But on the other hand, introduction of EU solutions and standards led to the change of language of addressing women’s rights or gender equality. The equality and antidiscrimination discourse replaced women’s rights discourse what may lead to marginalization certain demands (e.g. right to abortion, right to contraception etc.). At the same one may have a feeling that women’s problems are being addressed. Therefore, it is characteristic that many women’s organizations and social actors have changed their attitude towards the European Union from big hopes which accompanied the EU accession to more critical reflection. One of the interesting phenomenon visible in the “new” member states is development of the social critic of the EU project from feminist perspective.

The conference aims to discuss the new challenges for the new European Parliament and the new European Commission. The conference will be attended by the representatives of the EU institutions, commentators, researchers and representatives of women’s organizations. It will address the following questions:



- What challenges in the field of gender equality will the new European Parliament and new European Commission have to respond to? Are there any chances to overcome the existing status quo?
- What are the perspectives of development and a strategy of the European Institute for Gender Equality?
- What are other alternative strategies of real improvement of women's status, except gender mainstreaming?
- What alliances can be build to strengthen gender equality policies?

Agenda:

(to be confirmed)

- 10.00-10.10 – Welcome: **Agnieszka Rochon**, Director of Heinrich Böll Regional Office Warsaw
- 10.10-10.40 – Introductory Lecture: **dr Ewa Ruminska-Zimny**, Warsaw School of Economics, former Head of the Gender and Economy Program at the UN Economic Commission for Europe
- 10.40-11.00 – Discussion – moderation: **Adam Ostolski**, „Poitical Critique” („Krytyka Polityczna”)
- 11.00-13.00 – I Panel Discussion: Gender in the Institutions. Status quo or an Opportunity to Change?
Virginija Langbakk, Director of the European Institute for Gender Equality
dr Ewa Ruminska-Zimny, Warsaw School of Economics, former Head of the Gender and Economy Program at the UN Economic Commission for Europe
Luisa Antolin, Advocacy Officer, WIDE Network
Moderation: **Alexandra Jachanova-Dolezelova**, Gender Studies, Chairwoman of the Czech Women's Lobby
- 13.00-14.00 – Lunch
- 14.00-16.00 – II Panel Discussion: Cooperation or Conflict? EU, Integration and Women
Agnieszka Graff, Center for American Studies, Warsaw University, „Political Critique” (“Krytyka Polityczna”)
Jana Cvikova, Aspekt
Joanna Piotrowska, Feminoteka Foundation



Moderation: **Maciej Gdula**, Institute of Social Science, Warsaw University, „Political Critique” („Krytyka Polityczna”)

16.00-16.30 – Closing Words:

dr Ewa Ruminska-Zimny, Warsaw School of Economics, former Head of the Gender and Economy Program at the UN Economic Commission for Europe

Alexandra Jachanova-Dolezelova, Gender Studies, Chairwoman of the Czech Women’s Lobby

Maciej Gdula, Institute of Social Science, Warsaw University, „Political Critique” („Krytyka Polityczna”)

The conference will be held in Polish and English.



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