

1st European Expert Conference: Women in Arts and Media Professions: European Comparisons

This meeting of experts took place at the conference centre "Margarethenhöhe" in Königswinter and at the FrauenMuseum in Bonn, May 9-11 1997. It was mainly financed by the European Commission under the "4th EU medium-term action programme on equal opportunity for women and men" with additional funding from Friedrich-Naumann-Foundation.

Summary of Conference Results

The debate surrounding the employment of the first woman in the ranks of the Viennese Philharmonic a few weeks ago was perhaps spectacular, but not necessarily "typical" of the situation of women in arts and media professions in Europe. The European Expert Conference, which recently concluded in Königswinter/Bonn, provided a more realistic picture:

- The presence of women in the cultural labour market, traditionally a male-dominated sector, is becoming increasingly important as research has proven that women are more highly qualified than their male colleagues and who time and again set the standards for future artistic development.
- Women remain under represented in decision making positions in cultural or media institutions as well as in individual professions including, for example, musical composition and theatre. On the other hand, women are over represented in those positions in which salaries are low and little job security is provided yet which require a great deal of flexibility. It was in these areas that Conference participants observed the greatest need for reform and subsequently made specific recommendations on these issues.

The EU Conference served as an exchange of research experiences from 15 European countries as well as providing an inventory of national or European programmes designed to support projects related to women or aimed at creating balanced participation of men and women. There were approximately 65 participants representing a diversity of social actors including national ministries responsible for women and/or the arts and media; non-profit cultural institutions; universities; research institutes, women's and cultural networks; individual artists and representatives from the media. The introductory talks and those aimed at stimulating further discussion were given by, among others, the following:

- in the field of media: Kate Holman (European Voice, Brussels) and Margret Lünenborg (Ministry for Women and Children, Kiel);
- in the arts: Patricia Adkins Chiti (President of "Fondazione Donne in Musica", Fiuggi) and Helen Thomas (Goldsmiths University of London);
- in international organisations and European networks; Guimar Alonso (UNESCO, Paris), Evelyne Serdjénian (Union Professionnelle Féminine, Paris) und Marie-Thérèse Destercke (EUDIF, Brussels).

In addition, examples of initiatives and institutions directed by women such as the "City of Women" festival in Ljubljana, the European Charter for Equality of Women in Broadcasting, or the FrauenMuseum in Bonn were an additional part of the programme.

The Conference was also designed to initiate empirical study in those regions of Europe where transparency either does not exist at all or does so only for certain fields - usually for journalists. The Centre for Cultural Research in Bonn presented a model for such study based on its report "Gender Relations in the Arts and Media II," which was completed a few months ago in response to a commission by the German Federal Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Technology. This second study demonstrated politically based changes in gender equality due to the public debate which resulted from the first study conducted in 1987. One area, as noted at the Conference, which exemplifies this change is the increased distribution of prizes and scholarships to women.

Such positive, useful effects are also of priority for the activities of the new European Research

Institute for Comparative Cultural Policy and the Arts (ERICarts). From this point forward it will prepare and support new studies as well as compile and evaluate existing models of "good practices." ERICarts' goals include the implementation of effective initiatives at the EU-level as well as support of individual, national and regional measures. To date twelve governments, women's networks and research institutes from various European countries have committed themselves to this project despite the fact that in a few of these countries relevant data on equal opportunity initiatives are not readily available. The Conference thus developed a detailed catalog of criteria for future studies which includes social and legal topics such as (further) education, contracts, protection from discrimination, support programmes and the question of women's influence in cultural and media policy.