

Women in the European Parliament – Parliament for Women

6 March (Friday), 2009, 11:00 – 14:00

Conference Center “Zielna”, Zielna 37

For many years, the European Parliament has been considered as an institution which has a real impact on gender equality policies of the European Union and where women managed to increase their political participation over 30%, i.e. they constitute so called “critical mass”. The 1990s were even called the “Gold Age” of the EU gender equality policies as many gender initiatives were undertaken at that time. However, in the last five years we could observe backlash tendencies at the EU level like in most of the EU member states where conservative parties have power. The Women’s Rights and Equal Opportunities Committee led by Anna Zaborska from a conservative Group of the European People’s Party seems to play less active role in promoting women’s rights. The proposal of a new antidiscriminatory directive was accepted after a long debate.

Will the new European Parliament (2009-2014) play a role in creating political space for gender equality policies? Will the stronger role of the European Parliament which is set forth in the Lisbon Treaty not only increase effectiveness of the European Union and make it more democratic but enhance gender equality initiatives as well? The aim of a debate which will take place in a view of the European election in June, 2009, is to initiate discussion on the role of the European Parliament in promoting solutions which will help to achieve gender justice.

The discussion will focus on the following issues:

- Which of the current EP’s gender equality strategies and initiatives have been the most effective? Which ones should be re-defined?
- How can the European Parliament be used more effectively in order to implement gender equality strategies?
- What mechanisms should be developed in order to ensure women’s representation in the European Parliament at least at the current level of 30%?
- What alliances should be established in order to counteract backlash tendencies in the European Parliament?
- What challenges in the field of gender equality will the next European Parliament have to respond to?

The pannelists:

- **prof. Małgorzata Sroda** – Institute of Philosophy, Warsaw University, former governmental plenipotentiary for equal status of women and men;
- **Magdalena Grabowska** – Women’s and Gender Studies Department, Rutgers University, USA;
- **Elisabeth Law** – member of the Board, European Women’s Lobby

Moderation: **Agnieszka Grzybek**, program coordinator, Regional Program “Gender Democracy/ Women’s Politics”, Heinrich Böll Foundation Regional Office in Warsaw.

The debate will be hold with simultaneous Polish-English translation.

After the discussion we would like to invite you for a lunch.