
Women in the shadows of European construction

FROM *FEMMES POUR L'EUROPE* TO THE
EUROPEAN WOMEN'S LOBBY

JÚLIA MANRESA NOGUERAS



Research for the Pasqual Maragall Legacy Program of
the Catalunya Europa Foundation.



Women in the shadows of European construction

FROM *FEMMES POUR L'EUROPE* TO THE
EUROPEAN WOMEN'S LOBBY

JÚLIA MANRESA NOGUERAS

Master's in Contemporary History and Today's World
University of Barcelona
ACADEMIC YEAR 2022- 2023
ADVISER: Paola Lo Cascio
STUDENT: Júlia Manresa Nogueras

First edition: December 2023

Fundació Catalunya Europa
Calle Sant Eusebi 48-50 bajos local 3
08006 Barcelona
info@catalunyaeuropa.cat
www.catalunyaeuropa.cat

Design: HOBRA design
Translation: Mary Black

ISBN: 978-84-09-46830-0



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution NonCommercial
NoDerivatives 4.0 International License.

Contents

1. Introduction: Questions and research plan	8
1. 1 Methodology and research sources	11
2. Historical background	15
2.1 European construction and integration	15
- The first direct European Parliament elections	17
- The prior debate and the signing of the Maastricht Treaty	20
- The launch of the single market	24
2.2 The second wave of feminism in Europe	26
- Institutional feminism and rights conquered	27
- International Women's Year and the institutional agenda	28
- The first pro-European women's organisations	31
3. Femmes pour l'Europe	36
3.1 From talk to action	48
3.2 The seed that survived Ursula Hirschmann	53
4. The European Women's Lobby	56
4.1 The reason for a lobby	59
4.2 Objectives and lines of action	62
5. The founders in the shadows	66
5.1 Ursula Hirschmann and Femmes pour l'Europe	66
5.2 Fausta Deshormes La Valle and the Women's Information Service	73
- The Women's Information Service	81
5.3 Jacqueline Nonon and the Office for Women's Employment	85
5.4 Eliane Vogel-Polsky and article 119	92
5.5 Jacqueline de Grootte and the European Women's Lobby	102
6. Conclusions	109
7. Sources and bibliography	114
Archives and collections	114
Bibliography	114
Audiovisual sources - Interviews	118
8. Annexe	119

I. Introduction: Questions and research plan

When women ask the questions, the past assumes new shapes.

Karen Offen
European Feminisms (1700-1950)
A Political History

The initial idea for this study originated in journalism. It emerged from the desire to find, identify and share knowledge of the women who contributed to the creation of the European Union, partly the outcome of a journalist's inevitable drive to 'uncover' all things new and unknown. When walking through the interminable halls of the European Parliament headquarters in Brussels looking for the right room, the names of men tend to serve as a guide in the buildings named after Altiero Spinelli, József Antall, Willy Brandt, Konrad Adenauer and Paul Henri Spaak. And if you want to go to the European Commission, then you have to head to Robert Schumann Square, at the underground stop of the same name. If, however, your destination is the European Council, the building is named after Justus Lipsius. You will not run into Simone Weil, who lends her name to the round plaza leading into the European Parliament headquarters in Brussels, until you leave the building.

Thus, there is just one woman's name among the most prominent locations in the EU neighbourhood in the capital of Brussels. Where are all the others? Are there not more women who deserve a public or institutional space in the capital of the European institutions? Today, some of the most important names in the European Union are women. The president of the European Commission, Ursula Von der Leyen, is a woman; the head of the European Central Bank, Christine Lagarde, is too; and even the president of the European Parliament, Roberta Metsola,

is a woman. But who are their predecessors? Was Simone Weil the only woman who actively participated in European construction with a contribution that deserves to be recognised with an institutional building? In short: what have women contributed to the construction of a political, economic, social and cultural project as important as the European Union?

All of these questions are at the root of this study. If we dive a little more deeply into the history of European construction, we will easily find glorification of the founding fathers of Europe, but you have to dig quite a bit further to find the names of women. Gender studies and public pressure have been pushing for a review of history, which still seems quite nascent in the case of the European Community and later the European Union. The European Commission website seems to be seeking a forced equity when it headlines a list of women who were ‘EU pioneers’,¹ who have not only barely been studied and disseminated but sometimes also seem to be named just because they were the first women to occupy a certain post, a justification lacking in analytical and bibliographic depth.

But many women researchers actually believe that many of key players are still missing from the history of the European Union. This study aims to be part of the burgeoning historiography initiated by historians like Silvana Boccanfuso, Anne-Laure Briatte, Éliane Gubin, Françoise Thebaud and Maria Pia di Nonno, who have begun to review all the processes related to European construction bearing in mind the gender component and the role of women. And we do not just mean women individually. The initial search for individual names, inevitably influenced by the culture of big personalities permeating the historiography of the European Union, led to a different result than what was originally expected. Some of the women who were the most actively involved in European construction processes from the 1970s to the early 2000s did so in an organised fashion. They were strong personalities, individually brilliant, but from the beginning they clearly knew that they had to be organised in order to influence the European agenda and the process of EU construction.

Therefore, this study contributes to the framework set by the aforementioned historians with a study of the organisation *Femmes pour*

1 *Les pionniers de l'UE*. European Commission. Retrieved on 15 May 2023 from https://european-union.europa.eu/principles-countries-history/history-eu/eu-pioneers_fr.

l'Europe founded in Brussels in 1973 by Ursula Hirschmann (1913-1991), an essential thinker behind European federalism and an anti-fascist activist and founder of the Union of European Federalists with her husband, Altiero Spinelli. The study of this organisation is the common thread running throughout this work, and the analysis of its history aims to be one of its main contributions. Tracing the life of *Femmes pour l'Europe*, its members and its evolution enables us to understand how and why a series of diverse yet also privileged prominent women coalesced around the European project to influence the decision-making process of the then-European Economic Community at the highest level. We shall examine their claims and contributions and how they decided to organise to achieve them. The study of this group also leads us to the European Women's Lobby (EWL), so we will also analyse the history of this organisation which, as the documents analysed confirm, took over where *Femmes pour l'Europe* left off.

We will talk about a women's organisation that was special because its members were part of the European Economic Community institutions. They were not at the periphery but at the core of the process they were seeking to influence. They were familiar with the power structures and how institutions with a clear dearth of democratic legitimacy operated. They were also familiar with the laws and the impact on the lives of European citizens of everything they were forging in Brussels, Strasbourg, Paris and Rome. Some of them were senior functionaries in the European Commission, others were scholars and experts recognised by national governments and institutions, and yet others were activists with a far-reaching political vision and the drive needed to guarantee the functioning of any organisation, no matter how professional its members may be.

For all these reasons, the second part of this study examines the profiles of the most prominent members of the organisation, first because their individual trajectories help us to understand and explain the nature of *Femmes pour l'Europe* and the EWL, and secondly because they are all personalities who—with the partial exception of Hirschmann—have scarcely been recognised yet made important contributions to the project of European construction based on an autonomy and individual value. This, in turn, opens the doorway to the possibility of further exploring

their figures and therefore new avenues of research.

1. 1 METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH SOURCES

First, it is important highlight the fact that the available bibliography on this issue is certainly limited, even more so in Catalan, Spanish and English. It is primarily in French and Italian. Thus, the starting point for this study was searching for clues along the few tracks already laid down. The research of the historian Silvana Boccanfuso has been crucial in setting this course. In her biography of the still largely unknown Ursula Hirschmann (Boccanfuso, 2021), Boccanfuso talks about Hirschmann as the instigator behind the founding of the group *Femmes pour l'Europe*, and, as mentioned above, this is the thread I have followed to identify the most prominent figures and limit the research to a feasible framework, given the time available to write it. Therefore, a fundamental part of this work was an oral interview with Silvana Boccanfuso, which led to a further interview with another Italian historian, Maria Pia di Nonno, whose doctoral thesis is on one of the fundamental figures in this study: Fausta Deshormes La Valle.

Beyond that, three main sources have fed this research. The main ones are found in the Historical Archives of the European Union in Florence. They are the Fausta Deshormes La Valle collection (FDV), the European Movement collection (ME), the Femmes d'Europe collection (FDE) and the Altiero Spinelli collection (AS). These four collections contain the key information on the organisation *Femmes pour l'Europe* and on some of the most important figures in this research. Another collection consulted is the Femmes d'Europe collection in the Historical Archives of the European Commission in Brussels. There, I was able to document the relationship between the group studied and the institution, and the efforts of an essential figure, Fausta Deshormes La Valle (1927-2013), who was responsible for the European Commission's Information Service and compiled and shared indispensable information on the academic, cultural and political development of the European Union.

Another of the sources consulted was the Archive of the European Parliament, which has digitalised versions of some articles on another of

the important figures in *Femmes pour l'Europe*, Jacqueline de Grootte, an essential link in understanding the close relationship between *Femmes pour l'Europe* and the European Women's Lobby. In fact, this relationship is one of the objectives of this research, because previous studies, like Silvana Boccanfuso's biography of Ursula Hirschmann, had pointed in this direction but not verified it. Nor did Claire Lafon, author of the chapter on the European Women's Lobby in *Europe, une chance pour les femmes? Le genre de la construction européenne* (Briatte et al., 2019), refer to it.

Finally, it was also necessary to check the documents available on the European Women's Lobby (EWL), some of which are available online, scattered among the different aforementioned collections in the Archives of the European Union in Florence. I have analysed newsletters, letters, minutes of meetings and speeches from these archives, as well as interviews and audiovisual sources that report on this organisation's events. The historical archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Belgium also provided a key document for this study, the book that *Femmes pour l'Europe* published on the occasion of the 1979 European elections, with a prologue by Belgium's then-Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Beyond these document sources, this study also draws from the research and dissemination of French researchers and projects like the digital encyclopaedia of the European Union of the Sorbonne University in Paris, which includes a chapter on gender and the European Union. The book cited above, *Europe, une chance pour les femmes? Le genre de la construction européenne* (2019), coordinated by the historians Françoise Thébaud, Éliane Gubin and Anne-Laure Briatte, also comes from the same university and the same project. That study's initial approach comes from the same research questions used in this study and helped me to ascertain the state of the question. This book was published for the first time in 2019 and notes that 'the history of European construction has remained in a "blind spot" in the history of women and gender' (Briatte et al., 2019, 12). Thanks to the book by Briatte, Gubin and Thébaud, I was also able to historically situate the figure of Eliane Vogel-Polsky more rigorously, given that Eliane Gubin wrote a biography of her for the Institute for Equality between Men and Women, affiliated with the Belgian government, which contains an interview with Vogel-Polsky that

was extremely useful in getting a more complete picture of her importance and complexity.

Clearly, little research and few bibliographic references are available, but I would venture to say that they have gained momentum in the past decade. In fact, the book by Silvana Boccanfuso contains significant new information compared to the research reported by the French authors, and only two years went by between the publication of the two books. This is one of the issues we discussed in my virtual interview with Silvana Boccanfuso, which served as an introductory source for this study, as did an interview with Maria Pia Di Nonno, who—as mentioned above—is completing her doctoral thesis on the figure of Fausta Deshormes La Valle. Therefore, this work has also consisted of consulting experts, who are experts because not only have they been documenting an obscure topic for years but they are also the first to do so, and their contributions open up an extremely valuable pathway for those of us who want to carry it on.

Based on all of this, and once again taking the group *Femmes pour l'Europe* as the reference, the timeframe of this study spans from the 1970s to the 2000s, an intense time in European construction and integration because it is when the institutionalisation process gained momentum and the most important legislative pillars were established, such as the Maastricht Treaty (1992) and the revision in the Treaty of Amsterdam (1997).

Finally, I would like to add three methodological notes that aim to make it easier to seamlessly read and understand this study. First, it is peppered with references to *Femmes pour l'Europe*, a lobby launched by Ursula Hirschmann which serves as a common thread weaving the research together. Yet Fausta Deshormes La Valle published a magazine entitled *Femmes d'Europe*, which is both a source and a subject of study in this research. To avoid confusion between the group and the publication, we shall refer to the magazine by its initials *FdE* and the group by its complete name in French. This choice was made because the group is never identified by its initials in any of the documents found, while Deshormes did occasionally refer to the magazine by its initials.

Secondly, we should clarify that both the bibliographic and document sources used to write this study are in different languages in their original

versions, most of them in French, Italian and English. To make reading easier, the quotes from these texts are in English.

Finally, a note about citations of the direct sources consulted and included in the research. Parts of the documentation are reproduced throughout this text as direct quotes, and all have been referenced with a footnote to make them easier to identify. In the case of the Archives of the European Union in Florence, the archivist has digitalised the archives chosen at the author's request. Therefore, I have the digitalised archives in pdf format, and they are cited throughout this work with the document reference and the page in the corresponding pdf. Once they are digitalised at the request of researchers, the Archives of the European Union in Florence publishes them so anyone can consult them. Therefore, the pagination should be the same for any researcher who consults them online. However, this is not true for the documents consulted in the Historical Archives of the European Commission in Brussels. In this case, they were consulted in person and consequently there is no page number in the references in the footnotes; instead, there is a document classification reference code. Likewise, should it be of interest, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Belgium sends anyone who requests it by post the book written by different members of the *Femmes pour l'Europe* group in 1979, which is another of the main document sources of this study.

2. Historical background

2.1 EUROPEAN CONSTRUCTION AND INTEGRATION

One first note worth explaining is that I discuss European ‘construction and integration’ instead of just one of them.² As Antonio Moreno Juste explains in his chapter on this matter in the quintessential manual on international relations coordinated by Juan Carlos Pereira (Pereira, coord., 2009, 562), one of these words is often chosen based on tradition, interpretation or political will, but they are not neutral and do not have the same meaning. For this study, it is important to specify the difference at the outset in order to properly situate the women chosen and their specific contributions to a process that has been broadly studied and interpreted.

European construction is understood in the field of international relations as a set of initiatives aimed at achieving a closer union of the European peoples, with a European federation as the ideal endgame. The creation of European institutions is part of this construction process, but so are cultural and political initiatives aimed at this ultimate goal. This is the frame of the group *Femmes pour l'Europe* and the contributions of the women studied here.

On the other hand, European integration has more economic connotations, although it can also be understood institutionally and legislatively as the process whereby states voluntarily forge connections which strip them of some of their national sovereignty in favour of European sovereignty.

But this is a historical study, and as Moreno Juste also notes, from the historian's perspective the term ‘construction’ evokes a process that is ‘long and extended over time’ (Moreno, J. In Pereira coord., 2009, p. 563). Thus, this is a more nebulous concept, although that does not mean that it should become a grab-bag to stuff in anything that fits. But one thing that does not fit is noninstitutional actors, such as the women's organisations that are the subject of this study.

² Back in 1950, Paul Henri Spaak wrote that the word European ‘integration’ was used as a ‘panacea’ for all the continent's problems (Spaak, 1959, 94).

Having thus introduced this research, we must now provide its historical background. We have to go back to the early 1970s, a time when the European Economic Community was still deciding what form it wanted to take and what its role should be on the global geopolitical scene. Yet it was also a time of intense activity and growth of the European project. We should recall that the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC)³ had been founded in 1952 as an economic and industrial project, with a strong dose of politics (Gavín, 2007). This launched the debate (Birrenbach, 1959) about whether the idea of the European Community should consist of only economic integration, or whether it should also be political (Laurent, 1972). This debate, with all its ebbs and flows, still exists today. In the 1950s, the idea of creating a European Defence Community failed when it was rejected by the French National Assembly (Goormaghtigh, 1954).

France was also sceptical of the idea supported by Benelux and an intensely pro-European Italy of creating a common market among the six members of the ECSC. But the Treaty of Rome⁴ finally entered into force in 1958, and European federalism became the big dream. Nonetheless, that same year former General Charles de Gaulle became the leader of France, with a very different vision of Europe than the federalists. De Gaulle envisaged a Europe of sovereign states that did not cede any political autonomy to the common institutions (Segers, 2010).

De Gaulle's France was highly critical of the European political and economic integration process. It even left its chair empty for six months in 1965 after rejecting proposals that the Community be given its own financial resources (Moravcsik, 2000). But De Gaulle resigned in 1969, ushering in a decade of opportunity—and uncertainty—for the European Community. This was when the enlargement of the club was green-lighted, with approval of the accession of Great Britain, as well as Ireland, Denmark and Norway, which became official in 1972 with the signing of

3 Summary of the Treaty on the Founding of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC). Retrieved on 6 September 2023 from <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=LEGISSUM:xy0022>

4 *raité instituant la Communauté Économique Européenne (1957)*. Retrieved on 6 December 2023 from <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/FR/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:11957E/TXT>

their respective treaties.⁵

It was also a time of economic crisis, which spurred the Werner Report,⁶ a plan developed by the then-Prime Minister of Luxembourg, Pierre Werner, that outlined the three stages needed to achieve European economic and monetary union. He proposed a gradual reform to eventually reach just a single currency, which is now considered one of the main milestones in the European project. We should also mention the 1973 energy crisis around the same time, which made oil prices shoot up, and it was the era when the debate on the single European market became more heated because the European economy was unable to recover. Faced with global stagnation, the Delors Commission, pushed by the British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, exerted pressure to finalise the single European market, even though it did not come to fruition until 1993.

All of these factors led to scepticism about a project that was not bringing the promised economic prosperity. It led to a kind of crisis in confidence in the inexpert, rudderless and still experimental European institutions. However, the crisis also helped key actors in Europe—such as France, Germany and the United Kingdom—to realise that they would not come out of it separately. A new pro-European momentum made the debate on the need for European institutions, and ultimately the European project, gain more political clout (Moreno, J. In Pereira coord., 2009, 575).

The first direct European Parliament election

The departure of De Gaulle, who had always been in favour of intergovernmental institutions and critical of the democratic weakness of a project with clear integration problems, spurred the mobilisation of European federalism. It was possible to take advantage of the momentum and achieve direct suffrage. Important voices like Altiero Spinelli and

5 Documents concerning the accession to the European Communities of the Kingdom of Denmark, Ireland, the Kingdom of Norway and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (1979). Retrieved on 6 September 2023 from <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=OJ:L:1972:073:TOC>

6 Werner, P. (1970). Report to the Council and the Commission on the Realisation by Stages of Economic and Monetary Union in the Community. Retrieved on 15 May 2023 from https://ec.europa.eu/archives/emu_history/documentation/chapter5/19701008en72realisationbystage.pdf

Hendrik Brugmans, the co-founder of the European Movement and first president of the Union of European Federalists, had long been insisting that the European project would not fare well without democratic legitimacy.

Thus, the heads of state and government once again discussed direct suffrage for the European Parliament at a summit held in The Hague in 1969, which the French Member of the European Parliament (MEP) George Vedel left with the assignment to draft a report on the expansion of the European Parliament's powers. The then-president of the European Commission, Sicco Mansholt, expressed his agreement, and ultimately, after plenty of pressure and the technical complications entailed in elections that are based on national electoral laws even today, the heads of state and government decided to open the doorway to direct elections of MEPs.

While until then the national parliaments had delegated members to the European Parliament, starting in 1979 European citizens themselves could vote directly on their European parliamentarians (Nord & Taylor, 1979). The elections were held with high hopes and excitement. For the first time, European citizens were encouraged to get directly involved in a project that had been somewhat remote and abstract until then. That was also when the famous media-circus summits of European leaders were also officially periodically scheduled. That is, the European Economic Community sought to democratically legitimise itself after having been a project that sprang from the political and intellectual elites without citizen participation. The European institutions deliberately tried to draw closer to citizens, but organised citizens also tried to begin to exert pressure and influence the institutions, that is, to lobby them. In fact, other stakeholders, most of them economic, had already organised into lobbies primarily to influence the political and economic decisions taken by the European Economic Community, as well as the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSE). The powerful farmers' confederation COPA had been founded early in the second half of the twentieth century, and industrialists and other business owners were not indifferent to the founding of the ESCE and banded together in 1958 into the Union of Industrial and Employers' Confederations of Europe (UNICE),

which is still the largest European employers' association with the most influence in the institutions, known today as Business Europe (Nonon et al., 2019, 33).

With the European elections and therefore the democratic deepening of the politics and decision-making of the EC institutions, other social groups, like youth, farmer, union, producer and consumer organisations, as well as women's organisations, as we shall see in this study, realised that the most effective way to try to influence European policies was by lobbying. Curiously, one of the main figures in this study, Jacqueline Nonon, is the coauthor of one of the most illustrative, pioneering books available today that analyses the phenomenon of lobbying, especially around the European Community.

Place of influence: Brussels. Brussels, the capital of European lobbying. Everyone is there. Everyone wants to be there. [...] At the origins of the [European] Community, when the leading organisations of businesspeople, workers and farmers established the headquarters of their European coordination in Brussels. These organisations have evolved over time, alongside the volume of cases to track and the enlargement of the Community to twelve members, as well as some actors from third countries. They have become large bureaucracies. Collegial decision-making is difficult there, and when they have to express themselves with a single voice, the place where they end up is the least common denominator. This at least partly explains the lobbies that have cropped up parallel to them since the rise of the Project. The concern with efficiency is the engine behind this approach. In recent years, countless associations have been created in this way. (Ibid., 93)

In the 1970 European elections, 410 MEPs were elected. The exact number was assigned to each member state according to their population, and they were organised into pan-European groups. International cooperation among political parties dates back to the so-called international socialist alliances from the late nineteenth century, a formula that the Christian democratic parties later replicated, followed by the liberals and finally the Greens. Therefore, some parties already had

their international families in place even before the European elections. However, if we constrain ourselves solely to the sphere of European construction, the political parties actually began to cooperate in Europe and with European political integration on their agendas when the 1953 ESCE assembly grouped its members according to their political affinities instead of nationalities. If we examine the information on when they were founded, the Party of European Socialists, the European People's Party and the European Liberal Party were all founded between 1974 and 1976. The others, like the Greens and the Left, date from after 1984 (Calossi & Cicchi, 2019).

It is obviously relevant for the subject of this study to recall that the first direct European Parliament elections were a political milestone for European women, given that Simone Weil was elected president of the Parliament. She is perhaps one of the few women acknowledged in official and informational publications, along with Louise Weiss, the journalist and the oldest MEP, whom Weil mentions in her speech during her investiture (Pinder, 2007).

In these same elections, Altiero Spinelli was chosen to be an MEP for the Italian Communist Party after having been a member of the European Commission and earning recognition as one of the pioneers of the European Union. Jacques Delors was also elected to serve as an MEP in this first election via universal suffrage, even though his career as an MEP would be brief because two years later he would become the president of the European Commission.

The prior debate and the signing of the Maastricht Treaty

All of this is clear evidence that the period since the mid-1970s was not only a time of European construction but also of creation, design and experimentation. Therefore, it was also a time of debate. There was a constant institutional debate around the idea of Europe, the European Union and political cooperation. Proof of this is the Tindemans Report,⁷ which the heads of state and government had commissioned to the then-

⁷ Tindemans, L. (1976) *European Union. Report by Mr. Leo Tindemans, Prime Minister of Belgium, to the European Council*. Bulletin of the European Communities, Supplement 1/76. Retrieved on 15 April 2023 from <http://aei.pitt.edu/942/>

Belgian prime minister, Leo Tindemans. It was published in 1975 and outlines the steps to follow to achieve a European 'Union', such as the creation of an EU executive branch with real power and a foreign and defence policy, two points which are still an unrealised ideal today. *Femmes pour l'Europe's* call for union among European women also reports on this:

Recently, the heads of government have pledged to hold European elections in 1978 and have commissioned the Belgian prime minister, Mr Tindemans, to draft a report on political union. Sometime later, Mr Ortoli, president of the Commission of the European Communities, stated several times that the time had come for Europe to go beyond partial, impotent European policies to instead 'fully exercise our role in collective sovereignty' by liberating 'the reasons for living and hoping of a society suffocated by its own progress'.⁸

The period analysed in this study falls within this time of ongoing institutional debate and change, which also explains or makes sense of the founding of a group of women related directly or indirectly with this process who clamoured for their own role in the debate. At this juncture, Altiero Spinelli reached his peak influence after a long career with the famous 'Spinelli Report',⁹ which was the first draft treaty of the founding of the European Union. It was approved by the European Parliament with an overwhelming majority in 1984 but later rejected by the member states (Burgess, 1984). Without downplaying the career and accomplishments of such an important figure in European federalism and antifascism as Spinelli, it would be interesting to understand and recognise his wife Ursula Hirschmann's contribution to some of the then-MEP's ideas, as the recent historiography has discussed, such as Silvana Boccanfuso's biography of Hirschmann.

8 *Lettre d'accompagnement à 'l'Appel aux Femmes d'Europe'*. (1975). Archives of the European Union in Florence. ME collection. Reference: ME-2274, 4.

9 *Draft Treaty Establishing the European Union* (1984). Bulletin of the European Communities. No 2. Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities. pp. 8-26. Retrieved 6 September 2023 from https://www.cvce.eu/en/obj/draft_treaty_establishing_the_european_union_14_february_1984-en-0c1f92e8-db44-4408-b569-c464cc1e73c9.html .

Internationally, it is important to recall that the Cold War was in its death throes and Ronald Reagan had just been elected president of the United States (1981). Therefore, this was ushering in a period of escalation and clashes with the USSR, which Europe always looked to with apprehension and impotence. Within Europe, Margaret Thatcher had been elected prime minister of the United Kingdom and suggested amending the European Community's system of contributions so that the UK would stop receiving what was called the 'British cheque' in 1980, which gave back to the United Kingdom part of its contribution to the common European budget.

Despite everything, it was also a time of momentum for the EC project. Recall that Greece, Portugal and Spain embarked on their transitions to democracy in the late 1970s, and therefore also their journeys to accession to the European Community. Greece became the tenth member in 1981, although Spain and Portugal had to wait until 1986. Therefore, European construction continued with this significant enlargement southward, which also came with important actors in the north, like the instatement of Helmut Kohl as the chancellor of Germany in 1982 and François Mitterrand as the president of France in 1981. Likewise, *Monsieur Europe*, Jacques Delors, became the head of the European Commission in 1984, pushed by Kohl and Mitterrand.

All of these essential names in the history of European construction coincided in a 1980s. And we should not forget that Spinelli was already working on his report. We could say that he was literally drafting the legal and political foundations of the European Union the way we understand it today, even though Spinelli would have liked to take it even further. That was the time when the European summits were striving to draft different texts to establish the single market and the European free movement area, with the famous Single European Act, which entered into force in 1987.

All of this is the prelude to the drafting of the Maastricht Treaty, the Treaty on European Union, an unprecedented historical milestone in an extraordinarily tumultuous international context that brought about a paradigm shift. In the early 1990s, the Soviet Union fell, Germany was reunified and the conditions for the outbreak of the conflicts in the Balkans were in place. All of this meant—or perhaps because of all of

this—the time had come for the European Union to be founded, or as the text of the treaty states:

RESOLVED to mark a new stage in the process of European integration undertaken with the establishment of the European Communities, RECALLING the historic importance of the ending of the division of the European continent and the need to create firm bases for the construction of the future Europe;...¹⁰

The Maastricht Treaty is fundamental because it gave political clout to the European Communities that had previously been created. Even though it may be the least celebrated part of this historical milestone, this agreement signed in 1992, which entered into force in 1993, sought to rectify the democratic deficit of the EC project by giving the European Parliament more powers. However, the most important thing it did was lay the groundwork for the European Economic and Monetary Policy, the single currency and the EU's common policies, such as the agricultural and trade policies (Farina, et al., 1995). It also introduced the concept of European citizenship, giving each citizen the right to travel freely and live in any EU country, and to vote and run as a candidate in European elections. It is also worth noting that the European Union set five important objectives with the signing of this treaty, including respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms and the development and consolidation of democracy and the rule of law.

In short, the Maastricht Treaty transformed the existing institutions and decision-making policies, while also generating new political needs both nationally and across the EU (Baun, 1995). Politicians had to clarify their positions regarding the European Union and all its priorities, processes and goals from the national vantage point. At the same time, new common challenges arose, many of which have yet to be resolved, such as the common migration and asylum policies, foreign and defence policy, taxation and industrial policy.

¹⁰ Maastricht Treaty on European Union (1992). Eur-Lex. English version. Retrieved 15 May 2023 from <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:11992M/TXT>

The launch of the single market

But if this treaty solidified a political project, one of the first ways that citizens could experience firsthand what Maastricht and the creation of the European Union meant was the launch of the single market of services, capital and people. Maastricht laid out the roadmap for launching an unprecedented economic union in Europe, regarded as one of the most important achievements of the European Union, which celebrates its thirtieth anniversary this year (Godby & Anderson, 2016). It guarantees that services, people and capital can move freely throughout the entire European Union, establishing what is known as the EU's four freedoms.

The importance of this moment in economics and European citizens' rights is clear. Citizens, who until then were Spaniards, French or Germans, came to have two legally recognised citizenships, with new rights and new freedoms. And this is the framework surrounding the birth of the major pan-European organisations that seek to participate and influence European institutional creation and debates, such as the harmonisation of the labour regulations around Europe, how deep social Europe should go, the competences of the European parliament, the capacities of the European Commission and others, like the role of Europe in aid for development. This point is particularly salient in this study, given that the European Women's Lobby (EWL) was officially founded in 1991. The European Union began to have a direct impact on citizens' lives; that is, it generated a new sphere of public space in Europe,¹¹ with new interaction between citizens and policies that organised citizens wanted to take part in.

With the creation of the single market, the enlargement of the European Union also continued. In 1995, Sweden, Austria and Finland joined, while other countries like Norway and Switzerland were in the midst of an intense political debate on accession to the EU. Middle ways were also found, like the countries that are part of the European Economic Area but not the EU, including Norway and Iceland. The inequality among European countries was heightened with the entry of

11 European Women's Lobby (2015) *30 Years of European Women's Lobby. Herstory*. Retrieved on 20 May 2023 from <https://www.womenlobby.org/25-years-of-European-Women-s-Lobby?lang=en>.

these Nordic countries, which had the high standards of welfare states that were more advanced than the southern countries. Yet at the same time, they also had a different political tradition that brought these high standards into the nascent politics of the European Union, especially in areas like environmental protection and gender equality.

Always honouring the idea that European construction is constant, the Maastricht Treaty in no way put an end to the political debate; in fact, quite the opposite. Reflection initiatives quickly emerged that found areas of improvement and the need to prepare the European Union for a future enlargement. It is important to bear in mind that the USSR had just fallen, and Eastern Europe was looking towards the European Union expectantly. Thus, the 1997 Treaty of Amsterdam stressed respect for the fundamental rights and freedoms, principles which should be common in all the member states. It also emphasised social rights, social protection and the right to decent living conditions. It was once again a time of economic crisis in which citizens were worried about social rights that the European Union, which was distant from people's real problems, had yet to address. The goal again became to increase democratic legitimacy, and the European Parliament was given the power to vote on certain policies and reject the person chosen by the heads of state and government to preside over the European Commission.

This reform on the verge of the new millennium is also fundamental for this study because with the Maastricht Treaty the commitment to 'eliminate inequalities between men and women and promote equality' gained a foothold as one of the EU's principles. Furthermore, in article 13, the EU pledges to take appropriate actions to fight discrimination on the grounds of sex, racial or ethnic background, religion or conviction, disability, age or sexual orientation. Article 141 also explicitly recognises the principle of equal pay between male and female workers for the same job or a job of equal value (Folguera, C., in Pereira coord., 2009, 680).

Achieving these milestones was not gratuitous for European women. Equality between men and women is recognised as one of the European Union's fundamental principles and commitments, even though it is seldom considered as important as the recognition of other rights and freedoms. Some of the women we will examine in this study, such as the

Belgian jurist Eliane Vogel-Polsky (1926-2015), were crucial in securing this recognition in writing in the European Union's founding treaties, along with the second wave of European feminism and the importance of women's participation in European politics.

2.2 THE SECOND WAVE OF FEMINISM IN EUROPE

'*Tiempos revueltos*' [Troubled Times] is the title of the tenth chapter of the classic *El siglo de la revolución*, the history of the world since 1914 by Josep Fontana. As the Catalan historian reminds readers, the second half of the twentieth century was a time of dissatisfaction (Fontana, 2017, 245), especially in Western Europe. It was the era of the May '68 unrest at the universities in France and the hippies in the United States. Ultimately, despite the claim that the system was supposed to lead to social prosperity after the Second World War, it was still far from doing so.

For women, there were even more reasons for indignation. If they did not autonomously articulate their demands, they were not taken into account by parties and movements on either the left or the right. After the suffragists' claims, inequality did not seem to have decreased in practice. In fact, the new capitalist model exploited them in the workplace even more, leaving them only the most unstable and poorest paid jobs. But as Lois Graessle, a US feminist living in the United Kingdom, said, it was also a time 'of innocence, enthusiasm and creativity'¹² known as the second wave of feminism, which reached Europe on the wings of the claims in the United States, which were initially associated with economic and salary gender inequalities in a struggle that was also for cultural and social 'liberation' (Gubin et al., 2004).

Women had begun to attend university at a time when women's and feminist publications were on the rise, along with seminars on the status of women and such important milestones as the legalisation of abortion.

12 Cochrane, K. (2010). Forty years of women's liberation. *The Guardian*. Retrieved on 20 May 2023 from <https://web.archive.org/web/20180202052156/https://www.theguardian.com/lifeand-style/2010/feb/26/forty-years-womens-liberation>

One example is the famous *Le Manifeste de les 343 salopes* (1971)¹³ in France, where hundreds of women intellectuals, actresses and film directors, among others, stated that they had had abortions and called for free access to abortion and contraception. In 1970, Germaine Greer published *The Female Eunuch* and Kate Millet published *Sexual Politics*.

Institutional feminism and rights conquered

In the 1970s, feminism in Europe sought to directly influence policies and promote legislative reforms that would actually make gender equality a reality. As reported in the particularly informative first issue of *Femmes d'Europe (FdE)*,¹⁴ the newsletter of the information service for women's organisations and press in the European Commission that was sent to all women's organisations in the member states, many of the European Community countries enacted different laws related to salary and labour equality between men and women in the first half of the 1970s.

In the United Kingdom, the Equal Pay Act was approved in 1970 and was immediately followed by others like the Sex Discrimination Act and the Employment Protection Act to protect women from being dismissed if they became pregnant. This legislation reached France in 1972, Ireland in 1974 and Belgium and the Netherlands in 1975, and it was incorporated into the constitutions of Italy and Germany. But steps were also made in other fields. In Italy, the law on divorce was passed in 1970. And we cannot forget that France, the country at the intellectual forefront at that time—in the feminist movement as well—also eliminated men's legal

13 The complete manifesto with all its signatures, including Simone de Beauvoir's, can be seen online on the website of the newspaper where it was originally published, *Le Nouvel Observateur*. Le 'Manifeste des 343 salopes' (1971) *Le Nouvel Observateur*. Retrieved on 20 May 2023 from <https://www.nouvelobs.com/societe/20071127.OBS7018/le-manifeste-des-343-salopes-paru-dans-le-nouvel-obs-en-1971.html>.

14 *Femmes d'Europe (FdE)* or *Women of Europe* is the magazine and newsletter that the information service of the European Commission for women's media and organisations created under the oversight and on the initiative of Fausta Deshormes La Valle. It was launched in 1977 and continued until 1992. Published in French and English, it reported information considered of interest to European women, ranging from new EC debates or initiatives to appointments, rulings or new organisations, and it was sent to all the feminist or women's organisations that Deshormes La Valle had located in her previous search, in addition to those that later requested it. All the documentation and publications can be found in the Archives of the European Commission in Brussels, and fortunately the newsletter issues have been digitalised.

authority over family members in 1970.

This was also when we once again encounter the names we found while strolling through the European neighbourhood in Brussels. Before being the first president of the European Parliament, Simone Weil had pushed for the law demanded by the 343 *salopes* in 1970. Then the Minister of Health, she promoted the law that legalised abortion in France, which she called the *Loi Veil*¹⁵ in French.

That is, women were beginning to enter not only universities but also ministries, albeit as a significant minority. They no longer only engaged in politics in the streets, in newspapers and in the shadows. They did so in the institutions. Therefore, it is also natural that they wanted to influence European policies. However, the women had reached the European institutions in subordinate positions. For example, as Mauve Carbonell recalls in her chapter ‘*Les femmes dans les premières années de la construction européenne*’ in the book *L’Europe, une chance pour les femmes?* (Briatte et al., 2019, 81), between 1952 and 1967, it is difficult to quantify how many women worked in the ESCE, but they were primarily interpreters, secretaries or telephone operators, ‘women’s’ jobs that were far from important positions like director-general. Nor did they have much institutional clout.

According to figures from the European Parliament, before the European Parliament elections were direct and universal, the number of women representatives was utterly marginal.¹⁶ In 1952, there was only one female MEP among the 78, the Dutch Christian Democrat Marga Klompé. In 1972, only five of the 148 MEPs were women, most of them from the same conservative political family as Klompé. The percentage shot up with the first direct European Parliament elections, when 68 of the 410 seats went to women. They occupied 15% of the parliament, quite a significant percentage if we consider that today women account

15 Legifrance. (1975) Loi no. 75-17 du 17 janvier 1975 relative à l’interruption volontaire de la grossesse. Retrieved on 20 May 2023 from legifrance.gouv.fr/loda/article_lc/LEGIAR-TI000006695557/1975-01-18

16 Historical Archives (2014). *Europe’s First Women*. Retrieved on 28 May 2023 from <https://ep-thinktank.eu/2014/03/05/europes-first-women/>

for 39.4%.¹⁷

Thus, though a minority, women were beginning to enter the institutions, both national and European. They struggled to carve a space for themselves, which they were naturally never given, and they earned the nickname of ‘femocrats’ (Briatte, 2020) from some of the more radical feminist groups. The Europe that was becoming institutionalised and gradually constructed became yet another political arena where equality could be demanded. In February 1966, 3,000 women workers from the national war weapons factory in Herstal (Belgium) decided to go on strike to demand the salary equality they were promised in article 119 of the Treaty of Rome (1957) (Zancarini, 2020). This victory, achieved thanks not only to the hundreds of women who went on strike but also to the Belgian jurist Eliane Vogel-Polsky, led her to bring the case to the European justice system to force the European Economic Community to take steps in the same direction. The EU’s policy agenda was pushed by not only the national agendas but also the claims of the women’s associations that decided to tackle the issue at the EC level.

Advances in equal working conditions were actually one of the main concerns of feminist associations and European institutions in the 1970s, to such an extent that in 1976 the European Commission created a Bureau for Problems Concerning Women’s Work under the direction of Jacqueline Nonon. An extensive part of the first issue of the *Femmes d’Europe (FdE)* newsletter from 1977 discussed such achievements in both Europe and nationally. There is also a series of informative documents from the information service of the Commission and the European Movement that outline what Europe had done for women, with a heavy emphasis on the workplace and salaries.

In Article 119, the Court recognises an imperative and considers that banning discrimination between male and female works entails discrimination, direct or indirect. Not only is it imposed on the action of public authorities but it also extends to all the collective

¹⁷ Women in the European Parliament (2019). European Parliament. Retrieved on 28 May 2023 from <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/headlines/society/20190226STO28804/women-in-the-european-parliament-infographics> .

bargaining agreements as well as all contracts among private parties. If successful, all the trials that workers win in the future could give rise to retroactive compensation up to the date of the Court of Justice of the European Community ruling (April 1976). To implement article 119 and comply with the directive, the member states have introduced provisions in their legislation on legal remuneration: United Kingdom (1970), France (1972), Ireland (1974), Belgium (1975), Denmark (1976). Equality is written into the Constitution in Germany and Italy. However, compensation differences still persist in the different EC countries owing to causes that are both broad and deep, particularly associated with the structure of the labour market.¹⁸

International Women's Year and the institutional agenda

All of this makes it clear that the 1970s was a particularly important time for feminist claims, legislative victories leading to actual equality and the arrival of women in institutional politics. It was also an important time because of the policies enacted and for women. Further proof is the United Nations' declaration of 1975 as International Women's Year. This proved to be an impetus for women and feminist associations organised around institutional agendas with the goal of exerting political influence, but it also pushed institutions. It encouraged events and debates to be held, as well as research and the drive for policies. Below we shall see how the organisation *Femmes pour l'Europe* held a colloquium in Brussels with the goal preparing for the conference in Mexico that was the core international event in this United Nations commemoration.

It was precisely under the impetus of this agenda that in 1976 the European Commission created a Bureau for Problems Concerning Women's Work within the Social Affairs service under the direction of Jacqueline Nonon. It also created the information service of women's organisations and press under the leadership of Fausta Deshormes. Both divisions sought to contribute actively to this commemoration's institutional agenda. Among Fausta Deshormes's documents at the European Commission in Brussels, one can browse through hundreds of

¹⁸ *La Communauté Européenne pour le travail des femmes*. Archives of the European Union in Florence. European Movement collection. Reference: ME-2576, 72.

pages of preparations of activities, surveys and press clippings related to that commemoration.

As part of International Women's Year, the European Commission also conducted a far-reaching survey on the social difficulties European women were facing, especially at work, which bore in mind such pioneering aspects as the desire to be paid for what are mistakenly called 'housework' and the difficulties finding full-time work. The research is an impressive undertaking seen from today, because it is somewhat similar to the Eurobarometer, the yearly survey conducted by the European institutions to ascertain the health of European sentiment and European citizens' current concerns. But just to get an idea, it was a kind of Eurobarometer which only asked the questions to women from all the countries that were members of the European Economic Community at the time. After that, the Information Service compared the results country by country.¹⁹

In short, it was a time when, from the department directed by Fausta Deshormes, the European Commission strove to understand the concerns, needs and wishes of the women of Europe not only to promote European policies in this direction but also to encourage women to get involved with the European project so that they would begin to see the European institutions and the idea of the European Community as a useful arena for both their claims and their everyday lives in practice.

In short, it was a busy time in Europe's feminist organisations, movements and groups with the arrival of women in European institutions in crisis, which had to become democratic and begin to listen to European citizens if they wanted to survive. The European Community also became a new political arena where these women could fight for their interests. The group *Femmes pour l'Europe*, the subject of this study, was founded in 1975 within this context.

The first pro-European women's organisations

There is little historiography of feminisms from a transnational European dimension. The US historian Karen Offen has made a substantial

¹⁹ *Synthèse des résultats de la campagne d'information lancée dans la presse féminine en 1977-1978 en vue des élections du Parlement européen et à l'initiative de la DGX - Information - Action en faveur des femmes*. Archives of the European Commission in Brussels. Reference: BAC 196/1991, 3.

contribution to painting a more comprehensive picture from this perspective in her book *European Feminisms, 1700-1950. A Political History* (2020), but her exhaustive study leads us to the eve of the period we are examining in this study. Nonetheless, it is useful in sketching out the background.

The International Council of Women (ICW) had been founded in 1888 and the International Women's Suffrage Alliance (IWSA) in 1904. After that, with the two World Wars, women's organisations were primarily focused on pacifism, with major milestones like The Hague gathering and the creation of global organisations like the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), founded in 1919 with 16 national chapters. International feminist movements were slow to react to the rise of fascisms, while socialist and communist movements relegated feminist claims to the background.

These organisations marched forward within what we have already situated as the second wave of feminism, but many new ones also cropped up, especially around the idea of women's 'liberation', directly inspired by the movement founded in the United States. For example, the *Mouvement de Libération des Femmes* was founded in France in the early 1970s, and the British Women's Liberation Movement in the United Kingdom and the *Frente de Liberación de la Mujer* in Madrid in 1976. Many feminist groups associated with certain political leanings, like socialism and communism, were also founded. In the countries emerging from dictatorial regimes, some of the associations that were founded chose to highlight democratic values, like the *Asociación Democrática de Mujeres a España* in Spain (De Wolf, 2020).

In Europe, after intense pressure and insistence from women's organisations, in the 1970s the European Commission got actively involved in what it called 'women's affairs'. As noted above, the office for women's employment problems was created in 1976 as part of the Social Affairs service directed by the French functionary, Jacqueline Nonon. An information and women's organisation division led by Fausta Deshormes was also created, which actively sought to collect and disseminate the initiatives and victories of women's organisations in the EC countries, regardless of their ideology. The newsletters analysed for this study

include references to both associations of Christian women and the creation of a new division of union leaders in the European Trade Union Confederation.²⁰

Thus, the European institutions contributed to creating a common 'European agenda' in the existing national women's organisations. Yet the fact is that women had been organising internationally, and across Europe, to fight for gender equality for some time. In fact, one of Fausta Deshormes's unfulfilled goals at the Commission's information service was for feminist organisations she called 'traditional' to group together under an umbrella organisation to promote a more active role for women in European policies and the process of European construction. What she did manage to do was contact all the known formal organisations to establish relations with them, find out their demands and exchange experiences.

Feminist associations' desire to be recognised by the Commission and, in general, by the EC institutions as partners dates back to the mid-1960s. At that time, women's associations were demanding (not very adeptly, but resolutely) that the Commission take measures to join the Economic and Social Committee. Obviously, they were not very familiar with the institutional game and had set the wrong goal. But they still expressed this aim. In the 1960s, relations between the European Commission and women's associations were irregular, frequent, but not very systematic or exhaustive. Only after early 1977, when this small unit charged with information for women was founded, did the relations become more systematic, detailed and ongoing. At first, the EC's services believed they had to know more about the universe they were addressing: we did this via a form-based survey which we sent to all the leading women's organisations we were aware of. Naturally, the goal at that time was to almost exclusively cover traditional women's associations. I will not now revisit the debate we initiated the other day; I believe we should also explore less structured movements, movements we could call 'neo-feminist',

20 *Femmes d'Europe* no. 0.77 – July 77- p.13. *Vie Militante. Europe. Confederation européenne des Syndicats*. Archives of the European Union in Florence. Reference: ME-2576, 52.

*although it would be very difficult to reach them via this type of survey.*²¹

Likewise, organisations specifically geared at European construction were founded. Some of them were chapters of pro-European organisations like the European Movement, but most of them were national pro-European organisations which served as umbrellas for a representative group of feminist national organisations to interact with the European Commission. This is why it is particularly interesting to analyse *Femmes pour l'Europe*, which turned to this logic: Ursula Hirschmann and Fausta Deshormes wanted to build a women's organisation that went from Europe to the nations.

For example, many of Fausta Deshormes's dossiers include interactions with organisations like the *Union Féminine des Femmes Françaises* and the *Conseil National des Femmes*, both from France, and the National Council of Danish Women. Likewise, many diverse international organisations were located by the division that Fausta Deshormes directed, including the University Women of Europe headquartered in Geneva, the Centre for Research on European Women (CREW) in Brussels and even the *Confédération Européenne des Syndicats*.

In fact, the 1976 summary by one of the civil servants from the Directorate General of Information of the Commission of the European Communities on the preparatory work for the 'women's cell' that Deshormes would later direct is particularly useful. For example, the Commission contacted the National Council of Danish Women, which had 50,000 women members, but it also sought engage in dialogue with the most active associations in Belgium, where there was no large umbrella bringing together all the groups in the country. It also had the United Kingdom's Women's National Commission, with four million members, and Ireland's Council for the Status of Women on its radar, among others.²²

It is important to understand that the majority of the more traditional feminist groups viewed the European framework as a space that delimited

21 Speech by Fausta Deshormes La Valle. *Enquête sur la situation de la femme*, 30 November 1981, Brussels. Archives of the European Commission in Brussels. Reference: BAC 196/199113

22 Document signed by A. Sider addressed to Fausta Deshormes and dated 3 November 1976 in Brussels. Archives of the European Commission in Brussels. Reference: BAC 196/1991, 15.

their claims and their reach, but their priorities did not include advancing in integration, and this is precisely one of Hirschmann's frustrations, as Boccanfuso outlines via Alitero Spinelli's journal (Boccanfuso, 2021, 196).

3. Femmes pour l'Europe

*The group Femmes pour l'Europe [...] is made up of women from the nine countries in the European Community who are convinced of the need for women to be heard and who accept their responsibilities at all levels, European as well. We know that there is a Europe that already exists and another under construction. We do not want to be left out of either its conception or its development.*²³

This is how *Femmes pour l'Europe* presented itself in its most valuable written contribution as a lobby, a 200-page book published by the Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs that served as a prelude to the 1979 European elections. It is an extensive compilation of reflections by different group members and independent experts on such far-ranging issues as salary equality, article 119 of the Treaty of Rome, women workers in European trade unions, immigrant women and women as consumers. The thematic scope, depth and intentions to distribute the analyses contained in this book, which was translated into English, Dutch, Spanish, Italian and German, show not only the extent of this group's aspirations but also its success.

Femmes pour l'Europe was barely four years old in 1979, when this book was published. It had been spearheaded by Ursula Hirschmann, who was also one of the founders of the Union of European Federalists along with Alitero Spinelli. *Femmes pour l'Europe* was not officially established until 24 April 1975, as proven by the founding documents available in the Historical Archives of the European Union in Florence, but Hirschmann had been conceiving and gestating it since 1973.²⁴

Spinelli said that Hirschmann also worked on the conception and communication of the book, even though she was unable to write

²³ *European Women about Europe. Views and Ideas Amassed by the 'Women for Europe' Group.* (1979). Ministry of Foreign Affairs, External Trade and Cooperation in Development. Brussels, 7.

²⁴ Spinelli, A. (1979) Women for Europe. In *European Women about Europe. Views and Ideas Amassed by the 'Women for Europe' Group.* (1979). Ministry of Foreign Affairs, External Trade and Cooperation in Development. Brussels, 11.

anything for it. By that time she had had the stroke which sidelined her from political activism for a few years and ended up keeping her away from the project.

According to its founding manifesto, *Femmes pour l'Europe* was an 'initiative group' that issued a 'call to the women of Europe' to participate in constructing a more democratic, socially committed and social European Union, and especially one where women had the representation, presence and power they deserved:

At a crucial moment for the future of all of us, the time has come for women to let their own voices be heard and to shoulder their own responsibilities. Let us not fool ourselves: our conquests are not irreversible. With inflation and unemployment battering us in many ways, but always powerfully, the different countries have stepped up the tendency to go back to economic and cultural compartmentalisation. If this narrow-minded particularism wins, all the promises of a fairer and more socially just European society will be threatened, and women will once again be among the first to be harmed, because the increasing difficulties will soon be used as a pretext to question their recent conquests on all fronts.²⁵

This is a paragraph from the part of the manifesto devoted to answering the question, 'Why women?' It is interesting to see how this working group's founding mission was not to influence the European political agenda, or not only that, but also to support the European project, federalism, because it was viewed as a guarantee that the rights that women had conquered until then would be kept. We should recall that Ursula Hirschmann, a figure we shall examine more in-depth below, was an antifascist and a European federalist who saw the European project as the way to avoid repeating the errors of the Second World War, that is, of fascism. We can see her personal mark on the project in this perspective, which also viewed the European project as a guarantee that women would continue to conquer more rights.

²⁵ *Appel aux Femmes d'Europe*. (1975). Archives of the European Union in Florence. European Movement collection. Reference: ME-2274, 2.

*Therefore, women must take an active role in the battle for true European unification. In both this sector and many others, they have to achieve an influence more in line with their numerical weight and with the role they wish to play in a society that aims to be both democratic and egalitarian.*²⁶

The women who signed this manifesto clearly understood that sending letters to the European institutions from Brussels was not enough, and they were issuing a call for the institutions to work towards ‘the European Union’; for ‘political organisations and trade unions’ to mobilise in favour of a ‘federal Europe’; and for citizens to express their ‘European will’ strongly enough that governments would be ‘forced to take action’.

Finally, they said the following, in upper-case letters for emphasis:

*MORE PARTICULARLY TO EUROPEAN WOMEN, TO EXERT PRESSURE IN FAVOUR OF A UNITED EUROPE WHEREVER THEY CAN, EITHER INDIVIDUALLY OR WITHIN THEIR ASSOCIATIONS.*²⁷

As Silvana Boccanfuso highlighted several times in an interview with the author of this study, and as we can also glean from Spinelli’s words cited above, Hirschmann was a ‘woman of action’, and therefore *Femmes pour l’Europe* was a group of action. It directly addressed the EC institutions from the very start, and in fact some of its initial members were functionaries in those same institutions, like Fausta Deshormes la Valle. However, this did not stop them from being highly critical of the process of European construction underway. This was 1975, in the midst of another economic crisis and a dire crisis of democratic legitimacy for the European Economic Community. Everything was leading to the 1979 elections, and we should also view this group as the outcome of the momentum created around this electoral milestone, which was going to

²⁶ *Appel aux Femmes d’Europe*. (1975). Archives of the European Union in Florence. European Movement collection. Reference: ME-2274, 2.

²⁷ Ibid.

be a massive new exercise in democracy never before seen in Europe.

From inside and outside the institutions, *Femmes pour l'Europe* believed that the European Economic Community had been 'poorly' constructed, and from the very beginning they were willing to funnel all their efforts on improving it. They found the lack of women in the institutions 'indefensible' and were certain that Europe's structural problems had to be addressed in order to rectify this.²⁸

So who were these women who joined forces around Ursula Hirschmann in this ambitious group? We have been unable to find any official record of the group members either initially or in its last year, but we can deduce that more than fifty women were involved, around twenty of them the most active. The group's first official colloquium gathering was held on 8 November 1975 and brought together 'eight women from all the countries in the EC', according to one of the documents summarising it. The unanimous desire of the group members, the text says, was to 'raise women's awareness of current political, economic and social problems', and they asserted that it was 'inadmissible' for women to be relegated to the sidelines of society.²⁹

Of these eighty women, some of them were highly qualified and familiar with the EC institutions and the way the game was played, and they were intellectually involved in gender equality. These profiles explain the group's capacity for influence and the scope of its actions in such a short period of time. Some of them were already political activists, such as Jacqueline de Grootte, who had been writing about feminism and Europe in the magazine *Les Cahiers du Griff* for some time.³⁰ Fausta Deshormes la Valle also came with a long career as a journalist, an EC service under her oversight and good connections in the highest echelons of the Commission. And obviously we should also mention Ursula Hirschmann, who, as Boccanfuso proves in her biography, had thirty years of experience

28 Letter summarising the first meeting of *Femmes pour l'Europe* dated 8 November 1975. Archives of the European Union in Florence. European Movement collection. Reference: ME-2418, 94.

29 Ibid.

30 *Les Cahiers du Griff* was a French feminist magazine founded in 1973 by the philosopher Françoise Collin and by Jacqueline de Grootte as part of the *Groupe de recherche et d'information féministes (GRIF)* in Brussels.

in political activism and had already founded the European Movement with Altiero Spinelli. Another prominent member was Jacqueline Nonon, who would be put in charge of the Commission's Bureau for Problems Concerning Women's Work, among many others.³¹

'They are national and European MPs, civil servants—some with senior positions—professors, university researchers, teachers, heads of trade unions and women's and mixed organisations, company executives, journalists', the introductory article in the book published by the Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs says about its authors. Not all the authors of the articles in the book were members of *Femmes pour l'Europe*, but the majority were, so this summary provides a good snapshot of the group.

The profile and expertise of the members of *Femmes pour l'Europe* also explains why one of its first documented lobbying efforts was a letter sent to the prime minister of Belgium, Leo Tindemans, who at that time was drafting the report named after him which sought to lay out a roadmap for the construction of the European Union. *Femmes pour l'Europe* sent him a letter with their vision of Europe in order to exert a direct influence on the report. Their vision was clearly not merely federalist but also progressive, if not socialist,³² anti-fascist and profoundly democratic with a particular emphasis on solidarity and the need to go 'beyond the institutional technocratic framework'. Read today, it is surprising language if we once again bear in mind that some of the group members, like Fausta Deshormes La Valle and Jacqueline Nonon, were EC functionaries. But we should also recall that European federalism, the bedrock of this group, was very closely associated with antifascism and socialism at that time.

To get a sense of their ideas, according to the document they sent Tindemans, *Femmes pour l'Europe* said that the 'European Union' should be characterised by 'the democratic participation of the citizens of Europe

31 The book *Femmes Européennes parlent de l'Europe. Réflexions rassemblées par le groupe 'Femmes pour l'Europe'* (1979), its original title in French which was later translated into different languages (including the English edition cited in previous references), enables us to ascertain some of the names through articles by 23 groups members, including Ursula Hirschmann, Monique Rifflet, Nicole Loeb-Mayer, Anne-Marie Lizin, Jacqueline de Grootte, Fausta Deshormes La Valle, Anne Choisez, Cecilia Andersen, Jacqueline Wigny, Bernadette Antoine, Sibylle Pino, Florence Morgan, Camille Pichault, Marie-Christine Lefebvre, Emilienne Brunfaut, Jacqueline Nonon, Jane Vital, Lily Boeykens, Fanny Fuks, Anne-Marie Rabier, Evelyn Eckhardt and Karen Moller.

32 The text refers to the need for a 'democratically planned' economy.

in all the decisions that affect their lives; a society in which production and growth serve people, not the opposite; political and economic independence from the Great Powers; and active solidarity with the poorest regions of the Community, those European countries that are trying to establish democratic structures after fascist dictatorships under complicated conditions and developing countries'.³³

Therefore, it is undeniable that it was a group with initiative and a clear idea of what the political articulation of the project of European integration should look like, with a political culture linked to European federalism. The fact that their first act was to send a letter to the Belgian prime minister makes it clear that not only did they want to strike high in the political ranks but they also knew exactly where to exert influence and how to reach it. They had a cross-cutting conception of feminism which encompassed the main areas in European politics.

However, Tindemans profoundly disappointed them. The announcement of the organisation's second colloquium reveals that *Femmes pour l'Europe* harshly criticised the report:

*The institutions of the current Community, a mediocre trade technocracy in its neoliberal inspiration, without initiative, without imagination, without planning, without authority and without perspective, no longer interests us. [...] How can the huge shortcomings in the TINDEMANS report be explained? [...] In fact, Mr TINDEMANS conscientiously fulfilled the mission entrusted to him. He did not want to and was unable to go further to give it a true political dimension. We are not questioning the Belgian prime minister's convictions but the narrow leeway he was given to formulate proposals, given the nationalistic rigidity of some, the systematic boycott of any common initiative by others, the doubts, vacillations, egoism, hypocrisies of new governments and all their leaders who preach a European vocation far and wide, even though all their acts contradict it.*³⁴

³³ *Views on European Union. For Prime Minister Mr Leo Tindemans.* (1975). Archives of the European Union in Florence. European Movement collection. Reference: ME-2274, 13

³⁴ *Ibid.*

The goals of *Femmes pour l'Europe* went much further than achieving gender equality in Europe or simply 'influencing' European policies; they wanted to upend the logic that had shaped the Community and were visibly disappointed with the European leaders at the time. The text continues by lashing out against 'much of the European political class, both left and right, and even certain trade unionists bullheadedly stuck in an outdated national compartmentalisation, busy resolving the problems of another century.'³⁵

Their vision of feminism was cutting-edge. They believed that they could bring perspectives to European policies that had been ignored, marginalised and silenced until then. The goal was not to get women to participate in European construction via quotas but to transform it, to improve a process they considered deeply flawed. Women were an asset, almost a phenomenon that, according to *Femmes pour l'Europe*, had the potential to transform the EC project. That is why the European elections were an opportunity to which they ferociously clung. It was the ideal time for European women's voices to be heard and for them to conquer the places, discourses and policies that they deserved.

*We believe that women, along with everyone who suffers from discrimination, are an immense reserve of creative power. Europe is being straitjacketed in stagnant structures. Now is the time to demand the opinion of everyone who hasn't had the chance to share theirs, and who should bring their contributions and dynamism to the definition of Europe given the need to fight to defend their own rights. With this perspective, we believe that the European Parliament elections are very important. It is the time to mobilise women around the problems that affect them. In order for universal suffrage to be an effective instrument for establishing a democratic Europe, women—who are half the electorate—must also be aware of the fundamental options which their representatives are facing.*³⁶

35 *Views on European Union. For Prime Minister Mr Leo Tindemans.* (1975). Archives of the European Union in Florence. European Movement collection. Reference: ME-2274, 13

36 *L'Europe pour les Femmes?* Archives of the European Union in Florence. European Movement collection. Reference: ME-2418, 18.

The group's opening event was a two-day conference in Brussels with simultaneous translation in French, English and Italian, with a keynote speech by the British diplomat Karen Fogg entitled '*Où en sommes-nous, les femmes?*'³⁷ She was followed by the functionary, Enrica Varese, who presented the status of women within the European Economic Community. Fausta Deshormes was then charged with spurring and moderating a debate among the participants. On the last day, Jacqueline de Groote and Ursula Hirschmann delivered a speech entitled '*La participation des femmes dans la construction européenne*'.³⁸

The list of participants in this event takes up three pages and includes everything from institutional functionaries to jurists, journalists, students, writers, activists and members of different organisations. Many of them were members of *Femmes pour l'Europe*, like Ursula Hirschmann Spinelli, along with independent names that were closely connected to the group's claims, such as Eliane Vogel Polsky, who we also introduce in this study. Observers from the institutions were also invited, like the Belgian federalist and European Commission employee, Raymond Rifflet.

Fogg's keynote is a feminist manifesto that calls for a profound change in economic and social structures, not only in Europe. While Ursula Hirschmann was reluctant to declare *Femmes pour l'Europe* a feminist movement when she first envisioned it, this speech does the complete opposite. In fact, Boccanfuso explains that feminism came to Hirschmann's life almost as a necessity and a revelation which she ended up fully embracing (Boccanfuso, 2021). Regardless, Fogg's speech is critical, and some may even call it 'radical', because it runs directly counter to the status quo at the time, even though she came from within the institutions.

This first *Femmes pour l'Europe* colloquium continued with Enrica Varese's explanation of the status of women in the European Commission, which, it should be said, has little to do with this topic. Varese expounded

37 Ibid, 114.

38 *La participation des femmes à la construction européenne*. Speech by Ursula Hirschmann and Jacqueline de Groote. Archives of the European Union in Florence. European Movement collection. Reference: ME-2418, p. 141. (Available in the annexe to this study, 102)

at length³⁹ about the feminist claims precisely from a feminist perspective. She stressed the need for a European directive that protected equal conditions, opportunities and remuneration between men and women, ESCE but she also asked Europe to address the structural causes of inequality like educating girls and boys in different values and the need for a maternity leave that covers 100% of the salary.

Therefore, the first *Femmes pour l'Europe* colloquium was not modest in its critiques of the European institutions at the time. In fact, it actually spoke about the European Community as an 'old, dusty, sluggish' institution. It was clear that the *Femmes pour l'Europe* members were already fed up with how the process of European construction had ensued, and they were convinced that an in-depth reform, a complete democratisation of the institutions, was needed.

The event concluded with the speech that is the most germane to this study. It was delivered jointly by Jacqueline de Groot and Ursula Hirschmann Spinelli to close the two-day conference. The speech was a statement of intentions, an outline of their strategy and priorities. They started by noting that women were already mobilised nationally, but that this mobilisation also had to be encouraged on the European level, because from then on Europe would be the new political arena where essential decisions—including those affecting women—would be taken. They answered the questions 'Where do we want to be present?' and 'Where do we want to focus our efforts?' as follows:

In order for women to actively participate in the construction of Europe, they have to be present in all areas promoting it and in all of its decision-making bodies. At the same time, we have to continue our reflection and investigation so that the women who reach decision-making posts can work effectively. Nonetheless, for the past thirty years European policy has been made in Community institutions, in the professional organisations and trade unions that lobby it and internationally in the political movements that struggle for European unification. With only a handful of exceptions, women have been excluded from this decision-

39 *La situation des femmes dans la CES; bilan et perspectives*. Archives of the European Union in Florence. European Movement collection. Reference: ME-2418, 120.

*making. To determine our work, in order to act effectively, we have to understand the mechanisms of all these different bodies and decide on the most useful strategy to achieve our objectives.*⁴⁰

After that, Hirschmann and de Groote began to outline how it would be apposite for women to try to influence all the EC's institutions, from the European Council to the Commission, the Parliament, the Economic and Social Committee and the European Court of Justice. 'Nothing but custom is keeping women from being commissioners', they stated, calling for the start of a campaign to combat this discrimination, with their sights set on the formation of the upcoming 1977 Commission. 'We still have a year and half', they said. Nor did they forget the call to create an office in the European Commission of 'information, documentation and studies' that dealt with 'female aspects' of all the European Community's relevant problems. This clarifies the connection between this claim and Fausta Deshormes's subsequent work at the helm of the Commission's Women's Information Service, as well as Jaqueline Nonon at the helm of the Bureau for Problems Concerning Women's Work.

They were particularly harsh about the European Parliament. The presence of women was 'ridiculously insignificant', they said:

We have already expressed our position in favour of a Parliament elected by direct universal suffrage. Nonetheless, our demand is not enough; we have to present our contribution to the preparations for these elections, which will obviously not be easy to organise. We propose creating an ad-hoc group which can perform a variety of tasks regarding the upcoming electoral campaigns: primarily ensuring that the preparations for these elections are not hindered and that the practical obstacles do not serve as a pretext for aborting the project; drawing women's attention to the importance of these elections; and encouraging women to participate as both voters and candidates. To do so, the ad-hoc group should serve as a lobby and logistical support. The group could support women

⁴⁰ *La participation des femmes à la construction européenne*. Speech by Ursula Hirschmann and Jacqueline de Groote. Archives of the European Union in Florence. European Movement collection. Reference: ME-2418, 141. (Available in the annexe to this study, 101)

*candidates in the different national parties and provide them with the information they are often lacking. In fact, male candidates are usually presented by groups, which usually then prepare and organise the work for them. The majority of women are more isolated.*⁴¹

They even proposed studying the different national election laws in order to provide practical tips to the women who wanted to run in the European elections in each country. In fact, Hirschmann and de Groot's analysis of the needs of the European institutions of their day and the project of European construction from the gender perspective is truly profound, cross-cutting and impressive. They next invited the association of European women jurists to adopt the claim for women to join the European Court of Justice so that it would be taken into account the next time the judges were renewed. They also asked for a quota for women in European administrations: 'We prefer to ask that the Commission set a quota of women for each level. Fifty percent would be expected, because women are 50% of the population. However, at first we would be willing to accept 20%',⁴² they said, admitting that this demand was 'not very ambitious'.

To achieve this goal, *Femmes pour l'Europe* offered itself as 'support' to the women employees of the EC institutions. 'We want to become a lobby that sways public opinion, women's movements, trade unions, political parties and the authorities in charge of the EC institutions', they declared. Immediately thereafter, they addressed one of the most important topics: the relationship between *Femmes pour l'Europe* and the European movements, as well as the women's divisions of the European political parties:

The group aims to maintain an attitude of open collaboration: we will support European organisations and join them every time their

41 *La participation des femmes à la construction européenne*. Speech by Ursula Hirschmann and Jacqueline de Groot. Archives of the European Union in Florence. European Movement collection. Reference: ME-2418, 141. (Available in the annexe to this study, 102).

42 *La participation des femmes à la construction européenne*. Speech by Ursula Hirschmann and Jacqueline de Groot. Archives of the European Union in Florence. European Movement collection. Reference: ME-2418, 141. (Available in the Annexe to this study, 101).

*positions and proposals seek to accelerate and democratise European construction. We will reserve the right to criticise them vocally if they are overly timid or lack dynamic imagination.*⁴³

There is yet another final reflection that closed the speech and shows that the group was starting off with fears and what we would call ‘impostor syndrome’ today. Ursula Hirschmann had first and foremost been an activist; she had helped to distribute, inform about and disseminate the Ventotene Manifesto and had made a major contribution to creating the Union of European Federalists. Jacqueline de Grootte was a powerful intellectual with dozens of published articles under her belt. Yet not only did they have fears, but they also questioned their worth: ‘We are more than prepared to take on these tasks, but taking the positions we are asserting? Should we begin by informing and training ourselves? Isn’t it better to start with what we know, house-to-house, our neighbourhood, our community, before embarking for the unknown lands of Europe?’⁴⁴

But they answered this question themselves: ‘The information can be found and learned’, and this was not sufficient reason to not act. It could not be the ‘pretext for those who want us eternally in an inferior state, nor those who want to avoid confronting political problems’.⁴⁵

*We are somewhat late compared to the men who have be in charge of Europe for 25 years, but we cannot let ourselves be carried away by fear. We will only achieve it if we have the courage to fight on all fronts at the same time. Women will be capable of being commissioners, MEPs and senior functionaries when they have conquered the possibility of being them.*⁴⁶

They also knew that not only were their fears their own worst enemy

43 Ibid, 101.

44 *La participation des femmes à la construction européenne*. Speech by Ursula Hirschmann and Jacqueline de Grootte. Archives of the European Union in Florence. European Movement collection. Reference: ME-2418, 141. (Available in the Annexe to this study, 102).

45 Ibid.

46 Ibid.

but that men would put up resistance from their situation of power and control. *Femmes pour l'Europe* was determined to 'act in European politics' despite the 'more or less overtly stated male resistance' and their 'own timorousness'.

*It is time we understand that we cannot wait for our emancipation from men. The different feminist actions are beginning to shake up their power and force them to be increasingly heedful of our demands.*⁴⁷

The contemporary relevance of that manifesto is striking and shows that *Femmes pour l'Europe* was keenly aware of the long road that feminism and gender equality had ahead of it in Europe. Until that time, women had been kept outside the project of European construction, and they had every intention of changing that and influencing it from both the inside and the outside. Hirschmann and de Groot's speech seems like the first of many of the initiatives that came later, driven from within the Commission, like Fausta Deshormes's newsletter and the initiatives that Jacqueline Nonon promoted from her committee. But among their intentions, we can also glimpse the desire to take the European Women's Lobby to all the areas concerning women within the EC's structures, politics and decision-making.

3.1 FROM TALK TO ACTION

After the first colloquium and the letter to Tindemans, the group undertook another protest on 18 December 1975, when it called a demonstration along with trade unions in front of the meeting of the Council of Ministers of Social Affairs. Therefore, they were willing not only to lobby for institutional policy but also to take to the streets and cry out and make themselves heard, even if their interlocutors were not fully receptive. The demonstration also showed their ability to coordinate with other organisations, both trade unions and women's or men's organisations:

⁴⁷ Ibid.

*The group managed to bring together many movements and associations, which joined—with many male colleagues—with banners and signs greet the ministers when they entered the room. The president welcomed a delegation of five of us, and we were able to tell him our general demands. It was the first time European women's opinions on a directive on equal treatment for all workers could finally be heard at the highest level of the EC. The delegation stressed the urgent need to organise the effective implementation of the right and guarantees of appeal. It advocated the adoption of additional provisions on equality in social security and education.*⁴⁸

They were thus congratulating themselves for having achieved their 'first goal': 'to be recognised as interlocutors'. Now all they needed was 'to be taken into account'.

This testimony is particularly interesting because viewed in retrospect, it is surprising that a group of intellectual women, including European functionaries, would demonstrate before a meeting of European Community ministers. But as stated above, the testimony makes it clear that *Femmes pour l'Europe* did not only want to be a group of women who met periodically to talk politics; instead, they intended to take their place, to 'publicly' demonstrate that women participated in EC policy just like men, said the announcement of the demonstration, quoted below. As Boccanfuso confessed to the author of this study, sometimes the lack of an in-depth analysis of *Femmes pour l'Europe* has led it to be defined as a group of 'women, of European functionaries', and this testimony contributes to redefining it beyond that framework, showing that they openly confronted the institutions on different fronts.

The success of this demonstration was not a spontaneous coincidence. *Femmes pour l'Europe* had previously called it and raised awareness, which can also be documented in the Archives of the European Union in Florence, which directly refers to the importance of mobilising around this

⁴⁸ *La participation des femmes à la construction européenne*. Speech by Ursula Hirschmann and Jacqueline de Groot. Archives of the European Union in Florence. European Movement collection. Reference: ME-2418, 141.

European directive for actual equality between male and female workers, which had to be negotiated in the European Council:

On 18 December, the Council of Ministers of the European Community will issue its opinion on an issue of prime importance for the social progress of our society—the principle of equal treatment for male and female workers. We believe that both you and the organisation to which you belong are interested, as we are, in ensuring that this event does not occur in silence, especially because several essential points of the directive have been left to be resolved at the meeting on 18 December.⁴⁹

With this introduction, the group wrote a missive to all the organisations and individuals that might support their cause, inviting them to sign the press release they were going to issue on 17 December prior to the meeting, which they would later send to the permanent representations of all the ministries involved. It also invited them to join the 18 December demonstration in front of the Charlemagne building at number 170 Rue de la Loi in Brussels. ‘Posters should be made in the EC’s different languages. We can provide the materials needed. Copies of the signed declaration in the six languages will be distributed’, the missive concludes.

The communique they published for the meeting also demonstrates a clearly political assessment of the directive being debated, the desire to point to those in charge of it and in-depth knowledge of the case in Europe and the member states. They knew the practical impact of the policies being forged in Brussels, and one of their objectives was for women around Europe to also become aware of it. But they also refused to settle for what was on the table. The fact that the EEC had the intention of creating a European law to guarantee equal treatment between male and female workers ‘should be the point of departure, not the culmination, within a democratic society worthy of this name’, the call for participation said. In the text, they also mentioned the individual countries that were not enacting policies coherent with this European initiative, like Denmark and the Netherlands, and they deemed it ‘inconceivable’ that ‘recognition

⁴⁹ *Appel au personnel*. Archives of the European Union in Florence. European Movement collection. Reference: ME-2418, 101.

of the right to non-discrimination' is still being debated.

Beyond a general directive, we must also call for the elimination of all discrimination, especially the most serious kinds in employment matters, such as:

- *in education, where girls and boys are conditioned to accept inequality in their adult lives;*
- *in social security, where equal obligations do not correspond to equal rights; it is the claim for everyone's right to work, both men and women, the right to be treated as a human being, not as a factor of production or reproduction, the right to exercise a professional activity that is not hindered in any way because one is a man or woman, father or mother. Here is where the real problems of the directive on the principle of equal treatment lie, if it is approved. It is only a point of departure.⁵⁰*

As a whole, they framed it within a time when the European Economic Community was 'about to add its contribution to the set of resolutions and ideas meant to celebrate International Women's Year'. This is why they demanded that it 'signal the end of the subordination of the elementary principles of social justice to what are called economic contingencies'.

This communique was signed by 31 different groups, from the Italian Social-Democratic party (PSDI) and its counterparts in Denmark, France and Greece to groups like Women Overseas for Equality and the *Mouvement contre le racisme, l'antisémitisme et la Xénophobie*. The people who signed it individually include Ursula Hirschmann Spinelli, followed by the Belgian socialist politician Piet Vermeylen, senator Cécile Goor and Jacqueline de Groot.

We can thus get an idea of the group's scope, impact and aspirations. Their aim was clear and their demands firm. Their autonomy, ultimately because they were a lobby and not part of any political party, kept them from fear of criticising the individual positions of European governments or demanding more. *Femmes pour l'Europe* did not settle for a minimal directive to make Europe look good for International Women's Year but

⁵⁰ *Appel au personnel*. Archives of the European Union in Florence. European Movement collection. Reference: ME-2418, 101.

instead demanded real change.

These first two lobbying initiatives served as the impetus for the second colloquium called for 11 February 1976, where they addressed the group's line of action regarding the European Parliament elections, 'the actions to take in the short and middle term' and ways to collaborate with other women and other women's groups in other countries.

But only a few members participated in the second meeting. Ursula Hirschmann had fallen ill, and the group had not managed to carve a role for itself as an interlocutor with the European institutions, as it had meant to. The outcome of that second gathering was the creation of a coordination group with Jacqueline de Grootte at the helm that was charged with defining the group's 'identity and mission' and creating a basic programme of action.

Despite de Grootte's attempts to launch it, *Femmes pour l'Europe* ended up having a very brief life, at least under this name. Ursula Hirschmann's sudden illness also signalled the death knell of the group (Boccanfuso, 2021), which was unable to forge ahead under the impetus of Jacqueline de Grootte or Fausta Deshormes. *Femmes pour l'Europe* disappeared. There are no further documents of the group's meetings or activities after 1977, nor does it appear as a participant in the meetings of the women's chapter of the European Movement after then. However, its last contribution was the book cited at the beginning of this chapter, published in 1979 in the main European languages of the time.

This book was a huge research undertaking; it fortunately left written proof of all the group's political concerns and gives us an idea of the depth of its political and intellectual activity until the end. It also corroborates *Femmes pour l'Europe's* success. It managed to get a Foreign Ministry (of Belgium) to publish a 200-page book, with an introduction by the minister no less, a major milestone if we bear in mind that one of this group's first protests had been vociferous criticism of the Belgian prime minister. Furthermore, its introduction was by none other than Altiero Spinelli.

3.2 THE SEED THAT SURVIVED URSULA HIRSCHMANN

Nonetheless, it is hard to believe that a group would die just like that, once the European elections were held. Actually, though, it seems that the idea of *Femmes pour l'Europe* transformed. The desire to organise a women's pro-European group to influence the EC institutions remained alive and well among its members. From her role within the European Commission, Fausta Deshormes la Valle clearly understood that some type of 'umbrella'⁵¹ women's organisation had to be created in order to maintain a coherent dialogue with the EC's executive branch. Among her documents in the European Commission, this intention could clearly be seen back in 1975, when she was laying the groundwork for her newsletter, *Femmes d'Europe*. Even though this was not achieved at that time, her efforts lasted years and the network of contacts she wove with this newsletter, coupled with the research conducted by her department in the European Commission, ended up culminating in the European Women's Lobby (EWL), whose driving forces included Jacqueline de Groot and Jacqueline Nonon. This is where Silvana Boccanfuso finds the thread connecting the two organisations.

Silvana Boccanfuso introduces the idea that *Femmes pour l'Europe* was the embryo of the EWL as a hypothesis in her book about Ursula Hirschmann, but she found no written proof of this during her research (Boccanfuso, 2021, 215). However, this is clearly acknowledged by the EWL's first coordinator, Jacqueline de Groot, in the lobby's founding documents conserved in the Ursula Hirschmann collection in the archive in Florence:

The other origin of the project dates back to 1974: the group Femmes pour l'Europe created by Ursula Hirschmann-Spinelli. We should remember the role played by Ursula Spinelli, who died in Rome on 8 January 1991 after a life wholly devoted to the construction of a

51 *Information des femmes: Correspondance entre la DG X - Information et les bureaux de presse et d'information de Bonn, Berlin, Bruxelles, Copenhague et Paris concernant les actions en faveur des femmes et des rencontres avec des organisations/associations féminines.* Archives of the European Commission in Brussels. Reference: BAC 196/199113.

*European federation and to the cause of women. The illness that had been besieging her since 1975 prevented her from bringing her project to complete fruition, but we can consider the European Women's Lobby the contemporary version of Femmes pour l'Europe.*⁵²

Therefore, the desire to maintain an 'umbrella' organisation, using the word Deshormes often used, so that the women of Europe could influence European policies came from the group of women that Ursula Hirschmann had managed to mobilise in the 1970s. However, the political intensity and the antifascist, profoundly federalist and progressive drive gleaned from the manifestos and texts that survive from *Femmes pour l'Europe* were lost in the transition. Hirschmann was pro-European, antifascist and a diehard leftist who saw Europe as the political arena where all these ideals could be fulfilled. As she herself acknowledged, feminism was a concern—if it could be described in that way—that she discovered in the last stage of her life. And if she spearheaded it in her last years of political activism, it was always a part—a necessary one, but ultimately just a part—of her political efforts as a European federalist and antifascist. Once Ursula Hirschmann disassociated from *Femmes pour l'Europe* and the women around it and the women who had coalesced around the desire to organise to influence European institutions continued without her, the meaning of the organisation was somehow stripped of that pro-European and intensely politicised soul that was so crucial in Ventotene.

Once Hirschmann removed herself from this struggle, the ones left at the helm shared goals but seemed to have different priorities. Jacqueline de Groote was primarily a feminist activist, who would continue her work through writing, but her personal agenda was always primarily feminism and the desire for women to influence the new EC institutions. Fausta Deshormes la Valle and Jacqueline Nonon were functionaries in the EC institutions and did not have such an ideologically profound and critical view of the EC architecture that was being built, but their agendas also prioritised women's participation and equality. Therefore, as we work forward in time towards the creation of the European Women's Lobby and leave *Femmes pour l'Europe* behind, that critical discourse of the EC

⁵² Documents on the creation of the European Women's Lobby and the first minutes from meetings signed by Jacqueline de Groote. Fausta Deshormes La Valle collection. Reference: FDLV 0024, 324.

project, that reference to a European Community that was already ‘ill’ that we found in the first public written manifestations from the group led by Ursula Hirschmann, disappears.

4. The European Women's Lobby

Women now have yet another instrument to ensure that their voices are heard in Europe. The Constituent Assembly of the European Women's Lobby was held on 21 and 22 September, marking an essential milestone in the work carried out by many European women and women's associations over the last few years.⁵³

This is how the newsletter *Women of Europe* (or *Femmes d'Europe* in its French version) announced the official creation of the European Women's Lobby (EWL) in its twelfth issue. Fausta Deshormes la Valle, the author of this newsletter from the European Commission, and of the magazine associated with it, had been trying to set up this organisation for years, but she did not manage to do so until the 1990s, as proven by the preparatory documents for the creation of the first issue of this newsletter and the magazine. The creation of this organisation was 'pursued tenaciously' not only by her but also by other women who had been associated with *Femmes pour l'Europe* and other women's organisations in Brussels and around Europe. However, thanks to Deshormes La Valle, the European Commission played an essential role in creating the European Women's Lobby. Ultimately, the European Commission's Women's Information Service had provided the project with 'constant support and encouragement'. It was the perfect time. As we shall see below,⁵⁴ Deshormes had been working for years to make connections with women's organisations around Europe and promote the creation of umbrella organisations in each European country to facilitate communication. Furthermore, it was a time when there was a resurgence of NGOs. 'On the eve of the major changes occurring with the 1992 deadline, the more responsible and dynamic NGOs are wondering about the role they can play in achieving the 1992 objective of ensuring that the

⁵³ *Women of Europe*. Newsletter. September/October 90 N/12. European Women's Lobby. Archives of European Integration. University of Pittsburgh. Retrieved on 15 May 2023 from <http://aei.pitt.edu/id/eprint/34627>

⁵⁴ See the chapter on Fausta Deshormes La Valle, 55.

European citizens they represent can deal with the challenges and take advantage of the opportunities,⁵⁵ Deshormes la Valle said.

Obviously, this 1992 deadline she mentioned was the signing of the Maastricht Treaty, a fundamental milestone in the history of European construction and integration, given that it laid the groundwork for the European Union as we know it today, paved the way for the single currency and set the roadmap for the biggest European enlargement in history. Of course, citizens organised themselves around this historical milestone in order to influence it and ensure that their interests were taken into account, and women were there with them, or at least this is what Fausta Deshormes emphasised in her personal column in the newsletter she edited.

Of course, the women's organisations (I am in a good position to know this) did not wait until now to act as intermediaries for the citizens of Europe, offering the institutions a dialogue with the aim of informing them of the needs and aspirations of the people they represent. Without this constant, stimulating presence, the equal opportunity policy would not be what it is today, and we would not have the same number of women in the European Parliament, nor the progress in the debate in our societies that we have now. I am convinced of this.⁵⁶

Thus, the Italian journalist was claiming that the founding of the European Women's Lobby did not mean that women had not played a role in influencing European policies until then. Quite the opposite. As we have seen with *Femmes pour l'Europe* and the 1979 European elections, women had already lobbied intensely before the 1990s, but there had not been an association this size in terms of the number of associations and members involved that the lobby would have from now on. It is also interesting to see how she cites herself as proof of her claims, that is, how she claims her role in this undertaking.

55 *Women of Europe*. Newsletter. September/October 90 N/12. European Women's Lobby. Archives of European Integration. University of Pittsburgh. Retrieved on 15 May 2023 from <http://aei.pitt.edu/id/eprint/34627>

56 Ibid.

In short, she makes it clear that the European Women's Lobby was founded not so much bottom-up, from society as a way to reach the European institutions, but top-down, the outcome of both Fausta Deshormes La Valle's individual interest and that of other women associated with European institutions or politics. The women who were part of the EC 'bubble', like Fausta Deshormes La Valle, Jacqueline de Groote and Jacqueline Nonon, had spent years pushing the existing women's organisations to band together into a larger organisation with the goal of influencing the European institutions. De Groote took over the group's organisational reins, but Nonon brought invaluable knowledge of how and why to lobby in Brussels. Jacqueline Nonon, a senior functionary in the EC whose profile is discussed in further detail below, was the author of a handbook or guide on how to lobby published the same year the EWL was founded, which is still thoroughly up-to-date and sketches a comprehensive picture of lobbying in Brussels parallel to European construction.

Lobbying is a technique based on institutional mechanisms. It has to be used judiciously. Everyone adapts their purpose to their objectives and own culture. Hence the first obligation: to know how it works. [...] The main players are the Community institutions. Lobbying consists of playing a game with three partners: the European Commission, Council and Parliament. (Nonon & Clamen, 1991, 31)

Following this logic, we can state that the European Commission itself pushed to create the European Women's Lobby. In fact, it was its prime funder and still is today. This is at the very least an unusual process that is not very common in the dynamics of social organisations and should be taken into account in order to understand its tasks and priorities. 'Women's organisations have to be convinced to work together', Jacqueline de Groote said in an interview for a special issue commemorating the organisation's tenth anniversary (European Women's Lobby, 2001, 9).

On the one hand, this can be interpreted as proof that the European Union, its impacts, debates and political aspirations had not yet permeated the societies in the majority of European Community member countries

enough to naturally spark the drive to create an organisation of this type. On the other hand, it could be argued that ultimately the European Community was a relatively new project for an organisation of this type to have been founded. Yet at the same time, it is important to recall that it was not a priority of the European ‘powers’. That is, creating a women’s organisation to empower them before the institutions and give them a channel for communicating was not an initiative of the president of the European Commission, the European Parliament or the ministers of Social Affairs. Instead, the women within this bubble, most of them in the lower echelons of an extensive hierarchy, were the ones who wielded all the tools available to them to build it. The European Commission did indeed provide the resources, but ultimately it was because Fausta Deshormes La Valle was there, because she led a tiny team that aimed to inform European women and work towards gender equality in Europe.

At the same time, understanding and highlighting that its founding was directly promoted by women who were already somehow part of the EC dynamics also helps us to grasp a fundamental issue: *Femmes pour l’Europe* was an organisation of white, upper-class women with privileged educations, just like the people in the institutions at that time.

4.1 THE REASON FOR A LOBBY

The idea of organising women around the European Community to influence it and to use this powerful institutional structure to work towards gender equality had germinated in *Femmes pour l’Europe*. However, *Femmes pour l’Europe* had not managed to develop fully, perhaps because it had not forged the connections among national associations that had proven indispensable the lobby’s formation, or perhaps because it never actually became a lobby itself. But some of its members, like Fausta Deshormes and Jacqueline de Groote, decided to revisit the project and take the steps needed to find an effective way for women to have an influential voice in the European Community’s political processes. ‘We identified forty women from different countries and activity sectors and we met three times’, Jacqueline de Groote said in the issue commemorating the lobby’s tenth anniversary (European Women’s Lobby, 2001, 9).

Jacqueline de Grootte herself wrote an article in 1992 about the founding and characteristics of the European Women's Lobby in the journal *Women's Studies International Forum* (De Grootte, 1992). In it, she explains that the organisation was wholly funded by the European Commission and that they received an annual subsidy in order to 'make women's voices heard in Europe and ensure its democratic functioning'. In that same article, De Grootte, the Belgian activist, concurs with Fausta Deshormes in highlighting that the founding of the EWL is 'the culmination of many years of work by many individual women and organisations'. She further states that the decision to create the lobby was taken in 1987 at a conference in London spearheaded by Fausta Deshormes La Valle, but that it was not actually created until three years later because the organisations in the twelve member states had to be brought into alignment. De Grootte also stresses the momentum for volunteer organisations and the fact that 'the European Community is a new society in process. It is essential for women to be able to have a say in how they want this democratic society to protect individual rights and stress solidarity'.

In 2000, this organisation celebrated its tenth anniversary with the publication of a special commemorative report which took stock of it one decade on. This document contains testimonials of the women they call the 'founding sisters' of the lobby, including Fausta Deshormes la Valle and Jacqueline de Grootte. Here, the Italian journalist acknowledges that after creating the Women's Information Service, she saw that it was 'necessary' to create a group to 'coordinate women's associations across Europe' (Ibid, 8).

Deshormes talks about the creation of this 'forum' as a 'dream' that she first shared with Jaqueline Nonon and Janine Lansier, president of the *Comitè Francès del Treball Femení*. The next step, she says, was to enlist Helga Thieme, president of the *Deutscher Frauenrat*, who suggested organising the first 'European conference of women's associations' in Bonn, after which colloquia started to be held regularly, first in Turin (1984) and later in The Hague (1985). Yet it was not until the 1987 London conference, when 120 women, the members of 85 organisations representing 50 million people, adopted the resolution to create a 'lobby open to all women's organisations interested in pressurising the European

and national institutions to ensure a better defence of the representation of women's interests' (ibid). Deshormes la Valle did not fail to mention the European Commission, which immediately lent its support.

One interesting point in this entire process is understanding why they had the courage to call themselves a 'lobby', bearing in mind the word's negative connotations both then and now. They could have chosen the terms 'forum', 'federation' or even 'confederation', but they chose 'lobby'. Jacqueline de Groot explains this choice with a particularly illustrative anecdote:

The choice of lobby as a name was met with some mistrust both inside and outside European institutions and by the women's organisations themselves. I recall a comment at a meeting in the office of president Delors: 'A lobby? That doesn't sound very good.' But paradoxically, we were pleased. Our interlocutor had understood that it was a new structure with the goal of being active and exerting influence. (European Women's Lobby, 2001, 9)

'The word "lobby" surprised many members of the European parliament's budget committee', explains Marie-Claude Vayssade, another founder of the organisation, the coordinator of the French chapter and former MEP. The choice of this name shows that its founders were fully aware of and had in-depth knowledge of how the institutions worked, but it also illustrates the nature of the organisation. Once again, it was an organisation built top-down, not bottom-up. Its connection with what is traditionally called 'civil society' is inverse. Its founders were people who were part of the institutions, that is, of the power that they ultimately wanted to influence. In other words, Fausta Deshormes did not strive to create a trade union of women workers in the institutions to claim their rights; what she wanted to do was influence the policies that the European institutions made for women. This is why it is not a forum or a federation but a lobby. It is a powerful statement of intentions.

We should not lose sight of the fact that *Femmes pour l'Europe*, spearheaded by Ursula Hirschmann, was also a lobby. They were women linked to the highest echelons of the European project who wanted to

create a women's association to influence the European institutions. The points in common between the two organisations are obvious, as Jacqueline de Grootte later acknowledged, even though no written document or interview has been found in which Fausta Deshormes La Valle recognises the connection between the two.

4.2 OBJECTIVES AND LINES OF ACTION

The European Women's Lobby was extremely ambitious. It aimed very high, had high hopes for the capacities that the European Union taking shape would have and set objectives we can place on the left side of the political ideological spectrum. Jacqueline de Grootte summarised it as follows in the *Women Studies International Forum* magazine article cited above:

The fight against poverty and social exclusion, violence against women, the problems of rural women, the specific problems of Black women and women from ethnic minorities, relations with women from Central and Eastern Europe, women and the media, women and development, women and the environment, and women and consumer matters (De Grootte, 1992, 49-50).

In practice, this translated into initiatives that sought to directly influence the EC institutions. For example, one of their first actions was to ask that social affairs be voted on by qualified majority in the European Council to prevent the vote from being blocked by a single country. They also asked the president of the European Commission, Ruud Lubbers, in writing to establish a Council of Ministers for Equal Opportunities to meet every six months. And they had their sights set on different European directives, especially those that affected employment, just like *Femmes pour l'Europe* before them. To achieve all of this, de Grootte says, their strategies included holding transnational campaigns, writing to the institutions involved and exerting direct pressure on politicians.

One of their main priorities as an organisation was to influence the drafting of the Treaty of Amsterdam. The accession of Sweden and

Finland in 1995 brought the organisation an infusion of new experience that helped them to influence the preparation of this treaty, which ended up including gender transversality in the EU's principles (Lafon, 2020).

As seen in the report commemorating one decade of the European Women's Lobby, the European Union enlargement was also one of their main concerns and an internal challenge for the organisation, given that it meant that it also had to expand eastward and include new women's organisations with a different political culture. Even though the organisation was funded by the European Commission and was supposed to represent the sensibilities of countries with very different cultures, since 1998 the European Women's Lobby had stood in favour of abolishing prostitution, despite the reluctance of the Netherlands and Germany. It was also vociferously in favour of abortion and control over fertility.

Today the European Women's Lobby is recognised as the leader of the women's NGOs in the European Union. Relations have been strengthened with the associations from the candidate countries. The members of the 1997 Intergovernmental Conference spoke about 'political harassment' from the lobby, which resulted in articles 2 and 3 on equality between men and women being included in the treaties. The European Women's Lobby fights to effectively defend women's rights and is taking an ever clearer stance in institutional affairs. I believe that its future lies in that direction. We women were excluded from direct democracy and had to struggle for our rights in representative democracy. In my opinion, civil dialogue is the best way to fight for equality. Gender equality entails an end to stereotypes and recognition of different personalities. It entails not uniformity but each man and each woman's right to fully develop their own personality. (EWL, 2001, 9)

With these words, and always in a much more activist and radical tone, Jacqueline de Groot clarified her vision for the organisation and claimed that including diversity was part of it. As the organisation explains in its brief summary available on its website, the creation of the European Women's Lobby was 'linked to the creation of a new kind of public space

at European level' and a new form of interaction between citizens and politicians. Even today, one of the organisation's main objectives is to act as a 'link' between women's organisations and the institutions.

One of the main milestones it achieved was securing the status of consultative body to the United Nations and the Social Council of the Council of Europe. Internally, the European Women's Lobby was organised around a general assembly made up of the delegates from the member organisations. Voting rights were established according to each organisation's representativeness (different branches in different member states, for example). Each European Union member state had the right to four delegates. The first president was Ana Vale from Portugal. And they made it possible for any organisation, 'local, national or European', that agreed with the lobby's objectives to request membership.

Today, the European Women's Lobby is still active and funded by the European Commission. It works on issues like violence against women, women's leadership and support for migrant women and women refugees. It also serves as an umbrella for other organisations and a source of resources for organisations seeking funding or opportunities in Europe. An analysis of the current role and impact of the European Women's Lobby in EU politics is not relevant to the topic and objective of this study, but it is interesting to note its scope today. While it began with more than 85 organisations, according to the testimonies of the authors and players cited above, the European Women's Lobby currently has 48 member associations, 31 national coordinating organisations and 17 European organisations which are also members. However, according to its website, it represents more than 2,000 organisations, given that its 48 members are all umbrellas for other organisations. Therefore, it remains a very broad, representative lobby whose members include the most prominent experts on gender matters from civil society and trade unions.

Tracing the history of these organisations has enabled us to repeatedly encounter the names of women who looked for a way to influence European construction in the second half of the twentieth century so that women would also play the role they deserved in it. Beginning with Ursula Hirschmann, after her we have often come upon the names of Fausta Deshormes la Valle, Jacqueline Nonon, Eliane Vogel-Polsky and

Jacqueline de Groot. All five of these women played a prominent if not essential role in the construction of the European Union as we know it today, but they have remained in the shadows of the more public, widely disseminated, better-known history.

It is worth noting that omitting women the likes of Simone Veil, Louise Weiss and Ada Rossi from this study, who are fairly well known today, was intentional. This study aims to trace the profiles that are still in the shadows and have not been recognised in the history of European construction. Therefore, the aim is not to detract from the importance of these personalities but to bring others to the fore. It is also important to note that there are other women not discussed in this study for reasons of space who are also clearly worth studying and at least mentioning. For this reason, we shall devote a small section to mentioning these other possible founding mothers of Europe who are also in the shadows still.

5. The founders in the shadows

5.1 URSULA HIRSCHMANN AND FEMMES POUR L'EUROPE

Ursula Hirschmann is one of the women we have spoken about the most thus far, not only because she is one of the five chosen for this study as a 'founding mother of Europe' but also because she was the driving force behind the founding of *Femmes pour l'Europe*, the group that has served as the thread we have traced to reach this point in the research. Her figure was inevitably more public because she was the 'wife of', first of the socialist philosopher Eugenio Colorni and after that of one of the founding fathers of Europe, Altiero Spinelli. But Ursula Hirschmann herself was one of the founding mothers of Europe, regardless of who her husbands may have been.

She was born into a Jewish intellectual family in Berlin in 1913. Her brother was the renowned economist Albert Otto Hirschmann. The European Commission website now recognises her as one of the 'women pioneers' of Europe and briefly describes her as one of the authors of the Ventotene Manifesto, a text regarded as the forerunner of European federalism that she and Ernesto Rossi, Eugenio Colorni and Altiero Spinelli drafted in 1941.

So why does Boccanfuso call Hirschmann the 'European soul' of the Manifesto? 'Colorni was the philosopher, Spinelli the politician and Rossi the activist, but Hirschmann was the true European soul', the Italian historian explained in a conversation with the author of this study. Boccanfuso studied the figure of Hirschmann for years, curiously on the suggestion of Altiero Spinelli's biographer, Piero S.Graglia, who after studying the life and contribution of this founding father of Europe and forerunner of European federalism clearly understood that Hirschmann also deserved to be studied in depth and, more importantly, recognised.

Over time, Ursula has suffered from this kind of marginalisation by a male-leaning historiography that has only viewed her as the wife of

*two of the most brilliant and profound minds that emerged from the antifascist struggle—Eugenio Colorni and Altiero Spinelli—without examining her own specificities, characteristics and originality.*⁵⁷

Hirschmann began studying philology in Berlin, and in 1932 she joined the youth chapter of the democratic socialist party to fight Nazism. During her university years, she met Eugenio Colorni, at that time an Italian lecturer at the University of Marburg. But soon thereafter, in 1933, she had to go into exile in Paris with her brother, which forced her to abandon her studies and start working as a translator or secretary to earn a living. In Paris, she contacted and mingled with groups of exiled Germans and discovered the ideas of European federalism in the underground publications issued by the *Neu Beginnen* group, which had begun to talk about the idea of a European federation to resolve the conflicts on the Old Continent. As Boccanfuso writes, Hirschmann also briefly dabbled in communist thinking in that early period after becoming disillusioned with the young socialists, but she soon removed herself from those circles. In Paris, her brother Albert Otto Hirschmann increasingly disassociated himself with politics to instead focus on his academic career. Ursula tried to resume her studies in Paris.

During that period, Ursula Hirschmann was still very young and searching for her political identity. She had become disenchanted with both communism and socialism and felt disillusioned in general. Searching for a guide, she had begun to exchange letters with Eugenio Colorni, who had been working as a philosophy professor at the University of Trieste since 1933. He finally invited her to the city in 1935, a key visit that ended with them marrying at the end of the year. ‘The conversations with him were a liberation for me at that moment of cultural decrepitude of base socialism and dialectical materiality, which had filled my needs for culture and political action until then’, Hirschmann describes in her book *Noi senzapatria*, which Boccanfuso cites in her biography (Boccanfuso, 2021, 79).

She moved to Trieste, where she soon enrolled at the university to

⁵⁷ Introduction by Piero S. Graglia, professor of the History of European Integration at the University of Milan and biographer of Altiero Spinelli. (Boccanfuso, 2019, 17)

complete her German philology studies that had been thwarted by her exile. In her biography of Hirschmann, Boccanfuso stresses how the young German woman did not want to conform to the role of housewife, bearing in mind Colorni's bourgeois, wealthy background, so she quickly resumed her studies and looked for a job to make a living.

Therefore, even during her period as a married woman in Trieste, Ursula Hirschmann put neither her political activism nor her intellectual vitality on hold. But problems soon arose. Both she and her husband were Jews and antifascists, and Colorni was detained in 1938, sent to prison in Varese and later transferred to Ventotene island in 1939. Hirschmann moved to the island and conceived two more daughters. However, their personal relationship suffered and Colorni and Hirschmann began to become emotionally distant.

Taking a brief hiatus in the chronological account of Ursula Hirschmann's life, it is important to stress here that at just 25 years old, the young woman from Berlin had already lived in Berlin, Paris, Trieste, and Milan, all before she became the wife of a political prisoner. The young Ursula Hirschmann had firsthand experience of anti-Semitic and political persecution in different parts of Europe, including Germany and Italy, where Nazism and fascism were threatening a peace that the Old Continent had only just secured. Hence, she was quite clear about the idea of Europe she wanted to promote and decided to fight for a federal, antifascist Europe as the antidote to her own personal experiences.

But now let us go back to Ventotene island, where Colorni encountered his fellow detainees Ernesto Rossi and Altiero Spinelli. Ursula Hirschmann, who also began her intellectual friendship with Spinelli on Ventotene, was not detained and could come and go from the island. This is also one of her crucial contributions: the dissemination of the Manifesto. 'Ursula was the one who carried the text of the manifesto off the island, transcribed on cigarette paper and hidden inside her coat', says Boccanfuso. We should recall that beyond the symbolism that has arisen around Ventotene, the text that Hirschmann carried away and disseminated is in some ways considered the first political scheme of the European federation project. However, even though there are no documents proving her intellectual contribution to the document, Hirschmann was much more than just a

courier. She had a very clear idea of Europe and knew that organisation was needed to begin working towards it.

Ursula was the one who ‘wove’, using Boccanfuso’s word, the first key connections that enabled the Union of European Federalists to be organised. The article that Spinelli wrote in the book *Femmes pour l’Europe* published by the Belgian Foreign Ministry tells about his wife’s ‘political life’ after she had suffered from the stroke⁵⁸ that would truncate her *Femmes pour l’Europe* project. When he had met her, Hirschmann was still married to Colorni, was ‘only 26 years old’ but ‘had already lived and matured an intense personal and political life’.

Altiero Spinelli wrote that ‘there are only a handful of us’ who recall the events on Ventotene, when Rossi and Colorni proposed writing that first draft of the federal Europe. ‘Ursula was in this small group that agreed to be considered visionary. Her tendency to translate any ideal commitment into practical action immediately led her to perceive the originality of our position’, states Spinelli, who always included Ursula Hirschmann as part of this group.

In our little group, Ursula was the only one who could go to Italy. She was this Italian conspiracy group’s first courier. She carried what thus far has been called the Ventotene Manifesto. She generated a debate around this manifesto, sought and found affiliates, wrote it, printed it, distributed it. [...] Thanks to her work, after Mussolini’s fall, a dozen days after the political prisoners were released on 27 August 1943, the underground conference was able to be held in Milan, which allowed the Union of European Federalists to be founded.⁵⁹

Milan was the last time that Ursula Hirschmann saw Eugenio Colorni, the father of her children, in person. Colorni had been transferred from Ventotene to Melfi and then decided to stay in Rome to continue his

58 Spinelli, A. (1979) Women for Europe. In *European Women About Europe. Views and Ideas Amassed by the ‘Women for Europe’ Group (1979)*. Ministry of Foreign Affairs, External Trade and Cooperation in Development, 7.

59 Spinelli, A. (1979) Women for Europe. In *European Women About Europe. Views and Ideas Amassed by the ‘Women for Europe’ Group (1979)*. Ministry of Foreign Affairs, External Trade and Cooperation in Development, 7.

struggle in the resistance. He was ultimately murdered in Rome in 1944. After this meeting, Hirschmann and Spinelli left for Geneva, where the leaders of the federalist movement decided to move their political action. Spinelli also acknowledges Hirschmann's role in making contacts in Switzerland, even though she stood out more in Paris, where they went in 1945 after getting married. In the second half of the 1940s, European federalist ideas were gaining momentum in France, so they decided to move there under the pseudonym of Mr and Mrs Antonelli.

Spinelli recounts how when they arrived in Paris, nobody really seemed willing to answer the call of the Union of European Federalists, but the secretary of the French Committee of National Liberation lent them a hand, and Ursula took over, convinced that they could be successful in that call. 'Ursula was calm, confident of her ability to gather people and organise, of her tenacity and old familiarity with Paris', Spinelli said, after stressing how the meeting was 'a resounding success' after Hirschmann took over the reins, made all the contacts and wrote the invitations. It became the first international federalist conference, with participants the stature of Albert Camus, George Orwell, Emmanuel Mounier, Henry Mumford and André Philippe.

Hirschmann had assigned herself a mission: to achieve a united, federal Europe. Her goal was not to be Spinelli's secretary or assistant. In her obituary published in *El País* newspaper on 11 January 1991,⁶⁰ when she died after a long illness, Ursula Hirschmann was called 'the missionary of united Europe'. And she did this while also fulfilling the duties she was traditionally assigned as a woman, that is, caring for her home and family. Spinelli himself acknowledges this heavy onus: 'Back in Italy, Ursula had to spend two or three years on the burdensome job of setting up the home and family life from scratch in miserable post-war Rome, while I tried to carve a place for myself in Italian politics that would enable me to lead the European battle'. Spinelli describes Hirschmann in that stage as his 'main assistant', not personally but politically.

With the end of the war, the driving forces behind European federalism stepped back and focused on reshaping their ideas, but it was a period when

60 Ursula Hirschmann, pionera del Movimiento Federalista europeo. (1991) *El País*. Retrieved on 15 April 2023 from https://elpais.com/diario/1991/01/11/agenda/663548401_850215.html

European and pro-European movements were blossoming and these ideas were beginning to take on different political guises. Nonetheless, there is silence about Ursula Hirschmann's political activity throughout the entire period when Spinelli was actively involved in politics in Italy. According to Boccanfuso, Hirschmann was a 'constant' in Spinelli's political work during those years, but she undertook no initiative beyond carrying out the organisational tasks in the Rome chapter of the Union of European Federalists.

In his article, Spinelli also laments that when he was appointed commissioner of the European Economic Community in 1970, it was the first time that 'I did not have her efficient collaboration'. But this gave Hirschmann room to explore her own more individual political concerns and embrace feminism as part of her federalist and antifascist ideals. This is how she began to ponder the need to create a movement of pro-European women. Ursula Hirschmann was sixty years old at the time.

Her intellectual and political curiosity was suspended, and she felt attracted by the explosion of the feminist movement, whose importance in the development of democracy she understood. She believed that by getting deeply involved in politics, this movement could prompt and promote in-depth reforms of society. She wanted to take advantage of the opportunity to be part of the great political creation of European construction that was underway. She poured her usual energy into persuading and gathering women around her. And this is how Femmes pour l'Europe was born.⁶¹

But Spinelli said no more, nor can we find more information about this group in the aforementioned obituary in *El País* newspaper. Curiously, the obituary says that Hirschmann founded the 'Women for Europe' movement in Brussels in 1975, but it provides no further details. It is important to recall that *Femmes pour l'Europe* had an extremely brief existence because its driving force, Hirschmann, had a stroke that kept her

61 Spinelli, A. (1979) *Women for Europe*. In *European Women About Europe. Views and Ideas Amassed by the 'Women for Europe' Group (1979)*. Ministry of Foreign Affairs, External Trade and Cooperation in Development, 10.

away from the group. Nonetheless, as we have examined in this study, the handful of activities it did engage in and the profiles it managed to attract had enough of an impact for an obituary in a non-Italian newspaper like *El País* to mention her.

According to Silvana Boccanfuso, *Femmes pour l'Europe* was the pinnacle of Ursula Hirschmann's career as a political activist and intellectual (Boccanfuso, 2021, 40):

Femmes pour l'Europe was founded in response to a period of individual and collective crisis. From the beginning, it was the attempt by a woman committed to European federalism to give a new shape and renew the operative vigour of an idea—a united Europe—that had not only lost momentum and credibility over the years but also ran the risk of disappearing entirely under the weight of the dire events that had occurred during that period.

In fact, Spinelli's article, which we have examined in depth in this section, describes the political life of the 'founder of *Femmes pour l'Europe*' and explains her entire background as an activist, as well as the importance of the role Hirschmann played in the founding of the Union of European Federalists, with *Femmes pour l'Europe* as its logical evolution. Ursula Hirschmann had spent much of her life as a political activist surrounded by men who earned plenty of recognition, but she also shared struggles and political concerns with women like Ada Rossi, another founder of the Union of European Federalists who is regarded by some as another 'founding mother' of Europe. Ursula Hirschmann also shared political concerns with the Italian writer and politician Natalia Ginzburg and exchanged letters with her.

In a 1975 letter to Ginzburg that Boccanfuso cites in her biography, Hirschmann acknowledges that feminism was a 'recent discovery' for her. Indeed, in the *Femmes pour l'Europe* documents we can get a clearer sense of Hirschmann's ideas about both the role of women in society and politics and her vision of Europe. As we have seen in the texts cited above from this women's lobby, the idea of Europe they promoted was a social Europe with a strong democratic, socially committed component. It was

a much more ambitious idea of European Union than what had been accomplished thus far, yet it can be considered modern in many regards.

Nonetheless, Hirschmann was a pioneer when she created a women's lobby around the European institutions, and who knows how far she would have gone if her stroke had not cut short this personal project. After that episode, she remained in the background of politics for some time, but she never completely extricated herself from it. She always remained associated with the Union of European Federalists and was the secretary of this movement's Rome chapter until the day she died. In 1986, she joined the Transnational Radical Party led by the MEP Marco Pannella. Ursula Hirschmann died on 8 January 1991 at the age of 78.

It is at the very least curious that we know so little about such an essential figure, whom Spinelli talks about with such admiration. Proof of this is the difficulty Silvana Boccanfuso encountered finding documentation. As this historian says, it was not until she found Hirschmann's sister that she was able to access a huge trove of Hirschmann's personal documents, which enabled her to grasp the intellectual depth of the woman she was profiling. Until then, only Altiero Spinelli's journals referred not only to the bond between them but also to Hirschmann's importance in the founding of both the Union of European Federalists (1943) and *Femmes pour l'Europe*.

5.2 FAUSTA DESHORMES LA VALLE AND THE WOMEN'S INFORMATION SERVICE

Another woman we have continuously run into throughout this story since the organisation *Femmes pour l'Europe* is Fausta Deshormes La Valle. Fortunately, there is a great deal of information on her as one of the women with the most traceable feminist activity both inside and outside European institutions. Nonetheless, she is, of course, little known outside a small academic circle interested in issues related to women and European integration. She is called 'the lobbyist within the network' by a study promoted by the Italian Senate entitled *Donne que hanno fatto*

l'Europa [The Women Who Have Made Europe].⁶²

Deshormes in some ways took over from Ursula Hirschmann when the latter's stroke kept her away from the *Femmes pour l'Europe* project. However, Deshormes had already been tirelessly working from inside the institutions to ensure that women played a role in the process of European construction and that this process took women into account. In fact, much of the documentation from this study was obtained thanks to the indefatigable efforts of this Italian journalist originally from Naples who promoted the creation of the European Documentation Centres and left an extensive archive that the Archives of the European Union in Florence is digitalising on their own initiative and on demand.

Fausta Deshormes La Valle was born in Naples in 1927. Her father, Renato La Valle, was a journalist, and so was her brother, Raniero La Valle, who was the director of the newspaper in the Catholic tradition, *Avvenire*. Her mother was also a writer. Fausta studied law, but she soon began to contribute to magazines while at the university. She was the newsroom secretary of the monthly medical publication *Avvenire* between 1964 and 1951, and after that she was a writer at the newspaper *Federació dels Universitats Catòlics d'Itàlia* (1951-1954). When she finished, she became affiliated with the European Youth Campaign, a youth organisation associated with the European Movement that promoted young people's awareness of European issues (Di Nonno, 2019-2021, 7).

In 1958, she became the editor-in-chief of this organisation's magazine, *Giovane Europa*. There she met Philippe Deshormes, secretary of the movement for Belgium, whom she married. She then left Italy, first for France and later for Brussels. Deshormes gained Belgian citizenship after she married.

Her association with pro-European ideals was clear even before she began her career. Once she arrived in Brussels, Jean Moreau, who had formerly been associated with the European Movement and was then responsible for the Information Service of the Commission of the European Economic Community, hired her as an expert in 1961, after

62 *Donne que hanno fatto l'Europa* (2017) Senato de la Republica. Retrieved on 25 MY 2023 from https://www.senato.it/application/xmanager/projects/leg19/file/repository/relazioni/libreria/novita/XVII/Volume_Donne_Europa_REV9_web.pdf

working with her sporadically for some time. There, she promoted education and university research in Europe. This was the period when she spearheaded the creation of European Union research dissemination centres at different universities in the EC member countries. She also created the European Communities Prize to reward the most significant doctoral theses in Europe, and she forged connections between university organisations and European authorities. She is also recognised as one of the founders of the European Youth Forum, which was founded after the European Youth conference held in 1970.

All of these steps are essential in understanding her subsequent role at the Women's Information Service. Later, the vice-president of the European Commission, Varlo Scarascia Mugnozza, who was ultimately in charge of the EC executive's information policies, tapped her to create the Women's Information Service, where she effected a turning point in the European Economic Community's work around women's rights. It was a moment of excitement in European feminism, with the second wave of the movement, which not only led to an increase in organised women's groups but also began to exert pressure on European institutions. Ultimately, Fausta Deshormes La Valle was a journalist who began her career in civil society organisations and showed a special awareness of the importance of information and the role that these organisations could play.

*Providing information in women's public opinion circles meets an increasing demand inasmuch as it increases women's degree of participation in our countries' political, economic and social life.*⁶³

She was obsessed with information in both directions: she wanted women to be informed of what was happening in Europe and what was of interest to them, and she wanted the European institutions to be informed of what women in the Community were doing. This is why she replicated the work

63 Deshormes La Valle, F. (1979) *The 'Women's Press and Organisations' department of the EEC Commission*. In: *European Women about European Europe. Views and ideas Amassed by the 'Women for Europe' Group* (1979). Ministry of Foreign Affairs, External Trade and Cooperation in Development. Brussels, 46.

she had done at the Youth Service at the Women's Information Service.

This can clearly be seen when she managed to create and lead what she calls in her documents a small 'cell', that is, an office, within the Information Service of the European Economic Community whose goal was to inform women and make connections with European women's associations in the 1970s. According to the documents available for consultation in the Archives of the European Commission in Brussels, Deshormes promoted, organised and disseminated the survey that the Commission carried out with European women, a very in-depth undertaking that yielded a fairly revealing picture of women's concerns, worries and problems in the European Economic Community's different member states. After this survey, prompted in part by the United Nations's commemoration of International Women's Year, two units within the Community executive devoted to women were created: the Women's Information Service under the reins of Deshormes and the Bureau for Problems Concerning Women's Work that Jacqueline Nonon led.

But the data from the survey were not kept cloistered within the walls of the European Commission. Fausta Deshormes La Valle spearheaded a conference-colloquium with women from the new European Community countries to assess the results and set a new road map.

The goal of the 'Women and the European Community' colloquium was to assess the results of the opinion survey conducted among the Community's new countries in 1975 on the occasion of International Women's Year. Since the debate, the Commission has adopted specific proposals, one of which was the creation of a unit within the Directorate General of Information aimed at maintaining constant dialogue with women's organisations, informing them and providing them with documentation chiefly on all these aspects of European integration and assisting them in exchanges of information between organisations and countries.⁶⁴

64 Deshormes La Valle, F. (1979) *The 'Women's Press and Organisations' department of the EEC Commission*. In: *European Women about European Europe. Views and ideas Amassed by the 'Women for Europe' Group* (1979). Ministry of Foreign Affairs, External Trade and Cooperation in Development. Brussels, 46.

Why did Fausta Deshormes consider information so important? She herself answered this question in the article cited above. Deshormes considered information ‘an institutional duty’ and believed that the European Community’s founding treaties stated this. For this reason, she believed it was fundamental and necessary to have ‘a European information action aimed at raising Europeans’ awareness ‘the establishment of a broader and deeper community among peoples’.⁶⁵

Therefore, we could say that Fausta Deshormes La Valle’s pro-European vocation was as deep and unswerving as her professional vocation. This is one of the points that connects her with Ursula Hirschmann. They were both diehard pro-Europeans with a clear desire to influence the process of European integration, not individually but by guaranteeing that women had a collective voice and that they literally had a vote. Deshormes recognised that everything changed after the 1970s thanks to the explosion of what she called the ‘neo-feminist movement’ and the ‘obligatory’ commemoration of International Women’s Year.

*Within this reality in motion, the creation of this service aimed at European information for women was an innovation and was perceived as such within the circles it targeted: it was an innovation because the Commission had recognised the specificity of women’s public opinion and considered them partners within a collaborative information policy.*⁶⁶

How did all these intentions translate into practice? Fausta Deshormes La Valle worked intensely to make connections. She got in touch with the leading feminist organisations in the new countries that had joined the European Economic Community and asked them in writing if they would be interested in making connections with the European Commission. She first asked them if they wanted to create an umbrella organisation across

65 Deshormes La Valle, F. (1979) *The ‘Women’s Press and Organisations’ department of the EEC Commission*. In: *European Women about European Europe. Views and ideas Amassed by the ‘Women for Europe’ Group* (1979). Ministry of Foreign Affairs, External Trade and Cooperation in Development. Brussels, 46.

66 Ibid, 48.

Europe to maintain this centralised dialogue, and later whether they would be interested in receiving and contributing to a periodic newsletter that would contain information that was important to the women of the European Economic Community. In reality, it would be ‘reciprocal’ information: the newsletter letter would offer information on European policies related to women, and the organisations could also provide information on their country or the creation of new organisations.

This newsletter, just like the magazine of the same name, was created in 1977 and survived until 1992, shortly after Fausta Deshormes La Valle retired. And this is another point she shares with Ursula Hirschmann: neither of their personal projects managed to survive after they were no longer directly associated with them. The annexe to this study contains several issues of the newsletter, which have been digitalised.⁶⁷

Beyond the work entailed in writing, translating and distributing this newsletter around Europe with the scant resources available in de Fausta Deshormes’s small ‘cell’, this department also managed to organise different colloquia, talks and conferences. It spearheaded the creation of two prizes, the Nike Prize for European women in television, and the *Femmes d’Europe* (FdE) Prize, which chose a woman with a European vocation from each of the countries in the Community. Ursula Hirschmann, for example, was nominated for it. Special thematic contents were also published from the cell that Fausta Deshormes led, especially with a view to the 1979 European elections. As explained in the article we have cited several times, these magazines had a total print run of five million copies, which was equivalent to around 20 million readers.

The direct European Parliament elections will be a very important moment within the life of the Community because they are bringing a qualitative change: women, as European citizens, will have the right to say what type of Europe they want; women, who represent 52% of the electorate, should participate as they see fit, as electors, as candidates, as promoters of electoral campaigns. That is, as main players, main players in a historical event in which they should participate from the

67 Examples of the newsletter and magazine are available on page 113 of the annexe.

*very beginning.*⁶⁸

Described in this way, Fausta Deshormes La Valle's career in the European institutions seems like a progressive, relatively linear career earned through her effort and personal skills, as well as her personal connections. But the fact is that Deshormes La Valle was given very few resources, had precarious contracts and even had to battle for recognition that she had the right to earn a pension:

*When Moreau asked me to work with him, I did not have a salaried job. I had a contract as an expert that paid peanuts. But at first I had two afternoons free because I had very small children, so this became the beginning of the administrative invention of this division. I joined in early January 1961 but was not part of the organisational chart until 1973. That is, in the meantime, I had 21 contracts as an expert, auxiliary, interim and later an auxiliary again.*⁶⁹

We know that Deshormes La Valle was a combative woman convinced about fighting for her rights because in the same interview she explains that after she managed to be officially hired in 1973, the European Commission refused to recognise her right to a pension for the years she had previously worked for the institution. Deshormes submitted an appeal to the Court of Justice, even though she already knew about another appeal that had failed, setting a precedent for workers in the same situation: 'After me, I think there were other experts or auxiliaries who got involved in this story, but I don't know if more appeals were filed. I actually think that for many people [...] it was automatic after my parada'. And she was 'proud' not only of this battle but of many others that she fought in the Commission.⁷⁰

From this story, not only can we infer her combative, determined

68 Ibid, 50.

69 Histoire interne de la Commission européenne 1958-1973. *Entretien avec Fausta Deshormes La Valle. Par Michel Dumoulin et Julie Cailleau* à Bruxelles le 2 février 2004. Archives of the European Union in Florence. Reference: INT726, 7.

70 Ibid, 8.

character, but we also have proof that even though the European Commission had a division to address women's affairs, any work done was achieved thanks to Fausta Deshormes La Valle's effort, insistence and vocation, not because this agenda was the institutions' political priority. Despite her role at the head of the small women's cell in the information service, she did her job with only a few other helpers, scraping together funds wherever she could without any stability or many guarantees, which also explains why the newsletter and the magazine *FdE* did not last far beyond her retirement:

We had lots of young women—Jacqueline [Lastenouse] was the first—with expert contracts renewed longer than was possible who were paid with activity budgets. I also did this when I later directed the Women's Information Service. I only had a secretary in the organisation and an increasing volume of work and demands. So I paid a typist from my business budget who worked secretly. I called her my submarine. How were we going to get anything done otherwise?⁷¹

It was not that Deshormes agreed with this; she asked for more and was aware of the discrimination entailed in working under these conditions. A secretary and a 'submarine' is the 'status' that the Commission gave to women's affairs at the time. 'I clearly felt the difference in the way I was treated compared to my male colleagues', she confessed. 'I was looked upon positively when I dealt with universities and even better when I dealt with the cabinet [of commissioner Mugnozza], but I was looked upon with much less interest and consideration when I discussed women. They saw it as a silly hobby.'⁷²

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² Histoire interne de la Commission européenne 1958-1973. *Entretien avec Fausta Deshormes La Valle. Par Michel Dumoulin et Julie Cailleau à Bruxelles le 2 février 2004.* Archives of the European Union in Florence, Reference: INT726, 8.

The Women's Information Service

But this 'silly' hobby created a lot of work and left a legacy that is both prolific and invaluable. The goal of the bimonthly magazine and monthly newsletter *Femmes d'Europe* (*FdE*) was to contribute to shaping women's opinion. However, it wanted to do so not via opinion articles but via news related to 'Community policies, initiatives, projects, achievements and programmes' about the issues that concerned women the most: equal opportunity, employment, health, European citizenship, the environment, consumer affairs, development, the jurisprudence of the Court of Justice of the European Union and news about the countries that belonged to the European Economic Community. It also focused on 'women's activities and movements in favour of European construction and equal opportunities, [and] the names of women who achieved exceptional positions in political, economic and social life'. According to Fausta Deshormes La Valle, that was 'the originality of *FdE*'.⁷³

In fact, both the magazine and the newsletter involved extensive information research and dissemination. It had a bibliography, literary recommendations, analyses and a section on international organisations. Initially, its target audience was primarily the heads of women's associations and editors in the women's press, but the demand kept increasing with subscriptions from national parliaments, ministries, journalists from the written and oral press, professors, trade unions, universities, libraries, and local organisations. It is difficult to get an idea of the real reach of this newsletter. Upon publication of the fiftieth issue, Fausta Deshormes La Valle calculated that in its first ten years from 1977 to 1987, it had published around 9,000 news stories on around forty different topics and had been sent to 6,000 different addresses. It was around a four-page newsletter published in English and French.

'It's important to stress that the materials published seemed to be a trove for university researchers, who kept coming back to us; bibliographies often cite *FdE*,' Fausta Deshormes La Valle celebrated in the report cited above. In the same document, the head of this service criticised the fact that the director general of the Commission imposed inconvenient

⁷³ Deshormes La Valle, F. *Memòria de Femmes d'Europe*. University of Florence Archive. Fausta Deshormes La Valle collection. Reference: FDLV-0064.

publication deadlines on them so it was often printed late, and that the directorate general did not defray the costs of the versions in different languages.

*Femmes d'Europe [...] is designed for a limited but increasingly varied audience, and its contents are multiplied because they are often leaders (in the broadest sense, such as the parliamentarians and many professors that are part of it). It provides a human image of the Community, a likeable image of the Commission which becomes a calling card in interested circles.*⁷⁴

While this bimonthly magazine seemed like a huge undertaking for just three people, that is not all that the service that Fausta Deshormes La Valle directed did. It also maintained constant contacts with the press, organised events, screened films, held colloquia and published supplements. All told, issues of the bimonthly magazine *Femmes d'Europe* and 29 monographs under the title *Cahiers à Femmes d'Europe* on the topics cited above were published in one decade. The monographic topics included 'Community law and women', 'Women and research' and 'Women and music'. As mentioned above, the office also organised two prizes, the Nike Prize for TV programmes that addressed issues related to equal opportunities, and the *Femme d'Europe (FdE)* Prize for a woman who had made a unique contribution on behalf of Europe.

All these endeavours petered out shortly after Fausta Deshormes La Valle retired in 1992, yet the proof of her success and positive impact is when different associations contacted Deshormes after the magazine disappeared to express their disappointment or even to offer to continue the project on private initiative.

'It was really sad news to find out that *Women in Europe* will not be published anymore and that you have decided to cease your cooperation with the Communities of Brussels. On behalf of hundreds of our members who were also interested in receiving the magazine and being informed, we wanted to express our xxx for the wonderful work done thus far, as well

⁷⁴ Deshormes La Valle, F. *Memòria de Femmes d'Europe*. University of Florence Archive. Fausta Deshormes La Valle collection. Reference: FDLV-0064.

as the hope that *Women in Europe* can be published once again with your support. Do the authorities think that women have now been informed and motivated? We do not think so,⁷⁵ she was told in a letter written by the Hellenic Federation of Business and Professional Women in 1985.

In fact, even though she had announced her intention to retire before 1990, she remained at the helm of the service until 1992, when the Commission led by Jacques Delors finally decided to close the department. Fausta Deshormes La Valle herself wrote a letter to the president of the Commission as a last-ditch attempt to stop it:

*For fifteen years, Femmes d'Europe has been one of the instruments of the Women's Information Service, the channel that has enabled it to disseminate not only information on Community policies in equal opportunity matters but also all Community policies that could affect citizens, and women in particular. On these issues, 'Women of Europe' and the Women's Information Service have managed to mobilise women's associations and conduct real promotion and awareness-raising campaigns.*⁷⁶

Deshormes also claimed that halting that undertaking would 'seriously harm' citizens' 'awareness' and 'would be perceived by women as a sign of the European institutions' abandonment of this important part of the European electorate'.⁷⁷ But Fausta Deshormes La Valle did not manage to stop it, and all the work her service did with its scant resources ground to a halt.

Beyond this huge task from the tiny Women's Information Service of the European Commission, Fausta Deshormes La Valle had already proven her initiative in the Department of Youth and Universities, where she promoted what would later become the European Documentation

75 Letter from the Hellenic Federation of Business and Professional Women to Fausta Deshormes La Valle. (1985). Archives of the European Union in Florence. Fausta Deshormes La Valle Collection. Reference: FDLV 0012, 64.

76 Letter from Fausta Deshormes La Valle to Jacques Delors. (1992). Archives of the European Union in Florence. Fausta Deshormes La Valle Collection. Reference FDLV 0012, 20.

77 Ibid.

Centres, which began to operate in 1963, back when she was working with Jean Moreau. These centres collected information on Europe and were designed not only to stimulate academic research into European integration and European affairs but also to facilitate research for an academic demand that was just beginning to take off. Her ties with Italy enabled her to begin the first pilot project with the Sapienza Università di Roma, but it rapidly spread to the other European Economic Community member countries.

Yet her legacy does not end with the European Commission. Fausta Deshormes La Valle was fundamental in the subsequent creation of the European Women's Lobby (EWL), as discussed above. Not only her efforts as a weaver of alliances among women's organisations around Europe but also the colloquia and conferences that she herself organised led to the birth of this organisation, which was ultimately the continuation of her friend Ursula Hirschmann's group *Femmes pour l'Europe*.

This tireless worker on behalf of women's equality in Europe died in Rome in 2013 at the age of 86. This means that she worked for the European Commission until she was 65 years old. As Maria Pia di Nonno noted, at the farewell ceremony held for her in Brussels on 14 April 2013 on the occasion of her passing, Jacqueline de Groot recalled: 'Fausta changed the life of women in Europe, and she certainly changed mine' (Di Nonno, 2019-2021, 53).

In fact, Deshormes La Valle is one of the keys to this study and the entryway for anyone interested in researching women and European construction. It has been possible to trace other essential figures via the hundreds of documents she collected thanks to her keen awareness of the importance of information. The Historical Archives of the European Union in Florence held a small homage for her in 2021⁷⁸ that recognised her as one of the 'founding mothers of Europe', because all the documents that the European Commission's information service that she led generated and compiled have been conserved thanks to the collection of *Femmes d'Europe* archives. 'These collections have enabled us to study the role

⁷⁸ *Women of Europe: In memory of Fausta Deshormes La Valle*. (2021) European University Institute. Retrieved on 10 June 2023 from <https://www.eui.eu/news-hub?id=women-of-europe-in-memory-of-fausta-deshormes-la-valle>

of women in the development of European cooperation and integration since the end of the Second World War', said the announcement of the seminar held to commemorate the figure of Fausta Deshormes.

5.3 JACQUELINE NONON AND THE OFFICE FOR WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT

There is another name that has come up repeatedly and has unfortunately received even less attention and historical recognition than the two previous women have. It is Jacqueline Nonon, who was in charge of the European Commission's Office for Women's Employment, or the 'Bureau for Problems Concerning Women's Work' if we translate the name more literally, parallel to when Fausta Deshormes La Valle was in charge of the Women's Information Service.

Jacqueline Nonon was born in Laval (Mayenne, France) in 1927, the daughter of a family that came from the border region of Lorraine next to Germany, Belgium and Luxembourg. She studied languages (Spanish and English) and literature, but her first professional experience was in business and trade. Even though she had a good job in the private sector in France, her pro-European vocation soon led her to seek work in Brussels. 'I worked with engineers, but I was in the sales department. I basically reached Brussels without knowing quite what I could do there. What I wanted to do was help build Europe and—as a native of eastern France—get away from the wars and build a Europe of our dreams', she confessed.⁷⁹

Nonon knew that she wanted to work in the European institutions, and at first she was willing to do anything. Thanks to a brief experience at the Sorbonne library, she found her first job in 1958 in the Directorate General of Social Affairs in Brussels, where she was put in charge of organising the department's documentation. After two years, she landed her first administrative job, which would become the first rung in her 35-year career as a European functionary. She retired the same year that the magazine *Femmes d'Europe* published its last issue, shortly after the

⁷⁹ Histoire interne de la Commission européenne 1973-1986. *Entretien avec Jacqueline Nonon par Sylvain Schirmann à Paris le 25 octobre 2010*. Archives of the European Union in Florence. Reference: INT226, 2.

European Women's Lobby was founded in 1992.

After that, she was moved to a department of what were called 'difficult jobs', which was in charge of sectors like agriculture, as well as women's employment. She found her place there, because 'nobody wanted to be in charge' of women's employment, although she was particularly interested in it.

I had gained experience in the company CSE, where I had had issues with human resources; I was told that if I joined a union I could just go home. I complained because the typists and secretaries in the technical departments had university degrees in physics and chemistry, because obviously they had to know what they were writing about and they hired women who were university graduates. But I told them, 'Listen, you can't accept this. You should be executives, you have a university degree!' I had successfully fought for myself, and we women had to fight for equality.⁸⁰

In this interview, Nonon mentioned how before she reached the European Commission, before the rise of feminism in the late 1960s, the European institutions had paid no attention to women's problems or to working towards gender equality. She described herself as a woman of 'contacts and networks' who had interacted with trade unions and women's associations, so she ultimately ended up running an office within the European Commission created exclusively to work towards employment equality between men and women.

As explained above, in 1976 the European directive on professional equality was adopted, and Jacqueline Nonon played an extremely active role in it. Not only did she instigate and pressurise the institutions to promote this directive, she also launched an expert group to advise the EC executive on what the directive should be like and how it should be implemented, and she did extensive internal lobbying until she achieved it. To get data supporting the need for the European Union to have this law, she managed to spearhead a survey on women's equality by seeking

⁸⁰ Ibid, 6.

funding outside the Commission, because the EC executive would not give her a budget for it. The survey was launched by five magazines in five different countries in their respective languages: *Amica* (Italy), *Margriet* (Netherlands), *Brigitte* (Germany), *Het Rijk der Vrouw* (Belgium) and *Femmes d'aujourd'hui* (France and Belgium). It reached a total of 11 million readers and therefore had a considerable impact. The survey was used to expose gender inequality in the labour market and revealed the need for a law that would guarantee an end to this inequality (Gubin, 2007, 116).

Just like Fausta Deshormes La Valle, Nonon worked with very few resources, 'a documentalist, a secretary and interns'. Nonetheless, she lobbied extensively within the institutions to ensure that this directive and others that came later were duly implemented.

I had to create networks. I'm a woman of contacts so I had to create networks with the trade unions and women's associations, and I soon found myself at the head of group that we called ad-hoc 'for women's equality', and this is how this law began, particularly the basic directive of 1975.⁸¹

She had been so active in promoting this agenda in Brussels that in 1978 the Prime Minister of France, Raymond Barre, offered her the post of National Delegate for the Status of Women. Nonon accepted, but it was not a good fit. 'Barre was not a feminist in any way; he had no idea what feminism was about', Nonon bemoaned. Barre had not earmarked resources for the department, and Nonon soon got frustrated. It closed after six months, and after another stint in Brussels she was appointed European Union delegate in France, where she would end her career.

Thus, she had a somewhat traditional life as a European functionary, but it was exceptional because very few women secured these posts at that time. In the interview with Nonon conserved in audio in the Archives of the European Union in Florence, she gives off an energy and a steadfast

81 Histoire interne de la Commission européenne 1973-1986 *Entretien avec Jacqueline Nonon par Sylvain Schirmann à Paris le 25 octobre 2010*. Archives of the European Union in Florence. Reference: INT226, 16.

conviction that Europe had to be constructed and that feminism had to be part of this process.

*I can unabashedly say that I was the driving force behind it [the Office for Women's Employment]. I had the idea and later I was in charge of implementing it because I'm an active person and I don't stop at the paperwork. I wrote some articles about lobbying because that was what it was about.*⁸²

Indeed, Jacqueline Nonon spent her whole life lobbying within the institutions to promote equality between men and women, a complicated task, which explains why later she wrote a book on lobbying in the European Union (Nonon et al., 1991). She recounts the birth of the European Women's Lobby in that book. The objective, she said, 'was to exert effective pressure over European and national institutions to defend women's interests'.

The winds of feminism have been blowing over Berlaymont [the name of the European Commission headquarters in Brussels] since the 1960s. It became the goal of trade union pressure so the Commission would resume the battle for salary equality and, more generally, employment equality. [...] After 1975, we ended up achieving a battery of European laws aimed at promoting women. Obviously it was not enough, but we tried to further them over the years. [...] Women have to remain watchful and never be complacent. Therefore, we have created a European lobby. After having dangled in limbo for ten years, this organisation was founded in 1990 (Nonon et al., 1991, 60-61).

But achieving this was not an individual accomplishment, as Nonon herself explained in her article in the book *Femmes pour l'Europe*.⁸³ Women in trade unions had been asking for a permanent interlocutor in

⁸² Ibid, 25.

⁸³ Nonon, J. (1979) *The 'Bureau for Problems Concerning Women's Work'*. In: *A European Women about Europe. Views and Ideas Amassed by the 'Women for Europe' Group*. Ministry of Foreign Affairs, External Trade and Cooperation in Development. Brussels, 134.

Brussels for years. Likewise, the European Parliament, and specifically the parliamentarian from Luxembourg Astrid Lulling, called for the creation of a Women's Office like the one in the United States. The commissioner for Social Affairs, the Irishman Patrick Hillery, heeded those demands. Even though it was not a Women's Office on par with its US role model, a 'specialised service' was created, Nonon wrote critically. 'For those who are not familiar with it, this is a type of administrative structure a level beneath the division, which is not statutory in nature and therefore can disappear from one day to the next if that's what the authorities wish', Nonon bemoaned.

But just like Fausta Deshormes La Valle's situation, despite its few resources or even guarantees of survival, the small office managed to forge ahead and do important work thanks to the conviction and vocation of the woman in charge of it. Jacqueline Nonon's real goal was for this office to 'cease having a reason to exist', that is, for equality between men and women to be achieved. 'In the middle and long term, the office was supposed to be an instrument that was a tangible expression of the commitments taken on by the member states in 1974 with the social action programme, which upheld equal opportunities for men and women in job hiring, professional training, promotion and working conditions, including salary', Nonon explained.

Once approval of the directive was assured, even though the member states trimmed it back to make it less ambitious than she wished, her fundamental job was to ensure the proper and complete implementation of the new European law, which was supposed to work towards achieving workplace equality between men and women. 'A directive does not mean victory', she reflected. The European Community member states had to implement the directive correctly, and to do so the necessary advice and legal and financial resources had to be guaranteed. This was one of the main remits of Jacqueline Nonon and her small office. But women also had to be aware and properly informed of their 'new rights' recognised by the European law. For that reason, another of Nonon's core jobs was to inform; hence she made the film *The Same Outlook, the Same Life*, 'which not only informed European women of the different means of action available to them, but also tried to combat preconceived ideas and

judgments about their options at work'.⁸⁴

Jacqueline Nonon's character and conviction in this job can be seen in the 1979 European elections, when she called for women to vote in favour of achieving equality and guaranteeing that they have the place they deserve.

*Direct elections for the European Parliament will be held in less than one year, and it is impossible to over-emphasise the imperative that European women take the place they deserve in society, especially at a time when the economic situation and rising unemployment are beginning to yield a discourse which claims that women are stealing jobs. Here once again, the office that the European Commission has launched can play a fundamental role. It should have the ability to track everything that is happening in the member countries and sound the alarm signal at the right time. This mini-department should conduct indispensable oversight for the women of Europe because the struggle will be long and fraught. Today more than ever, solidarity among women—whether or not they work—should be on the agenda.*⁸⁵

Jacqueline Nonon died on 21 February 2020. The French coordinator of the European Women's Lobby⁸⁶ remembers her as 'one of the figures of Europe', a woman who 'mattered a lot and was very active in European feminist and associative networks in the second half of the twentieth century'. This is certainly because not only was she part of *Femmes pour l'Europe*, the group spearheaded by Ursula Hirschmann, but she was also later associated with the European Women's Lobby from the very start. 'The first conversation about my dream of creating a European Women's Forum, as I tentatively called it, was with Jacqueline Nonon', Fausta Deshormes La Valle said (European Women's Lobby (EWL), 2001, 8).

84 Nonon, J. (1979) *The 'Bureau for Problems Concerning Women's Work'*. In: *European Women About Europe. Views and Ideas Amassed by the 'Women for Europe' Group*. Ministry of Foreign Affairs, External Trade and Cooperation in Development. Brussels, 134. , 140.

85 Ibid, 142.

86 Fouché, N. *Femmage a Jacqueline Nonon*. CLEF. Retrieved on 10 June 2023 from <https://www.clef-femmes.fr/2020/06/02/femmage-a-jacqueline-nonon-1927-2020/>

The fact that the European Union has a salary equality directive today is in part thanks to Jacqueline Nonon, who was heavily involved in negotiating, drafting, disseminating and implementing it around the European Union. But her job was both inside and outside the institutions. It is important to recall that one of the first activities promoted by the group founded by Ursula Hirschmann, *Femmes pour l'Europe*, to which Nonon belonged, was a demonstration before the gathering of ministers who were there to decide on the directive that Nonon had helped to draft. She was also one of the founders of the European Women's Lobby along with Fausta Deshormes La Valle. This demonstrates that the European institutions were not sufficient, because just like the French government, they did not let her do enough to advance towards effective equality between men and women.

The principle of equal pay between men and women is enshrined in article 119 of the Treaty of Rome. In the past 20 years, different EC directives have been adopted and the rulings of the Court of Justice of the EU have had a decisive influence on the fight against discrimination on the basis of sex. Progress in this area has benefited from the association with other European institutions, experts, associations and lobbies, such as the European Women's Lobby. Nonetheless, inequalities persist. The European governments' lack of political will has particularly translated into their reluctance to introduce the obligation of equality into the preamble and body of the Treaty of Amsterdam.⁸⁷

Jacqueline Nonon wrote this in 1998 in a magazine on training and work as a representative of the European Women's Lobby. Nonon never stopped fighting for salary equality between men and women both inside and outside the European institutions, and regardless of whether or not a directive on salary equality had been approved in Europe.

87 Nonon et al., (1998) *L'Europe, un atout pour les femmes?* In: European Commission. *Problèmes politiques et sociaux*, no. 804. Retrieved on 15 May 2023 from www.persee.fr/doc/forem_0759-6340_1998_num_64_1_2693_t1_0084_0000_12

5.4 ELIANE VOGEL-POLSKY AND ARTICLE 119

None of the women discussed in this study acted alone. They were all interlinked, and their contributions to the construction of the European Union should be viewed almost as a collective undertaking.

I contacted Jacqueline Nonon, who was in charge of what was called the 'Women's Office' at that time. But she made it very clear that she had no money and that the Commission was not willing to earmark even a penny to women... Still, she put me in touch with Huguette Defosse, who was the president of the International Women's Press Association and owner (with her husband) of the Belgian and French editions of Femmes d'Aujourd'hui.⁸⁸

Thus arose the idea of conducting a survey on the employment situation⁸⁹ of women to exert pressure to create a salary equality directive in the European Union. Eliane Vogel-Polsky, who was a scholar specialising in social law at the time, proposed this to Jacqueline Nonon, and the idea gelled so much that the European Commission supported it and the survey was published in five magazines around Europe.

In fact, the name Eliane Vogel-Polsky appears several times in Fausta Deshormes La Valle's many papers, not in direct exchanges but as an expert in the European laws needed to achieve salary equality between men and women. We could say that this survey on employment inequalities between men and women is the least of her contributions to European construction, and especially what is called the social Europe. Vogel-Polsky spent the core of her life seeking ways to guarantee that article 119 of the Treaty of Rome was actually fulfilled and that the member states were made to comply with it.

88 Direct testimonial by Eliane Vogel-Polsky to Eliane Gubin. In: Gubin, E. (2007) *Éliane Vogel-Polsky, Une femme de conviction*. Institute for the Equality of Women and Men, 46.

89 Some of the results of the survey published in magazines can be found in archive ME-2418 of the European Movement collection in the Archive of the European Union in Florence starting on page 12.

Each Member State shall during the first stage ensure and subsequently maintain the application of the principle that men and women should receive equal pay for equal work. For the purpose of this Article, 'pay' means the ordinary basic minimum wage or salary and any other consideration, whether in cash or in kind, which the worker receives, directly or indirectly, in respect of his employment from his employer.⁹⁰

This had been European law since 1958, but it was not yet even close to being a reality in the 1970s and is still not today. Eliane Vogel Polsky poured all her expertise into finding legal ways to obligate the member states to fulfil this principle and put an end to salary discrimination on the basis of gender once and for all.

Eliane Vogel Polsky was born in Ghent (Belgium) in 1926, the daughter of a Jewish family of Russian extraction who had moved to Belgium after the First World War. The family moved to Brussels in 1934, and Eliane Polsky (her name at the time) continued primary and secondary school there. Just like Ursula Hirschmann, she suffered from anti-Jewish persecution in the 1940s and had to hide in Liège with her family under a false identity. But after that episode was over, enrolled at the *Université Libre de Bruxelles* and joined the minority of women pursuing university degrees. She soon stood out in academia, graduated with honours and managed to gain admission into the Brussels Bar Association in 1950, a requirement to work as a lawyer. During this period, she met the fellow jurist Marie-Thérèse Cuvelliez, with whom she later shared the legal battle to ensure compliance with article 119. Both had been writing articles and texts for law journals since their university days.

We cannot forget that all of this was happening parallel to the negotiations and final approval of the Treaty of Rome, which was signed in 1957 and states in writing that women and men have the right to equal pay for equal work. Bearing this context and Vogel-Polsky's entire academic

⁹⁰ Excerpt from article 119 of the Treaty of Rome. Retrieved on 14 May 2023 from <http://www.ub.edu/ciudadania/hipertexto/europa/introduccion/art117.htm#:~:text=Art%C3%ADculo%20119&text=Cada%20Estado%20miembro%20garantizar%C3%A1%20durante,femeninos%20para%20un%20mismo%20trabajo.>

background in mind, it is easy to see her invaluable contribution to the struggle for salary equality among the women and men of Europe. As recounted by Eliane Gudin, the author of the biography of this prestigious scholar sponsored by the government of Belgium, Eliane Vogel-Polsky began to focus on feminism in the late 1960s, dovetailing with the second wave of feminism in France and associated with the May '68 protests. The Feminist Information Reflection Group (GRIF) was founded at that time, and Vogel-Polsky soon got involved in it as a member of the editorial board, although at that time she was convinced that her contribution to the feminist cause should be through law (Gubin, 2007, 65).

In 1952, she married André Vogel, another lawyer, and they had three children: Jean (1953), Laurent (1955) and Alain (1956). Becoming mother came very early in her career as a lawyer even further complicated things, bearing in mind that a woman lawyer faced a hard road at a time when there were very few of them. Nonetheless, Eliane Vogel-Polsky never stopped trying and never abandoned her scholarly interests. In 1955, the *Université Libre de Bruxelles* opened the *Institut du Travail* under the leadership of the jurist Madeleine Gevers-Dwelshauvers,⁹¹ and the young lawyer decided to further her academic training. She earned her doctorate in the sociology of work in 1958 with top honours and then entered the world of social law and the employment problems. After that, she began social law and graduated in 1963 with a specialisation in international social legislation. Finally, she was also in the first graduating class of the *Institut d'Études Européennes* (Institute for European Studies) at the University of Brussels, where she was able to specialise in European law and graduated, again with honours, in 1965. Thus, her academic career was extensive and impeccable, yet it is also essential to understand her subsequent essential contribution to what has been called social Europe. It is no coincidence that that *Université Libre de Bruxelles* remembers her as 'a mother of social Europe'.⁹²

91 Madeleine Dwelshauvers-Gevers (Ixelles 1897-1994) was a Belgian jurist and the first woman to occupy a university chair in Belgium. She was the first dean of the faculty and the first woman member of the administrative board of the *Université Libre de Bruxelles*.

92 Éliane Vogel-Polsky. *Une mère de l'Europe sociale. Université Libre de Bruxelles*. Retrieved on 15 May 2023 from <https://bib.ulb.be/fr/documents/digitheque/personalia/eliane-voegel-polsky>

As stated above, this entire body of expertise is essential in understanding her contribution to the struggle for salary equality between men and women in Europe. She was a lawyer, an expert in social law and a convinced feminist, the necessary combination that led her to focus on compliance with article 119 of the Treaty of Rome, even if the governments of the European Economic Community did not seem willing to do so.

One of the key junctures was the famous women's strike at the National Weapons Factory in Herstal in 1966. Vogel-Polsky held workshops for the country's trade unions and had suggested spreading the word about the importance of article 119 among women workers. One of the workers in the Herstal factory, Charlotte Hauglustaine, attended one of these seminars and pushed for the first major women's strike to protest for compliance with article 119, which halted the factory's production for three months.⁹³ The young Belgian lawyer was fascinated by the impact of the strike, which managed to raise women workers' salaries, although they did not achieve parity with their male colleagues. From then on, she became convinced that article 119 had to be brought before the European justice system to ensure compliance.

The young Eliane Vogel-Polsky began to search for cases to submit to the European Court of Justice, but it was not easy because the trade unions were afraid that it would hinder the negotiations that had started thanks to the protests that came in the wake of Herstal. Finally, she managed to find the first case, which involved a 19-year-old worker, Christiane Mertens, who had lost her job and was earning unemployment benefits far lower than any young man her age. Vogel-Polsky took the case to court in 1967, arguing that unemployment benefits were associated with salary and that they should therefore be protected under article 119. The young lawyer's goal was for the Belgian justice system to decide to refer a prejudicial question to the European justice system, but it did not happen, but she did manage to get the Belgian judge to state that there was no reason why Mertens should earn lower unemployment benefits than a man who had

93 Charlotte Hauglustaine's testimonial can be seen in this documentary about Eliane Vogel-Polsky: Hubert, A. (2019) *Eliane Vogel-Polsky*. Retrieved on 15 May 2023 from <https://vimeo.com/297136091>

performed the same job. After that, the Belgian government reformed the law so that unemployment benefits were proportional to the salary earned, which ultimately harmed women, who earned less. The case ended up becoming a bitter victory for the young lawyer's aspirations.

But she did not stop there. Vogel-Polsky soon found another case, which is now studied in European social law, the famous 'Defrenne vs Sabena'.⁹⁴ Gabrielle Defrenne was a stewardess with Belgium's flagship airline, Sabena, now Brussels Airlines. According to company policy, women were dismissed once they turned forty. However, their male colleagues could work until the age of 55. Sabena dismissed Defrenne in 1968, when she turned forty, and she decided to take the case to court, where Eliane Vogel-Polsky and Marie-Thérèse Cuvelliez defended her. The first attempt failed, and the second one almost did, but before the case was dismissed, the court decided to refer the prejudicial question to the European Court of Justice. Eight years after the first attempt, the ECJ ended up ruling in favour of the two women lawyers:

In fact, since Article 119 is mandatory in nature, the prohibition on discrimination between men and women applies not only to the action of public authorities but also extends to all agreements which are intended to regulate paid labour collectively, as well as to contracts between individuals. [...] The reply to the first question must therefore be that the principle of equal pay contained in Article 119 may be relied upon before the national courts and that these courts have a duty to ensure the protection of the rights which this provision vests in individuals, in particular as regards those types of discrimination arising directly from legislative provisions or collective labour agreements, as well as in cases in which men and women receive unequal pay for equal work which is carried out in the same establishment or service, whether private or

94 Court of Justice of the European Union (1976) *Judgment of the Court of 8 April 1976. Gabrielle Defrenne v Société anonyme belge de navigation aérienne Sabena. Reference for a preliminary ruling: Cour du travail de Bruxelles - Belgium. The principle that men and women should receive equal pay for equal work. Case 43-75*. Retrieved on 15 June 2023 from <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A61975CJ0043>

*public.*⁹⁵

That case signalled a turning point in Europe. Its impact was such that the governments of Ireland and the United Kingdom attended the trial in person to note down the ‘possible economic implications’ the decision may have. The court decided to set a date when the jurisprudence would become applicable. It was not retroactive but would only be applied to cases filed after the decision. Therefore, while this decision did not feel like a total victory, it can be considered the first stone laid in women’s struggle for employment equality in Europe.

But as mentioned above, this tireless lawyer and scholar did not stop there. She was aware that the fact that laws guaranteed salary equality in writing did not mean that this automatically translated into practice. That is why she lined up with Jacqueline Nonon in the European Commission to fight for a European directive on salary parity and ensure was implemented. To do so, she worked on disseminating scholarship and advised the Belgian government and the EC institutions.

Eliane Vogel-Polsky appears on the list of participants⁹⁶ of the first *Femmes pour l’Europe* colloquium held in November 1975, cited as a professor at the *Université Libre de Bruxelles* and an expert on women’s labour law. After the *Defrenne vs Sabena* case, Vogel-Polsky fought actively from both the legal front and academia to bring this women’s right to fruition. She focused on inequality in education, unequal opportunities, social roles dictated for women and the dearth of women in politics. She conducted a meticulous analysis of salary gaps and social law among European countries and left an extensive bibliography⁹⁷ on issues

95 Court of Justice of the European Union (1976) *Judgment of the Court of 8 April 1976. Gabrielle Defrenne v Société anonyme belge de navigation aérienne Sabena. Reference for a preliminary ruling: Cour du travail de Bruxelles - Belgium. The principle that men and women should receive equal pay for equal work. Case 43-75*, 181. Retrieved 15 June 2023 from <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A61975CJ0043>.

96 Agenda of the colloquium *La participació de les dones a la construcció europea* organised by *Femmes pour l’Europe*. ME Archives in the Archives of the European Union in Florence. Reference: ME-2418, 110.

97 List of Eliane Vogel-Polsky’s bibliography published by the ULB on the occasion of its tribute to her. Retrieved on 15 June 2021 from <https://e-legal.ulb.be/volume-n03/hommage-a-eliane-voegel-polsky/bibliographie-publications-d-eliane-voegel-polsky>

ranging from philosophical studies on salary inequalities to challenges for salary equality in Belgian legislation and gender inequality in professional training. She also conducted studies for the European Commission and the Council of Europe. But after years of commitment to this research, she realised that mindsets had to be changed and positive actions had to be undertaken in order to implement the solutions she proposed.

In the early 1980s, Vogel-Polsky got involved in the research group that studied how television presented women in society. The results of the sociological study were published in one of the monographs of the *Femmes d'Europe (FdE)*⁹⁸ magazine led by Fausta Deshormes La Valle. The conclusions were the seed of the Nike Prize for the European television programme that contributed to presenting a complete picture of women in society, one of the initiatives promoted from the small cell in the European Commission led by Deshormes La Valle.

Therefore, we can see how Vogel-Polsky's interests and feminist struggles expanded over the years as she detected new structural problems and new opportunities for action. In the 1980s, she began to take an interest in women's participation in power structures and took part in initiatives to promote it in both Belgium and Europe. In the 1990s, she got involved in the European expert group on Women in Decision-making as a representative of Belgium.⁹⁹ This group was briefly in the limelight at the Athens 1992 summit, where the former president of the European Parliament, Simone Weil, delivered a speech in favour of quotas in politics and critiqued the 'male chauvinism' she had suffered from while she served as the president of the Parliament.¹⁰⁰

Under this role as a 'national expert', Eliane Vogel-Polsky promoted and disseminated the need to achieve parity in representation and

98 *L'Europe pour les Femmes (1974)*. Annexe of the monograph of *Europe en bref*. Archives of the European Union in Florence. European Movement collection. Reference: ME-2418, 19.

99 *Les femmes dans la prise de décision.. Panorama d'activités dans le cadre du troisième programme d'action communautaire à moyen terme pour l'égalité des chances entre les femmes et les hommes (1991-1995) Le réseau européen d'expertes 'Les femmes dans la prise de décision'*. Archives of the European Union in Florence. Fausta Deshormes La Valle collection. Reference: FDLV 56, 498.

100 Weil. S. (1992). Intervention de Mme Simone Weil: Athènes - 2 novembre 1992. In *Projets féministes*, no. 2, April 1993. Les violences contre les femmes: Un droit des hommes, 185-189. Retrieved on 16 June 2023 from https://femenrev.persee.fr/doc/pfem_1019-5610_1993_num_2_1_894#pfem_1019-5610_1993_num_2_1_T1_0189_0000

powerful positions. She created the ‘Seminar on Equal Democracy’ at the *Université Libre de Bruxelles* and conducted a study on the legality of quotas on electoral lists for the Ministry of Equality and another study for the European Commission on the impact of the EC’s gender equality policy on women. She also proposed the creation of a ‘European Parity Observatory’ and a ‘European Institute of Political and Civil Education’ to ‘forge the culture of parity’ among European citizens.¹⁰¹

Vogel-Polsky was deeply involved in the struggle not only for equality but also for ‘parity’ between men and women. In the fields of law and social law, she undertook a debate on the limits and interpretations of the principle of equality in the European Union, such as with the issue of quotas and positive discrimination in job promotion cases.¹⁰² This debate was also part of the Treaty of Amsterdam, for which institutional feminism had lobbied intensely because it was supposed to advance social Europe.

‘*A civic Europe without its women citizens?*’ Vogel-Polsky asked in a 1996 opinion article in the French newspaper *Le Monde*¹⁰³ conserved in the Fausta Deshormes La Valle collection. Two decades after starting her struggle to get article 119 of the treaty of Rome implemented, it was still her obsession, the backbone of her struggle for gender equality, although it had become much more complex: she had begun to take a much more holistic vision. ‘Strange as it may seem, the Treaty of European Union does not guarantee the right to equality between women and men. Only salary equality appears, interpreted restrictively’, Vogel-Polsky criticised in *Le Monde*. This Belgian scholar clearly understood that it was no longer enough to fight for equal pay if the European Community was going to take ‘almost 80%’ of the legislative decisions that were going to affect European citizens, and if women only participated in this decision-

101 Ibid, 551-552.

102 In 1995, the Kalanke ruling from the Court of Justice of the European Union found in favour of a man who sued the German state of Bremen for discrimination when his candidacy was rejected after Bremen approved a law prioritising the promotion of women in public services when they have the same qualifications as men. Court of Justice Ruling dated 17 October 1995. Eckhard Kalanke vs Freie Hansestadt Bremen. Retrieved on 16 June 2023 from <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/ES/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A61993CJ0450>

103 *Une Europe citoyenne sans les citoyennes? Par Gisèle Halimi et Eliane Vogel Polsky*. 1996. Archive of the European Union in Florence. Fausta Deshormes La Valle collection. Reference: FDLV 56, 398.

making process in ‘homeopathic doses’. Vogel-Polsky and her co-author of the article, Gisèle Halimi, criticised the lack of will and even the hypocrisy of European leaders, whose speeches upheld gender equality as a cornerstone of democracy, but who later refused to legally support it in the EC’s treaties and laws. ‘The fragmentary nature of gender equality in EU law is harmful because it is constantly questioned and subject to the vicissitudes of the political and economic situation, given that it is not one of the foundations of the EC’, they claimed.

‘It is a fundamental right, a general right, and equality between men and women should be recognised in the treaties, because it should be compulsory to take it into account in all EU policies and institutions’, Vogel-Polsky said at a conference of the Association of Women from Southern Europe held in France in 1996, organised by the French government and the European Commission.¹⁰⁴

Therefore, this lawyer, who also specialised in European law and was by then an expert on gender equality and parity matters, suggested that the Intergovernmental Conference scheduled for Turin in March 1996¹⁰⁵ ‘urgently’ include equality between men and women as a ‘specific duty’, and that it determine ‘the means needed to achieve the objectives’. If not, equality would continue to be a ‘fiction’. Her proposal entailed establishing an ‘equal European citizenry’.

Thus, we can understand how an initiative to make a European Charter for Equality between Men and Women¹⁰⁶ in the local sphere also sprang from Eliane Vogel-Polsky’s debate and academic reflections, as well

104 Conferences of 12/1996 and 06/1997 for women’s access to decision-making in Southern Europe presented by the Association of Southern European Women (AFEM) and organised with the support of the Commission (DG V) and the French government (1996). Fausta Deshormes la Valle collection. Reference: FDLV-86-V.1. Archives of the European Union in Florence. Available online at https://archives.eui.eu/en/audio_visual/search/details/237460?search-terms%5Btext%5D=jacque+line+nonon&start=0

105 The European Council had pledged to call an Intergovernmental Conference before the end of the century to review the Treaties of European Union. The 1997 Maastricht Treaty was one outcome of the Intergovernmental Conference in Turin. European Parliament. Conclusions of the Spanish presidency on the 1996 Intergovernmental Conference of Turin. Retrieved 25 May 2034 from https://www.europarl.europa.eu/summits/tor1_es.htm#igc1

106 Ceriani, S. (2006) *La Charte Européenne pour l’égalité des femmes et des hommes*. Conseil des Communes et Régions d’Europe. Retrieved 25 May 2034 from https://www.ccre.org/docs/charte-egalite_fr.pdf

as her obsession with putting it into practice. Indeed, this instrument was adopted by the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR), an organisation that is still active and has brought together 60 associations from 40 countries since 1951. Vogel-Polsky contributed to drafting this document along with Françoise Gaspard, then the mayor of Dreux, under the coordination of Sandra Cerciani.¹⁰⁷

Thus, Vogel-Polsky threw herself into the struggle for gender equality and non-discrimination against women in Europe from different angles of the multifaceted prism comprised of the expertise and knowledge through which she viewed the world. This is why it is logical that her career to culminated with her name on the lists of the 1994 European elections, where she ran with the United Left (Gubin, 2007, 123). After that, her work at disseminating information as an expert scholar in gender equality spread as she gained recognition within the world of academia. She was appointed chair at the *Université Libre de Bruxelles* in 1978 and emeritus professor in 1991, and in 1999 the University of Lleida recognised her by granting her an honorary doctoral degree.¹⁰⁸

In her acceptance speech, she brilliantly summarised the evolution in her thinking and the reasons it was essential to fight for salary equality in the European courts, why after that we must fight for parity and quotas and why governments or public institutions are not the only ones that can guarantee these social rights and new rights:

The public authorities no longer have a monopoly on defining the solutions applicable to the problems in our communities, nor on the means needed to solve them. To guarantee a new generation of economic, social and cultural rights, we have to find new formulas for collective participation, coordination and integration of different objectives. We have to find new formulas that bring together the viewpoints, interests

107 De Vos, D. (2019) Activisme juridique - La Charte européenne pour l'égalité entre les hommes et les femmes au niveau local. A la recherche d'une ville femmes admises. In e-legal, *Revue de droit et de criminologie de l'ULB*, Volume 3. Retrieved 25 May 2034 from <https://e-legal.ulb.be/volume-n03/hommage-a-eliane-vogel-polsky/axe-3-activisme-juridique-la-charte-europeenne-pour-l-egalite-entre-les-hommes-et-les-femmes-au-niveau-local-a-la-recherche-d-une-ville-femmes-admises>

108 Honoris Causa UdL. (199) Retrieved on 14 May 2023 from 14 <https://www.udl.cat/ca/organs/secretaria/honoris/vogel/>

*and values of different members of society.*¹⁰⁹

Eliane Vogel-Polsky died in Brussels in 2015, recognised by academia as an expert and held up by a few people as a founding mother of social Europe, even though many have never heard of her.

*My choice may be a surprise to many, because most people are not aware of this woman. But I am convinced that with the appointment of our patron of the year, we have the power to shine a light on hidden histories and people who have made a crucial contribution to European integration in ways that have not always been recognised as they deserve.*¹¹⁰

Those are the words of Federica Mogherini, the rector of the College of Europe and the European Union High Representative, as she named Eliane Vogel-Polsky the patron of the 2020-21 graduating class. The city of Brussels celebrated her by naming a street after her in 2019.

5.5 JACQUELINE DE GROOTE AND THE EUROPEAN WOMEN'S LOBBY

Finally, we cannot forget Jacqueline de Grootte, a connector among almost all the women mentioned thus far who was essential keeping alive the flame of Ursula Hirschmann's project, *Femmes pour l'Europe*, and later turning it into the European Women's Lobby. She was a woman of action, a feminist activist who never held a post in the institutions or academia but was an essential point of support to ensure that feminism and the fight for gender equality had the power that they did in the development of the European Union during the second half of the twentieth century.

Jacqueline de Grootte was born in a small town in Wallonia (Belgium) on May 1931 and died in Brussels in October 2018. Her complete

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, 38-39.

¹¹⁰ Eliane Vogel-Polsky chosen as 'patronne de promotion' 2021/2022. College of Europe. Retrieved on 14 May 2023 from <https://www.coleurope.eu/news/eliane-vogel-polsky-chosen-patronne-de-promotion-2021/2022>

name was Jacqueline Wigny de Groote. She was the daughter of Pierre Wigny, a politician in the Belgian Christian Socialist Party, thrice minister between 1947 and 1968¹¹¹ and a member of the Common Assembly of the European Coal and Steel Community. Her mother was the Belgian feminist Juliette Borbux, known later as Lily Wigny, who founded the *Centre Féminin d'Éducation Permanente* in 1956, a centre that organised courses, conferences and job placements for women where later her daughter Jacqueline also participated actively.¹¹²

Therefore, it is not surprising that Jacqueline de Groote was an extremely active, diehard left-wing feminist activist who was also closely associated with the European project and European institutions. There is much less research about her than the other women discussed above. She was active in the Permanent Forum of European Civil Society and president of the *Centre Féminin d'Éducation Permanente*, which her mother had founded, and of the International Women's Commission of the European Movement. She was a member of *Femmes pour l'Europe*, the first coordinator of the European Women's Lobby and vice-president after that. She made significant contributions to *Cahiers du Griff*, the francophone feminist magazine, where she co-authored articles with Eliane Vogel-Polsky, among others. In fact, she and Françoise Collin co-founded it in 1973, according to posthumous homage¹¹³ paid to her by the *Conseil des Femmes Francophones de Belgique*.

Therefore, she was committed not only to intellectual and political activism based on her writings for the feminist magazine, but also to associationism and the need for the necessary information to reach women so they could achieve equality. To date, the women we have analysed share several qualities, including pro-Europeanism and feminism. This also holds true for Jacqueline de Groote, but her activism is what really made her stand out. Her writings deal with disparate issues, from household

111 Wigny, Pierre. Africa Museum. Retrieved on 25 April 2023 from <https://archives.africamuseum.be/agents/people/403>

112 Fonds d'archives du Centre Féminin d'Éducation Permanente. Retrieved on 25 April 2023 from <https://carhif.lescollections.be/Detail/objects/56693>

113 Lausberg, S. (2018) *Hommage à Jacqueline Wigny de Groote 10/11/2018*. Le Conseil des Femmes Francophones de Belgique (CFFB). Retrieved on 25 April 2023 from <https://www.cffb.be/hommage-a-jacqueline-wigny-de-groote-10-11-2018/>

chores to electoral strategies for the 1979 European elections. Her priority was to act, make connections and provide the resources needed for women to organise and fight for their rights—all women, no exceptions. She did not focus just on a single issue like Vogel-Polsky or Jacqueline Nonon but instead continuously worked in feminism and associationism in the broadest sense.

For example, her contribution to the book *Femmes pour l'Europe* is virtually a political manifesto about the European elections. De Groote wanted women to participate massively in those elections and see women reach positions of decision-making, not for them to become a 'hostage to male power'.¹¹⁴ That is why she upheld the need to raise awareness about European affairs and their importance. Women had to be 'convinced' that it was also their business. But one of the most interesting features of this article is that it exudes her spirit of associationism, her steadfast conviction that when organised into groups women could go much further than they could individually. In a demonstration of feminism, she showcased the work of her fellow group members: 'We can convey information, teach each other, locate sources of information, find them for ourselves. In the European Commission, there is an Information Office for the press and women's organisations. Many competent people work there, but there are just a handful of them', she said about the department run by Fausta Deshormes La Valle. And a few lines down she said the same about the office where Jacqueline Nonon worked.

'Gender mainstreaming has to come from below; women have to be where important things are happening, where decisions are being taken. [...] We always have to be there,' Jacqueline de Groote said in the conference of the Association of Women from Southern Europe held in France in 1996.¹¹⁵

114 De Groote. (1979). *Electoral Strategy and Tactics*. In *European Women About Europe. Views and Ideas Amassed by the 'Women for Europe' Group*. Ministry of Foreign Affairs and External Trade and Cooperation in Development, 42.

115 Conferences of 12/1996 and 06/1997 for women's access to decision-making in Southern Europe presented by the Association of Southern European Women (AFEM) and organised with the support of the Commission (DG V) and the French government. (1996). Fausta Deshormes la Valle collection. Reference: FDLV-86-V.1. Archives of the Europea Union in Florence. Available online at https://archives.eui.eu/en/audio_visual/search/details/237460?search-terms%5Btext%5D=jacque+line+nonon&start=0

Nonetheless, it is important to acknowledge that the majority of her articles in *Cahiers du Grif* discussed economic issues, always from a highly critical social and feminist perspective but with a particular focus on employment, economic growth and social progress or the need for women to reach positions of power.¹¹⁶

If Hirschmann was the pro-European soul behind *Femmes pour l'Europe*, Jacqueline de Groote was the soul of idealism and action. She had huge aspirations for the group she belonged to, and for women in the broader sense.

*Femmes d'Europe aims to become a centre of news and visions, a hub for European feminist organisations that share objectives. [...] This booklet gives us a chance to clarify our positions in different areas and will be followed by more extensive research.*¹¹⁷

We should recall that Jacqueline de Groote held the reins of the group in 1979 and was trying to rally it because Hirschmann had fallen ill. But as stated above, she also had high aspirations for women and believed that associationism and collective action were essential: 'Women are still quite timid. Maybe they have not yet understood how their solidarity—with a minimum of organisation—can be effective in achieving their objectives.' She went on to suggest, in a direct call for action, 'Why not organise a snowball of telephone calls to spread news and information? Each woman would only have to make three calls, which takes very little time and money.'¹¹⁸

Yet she was also profoundly practical and realistic. In her text, she upheld the need for quotas to achieve parity in political representation, as well as the need to establish the mechanisms of 'control needed' so this was done properly. She also recognised that financing had to be found to hold

116 Jacqueline de Groote's articles in a *Cahiers du Grif* can be found online here: https://www.persee.fr/doc/grif_0770-6081_1985_num_30_1_1655

117 De Groote. (1979). *Electoral Strategy and Tactics*. In *European Women about Europe. Views and Ideas Amassed by the 'Women for Europe' Group*. Ministry of Foreign Affairs and External Trade and Cooperation in Development, 42.

118 Ibid, 44.

electoral campaigns and to lobby. In short, her main goal was to get women engaged and make them aware that they should get involved in politics, both national and European. That is why she and Ursula Hirschmann were in charge of delivering the most ideological and essential speech entitled ‘Women’s Participation in European Construction’ at the first colloquium organised by *Femmes pour l’Europe*.¹¹⁹ The text is transcribed in its entirety, but while we do not know which part Ursula Hirschmann and which part Jacqueline de Grootte delivered, it was certainly one of the most political and motivating speeches at that event:

However, our goal is not only to include women in the existing structures equally with men; we also believe that women have to participate in European construction to bring it new ideas and to influence policies towards more democratic solutions, more favourable to a certain quality of life.

Jacqueline de Grootte remained faithful to this goal even after she herself had to announce the end of *Femmes pour l’Europe* to its members. Once the group halted its activities, she remained active in its circles and in *Cahiers du Gif*, and she also kept in touch with Fausta Deshormes, who after organising a meeting in London entrusted Jacqueline de Grootte to create a coordination group to establish what would end up becoming the European Women’s Lobby (EWL) (European Women’s Lobby (EWL), 2001,9).

I wrote a first draft of the organisation’s bylaws, stressing our objectives and working methods, and I sent it to the group of women that represent women’s associative life in Europe. We identified forty women from different countries and activity sectors and we met three times.

De Grootte was the one who coordinated all the activities to create the lobby prior to 1991; she signed all the documents, compiled all the working

119 Speech by Ursula Hirschmann and Jacqueline de Grootte in the compilation of speeches from the first *Femmes pour l’Europe* colloquium. Archives of the European Union in Florence. European Movement collection. Reference: ME-2418,141.

minutes, wrote the strategy and made her contact information available to all organisations or individuals that had questions or were interested in joining the lobby. In 1998, she wrote an extensive report laying out all the organisation's lines of action, its structure and its objectives and set the next steps for it to take. However, traces of her character and zeal for mobilising can even be found in a technical document like this one.

*Before the meeting in Brussels, some delegates had consulted extensively among themselves. It is imperative that you all consult as many associations as possible to understand how they want to participate in the lobby or not, their objectives and their structure. We have to receive your answers by October. If we secure the funding we need from the European Community, the group of 40 from Brussels can meet again in December on the same day as the Council of Social Affairs. If everything goes well, we could announce the lobby project to the Council of Social Affairs. The lobby could have its first constituent assembly in 1989.*¹²⁰

After the lobby was founded, Jacqueline de Grootte remained associated with it in one way or another for many years. These are written testimonials about her from 2000, one of the last we can find in the report that the EWL issued to commemorate its first ten years of life. Jacqueline de Grootte was 70 years old at the time.

The European Women's Lobby fights to effectively defend women's rights and is taking an ever clearer stance on institutional affairs. I believe that its future lies in that direction. We women were excluded from direct democracy and had to struggle for our rights in representative democracy. In my opinion, civil dialogue is the best way to fight for equality. Gender equality entails an end to stereotypes and recognition of different personalities. It entails not uniformity but each man and each woman's right to fully develop their personality.

120 *Instatement of a women's lobby at the request of the European Community. Working Group 29/30 April 1988 in Brussels. General Report by Jacqueline de Grootte.* Archives of the European Union in Florence. FDLV collection. Reference: FDLV-0024, 213.

Thus, Jacqueline de Grootte anticipated what would become later, and still is, the European Women's Lobby, an organisation that encompasses the voice of different European organisations and not only lobbies with the institutions but also takes positions on a full range of political and legislative issues related to women. For example, we can find a quote from Jacqueline de Grootte as the lobby's coordinator in 1991 in an article published in the *International Herald Tribune* about the 1991 agreement within the European Community to guarantee pregnant women 14 consecutive weeks of maternity leave paid at least the same amount as a leave for illness. 'It is a very important measure to ensure that women can control their professional lives and have children at the same time', she said.¹²¹

121 EC Standards for Pregnancy Leave agreed (1991) *The New York Times*. Retrieved in 25 April 2023 from <https://www.nytimes.com/1991/11/07/business/worldbusiness/IHT-ec-standards-for-pregnancy-leave-agreed.html>

6. Conclusions

This study has enabled us to assert that there were indeed women involved in the process of European construction who fought tenaciously and tirelessly to play a role in it and to ensure that all women of Europe could play a role if they wanted to. They were women who belonged to the uppermost institutional, political, academic and social spheres within the bubble that was being created around the EC institutions. Yet they did not do it alone: they organised to reach their goals, first in *Femmes pour l'Europe* and later in the European Women's Lobby.

Obviously, those were not the only women's organisations created around the European agenda, but they are important based on the profile of their members, the impact of their struggles, their contribution to the process of European construction and integration and their drive from Brussels to ensure that women's and other kinds of organisations around Europe took an interest and got involved in European affairs. From inside the EC institutions, a group of organised women understood, promoted and encouraged the participation of women and their organisations in the important and complex process of European construction. They found a way to maintain their autonomy by organising and creating a 'political lobby'. This is how they managed to achieve unique, special and effective power to influence matters, which led them to participate either directly or indirectly in such fundamental issues as the legal recognition of salary equality in Europe, the implementation of European directives to achieve this equality and the introduction of the concept of gender parity, among others.

Thus, due to its members' nature and expertise in European dynamics and the goals of *Femmes pour l'Europe*, it is logical that the idea would ultimately mutate into a lobby. And, in fact, this is one of the contributions of this study: we were able to establish and document a direct line connecting the group that Ursula Hirschmann instigated, *Femmes pour l'Europe*, and the European Women's Lobby. Today the organisation itself does not even recognise this connection in its story, but the fact is that the lobby's roots can be found in the organisation that Hirschmann promoted

with high expectations in the 1970s, as proven by this study based on one of the lobby's documents signed by Jacqueline de Grootte, and thanks to Silvana Boccanfuso's hypothesis. *Femmes pour l'Europe* was the first embryonic phase of the European Women's Lobby, and therefore Ursula Hirschmann also deserves its recognition.

It is equally important to observe and understand why they decided to organise as a lobby instead of choosing to be part of a political party or create a traditional civil organisation. In fact, we saw the work of lobby more than a civil organisation even in the stage prior to the EWL, which culminated, for example, with the book published by the Belgian government for the 1979 elections. It is a very comprehensive tome—and with the introduction written by a minister—that brought together experts, activists and very powerful functionaries to put into writing what women had to say, what they knew and what they were asking for before voting. In short, it is pure lobbying.

And we are talking about lobbying because *Femmes pour l'Europe* and its members knew how to approach the European institutions. They did not achieve their objectives through traditional associationism. Ultimately, the EU institutions are (and at that time were even more) a bubble where the politicians from the uppermost echelons of the national hierarchy met to take decisions. Their relations with citizens were filtered through many intermediate layers, which somehow detached them from accountability to their voters. Indeed, the members of the European Commission had not been chosen by universal suffrage but, just like today, were appointed by the European governments. Nor had the MEPs been chosen by direct universal suffrage until 1979. That is why a lobby was needed, because interacting with this type of institution as a legitimate interlocutor required at least a similar structure. The European Women's Lobby is nothing more than an organisation which is legitimised through other umbrella organisations, other smaller national organisations, and it has representatives in Brussels who are charged with engaging in dialogue with the European institutions.

The creation of this organisation also proves that there were a series of women in Brussels with such deep knowledge of how power, the institutions and politics operated that they knew that this was the right

structure at a time when it might not have been so obvious. In fact, it is noteworthy that the European Commission itself promoted the creation of a European women's organisation (via Fausta Deshormes La Valle and Jacqueline Nonon). As Jacqueline Nonon and Michel Clamen write in their comprehensive book on lobbying in Brussels (Clamen & Nonon, 1991), business organisations, trade unions and other groups had been organising around the EU project for years. However, in this case, it was necessary for the handful of women who were familiar with the institutions to promote it from Brussels. National organised feminism did not head to Brussels to proactively lobby; instead, it was the women in the Belgian capital who detected the need (or opportunity) to do it and worked to contact as many interlocutors in the European countries as possible to create this umbrella organisation. They were familiar with the institutions and knew that it was important to speak with a single voice if they wanted their message to be driven home.

Therefore, it is logical and even essential that a certain kind of women were the driving forces behind these organisations, women who were familiar with and even experts in the inner workings of the EC. That's why women like Ursula Hirschmann, Fausta Deshormes La Valle, Jacqueline Nonon, Eliane Vogel-Polsky, Jacqueline de Groot and many others pushed from both inside and outside the European institutions for women from all over Europe to be aware that European construction needed women's presence, influence, contribution and names. Studying the individual profile of each of these women explains and enables us to understand the founding, clout and evolution of *Femmes pour l'Europe*.

However, this report also confirms the need to further explore the issue of women's contribution to European construction from a European perspective, a need already noted by the French historian cited several times in this study, Françoise Thébaud.¹²² No matter how obvious it seems, the available bibliography on women's contributions to the European Union has a national perspective that should be contextualised or situated within the European perspective. In other words, it was surprising to

122 Thébaud, F. 2011. 'Écrire l'histoire des femmes et du genre: Comparaisons et connexions européennes'. In Bellavitis, A., & Edelman, N. (Eds.), *Genre, femmes, histoire en Europe: France, Italie, Espagne, Autriche*. Presses universitaires de Paris Nanterre. doi:10.4000/books.pupo.2865

realise that this issue has been thoroughly explored in Italian academia, where books and even podcasts about the founding mothers of Europe have been made. The women historians who have laid the groundwork for spotlighting the importance of Ursula Hirschmann and Fausta Deshormes La Valle are Italian. Ultimately, Italy was a founding country that played an essential role in the theorisation and political implementation of the idea of European federalism, as mentioned above with the drafting and dissemination of the Ventotene Manifesto. In Belgium, too—which for obvious reasons has a special connection with the process of European construction—the figure of Eliane Vogel-Polsky has been researched and showcased as a mother of social Europe, but it has not extended far beyond that country. And the French contribution is similar: the book by Anne Laure Briatte, Éliane Gubin and Françoise Thébaud is deeply framed within France’s contribution, which keeps it from painting a complete picture of European women’s contribution to the European project.

That is why the topic of this research requires a European perspective, which brings us back to the start: the door is wide open and we are far from closing it. From the standpoint of historical research, we must dig much deeper to rigorously and exhaustively determine to what extent all these women, others and their organisations deserve their place in the history books on the European Union, which until now have focused on men. This study answers some of the questions but raises many others which extend far beyond the scope of a master’s thesis. Therefore, this research should be taken as a starting point for future studies on women’s specific contributions to the construction of European Union and their struggles, victories and defeats.

The only woman’s name I found in our initial stroll through the EU neighbourhood in Brussels, Simone Weil, was the first president of the European parliament, but Ursula Hirschmann was also a diehard pro-European, a European federalist who spent the last years of her life raising women’s awareness so they would get involved in a political, economic and social project that was supposed to lead to a flourishing democratic Europe free of toxic nationalisms or oppression, and where women and minorities had the place they deserved. We are indebted to Fausta Deshormes La Valle for the creation of information centres on the European Union at

the most important universities on the continent, and for conserving invaluable information on European women's needs, claims and struggles throughout the entire process of European construction. We are indebted to Eliane Vogel-Polsky and Jacqueline Nonon for the fact that European women are now a little closer to salary equality and decision-making parity than they were forty years ago. And we are indebted to Jacqueline de Groot for the awareness that they did not achieve all this by themselves, but that behind every social conquest, European or not, there is always a network that pushes, supports and exerts pressure. In short, we are indebted to all the women who mobilised to construct Europe and make it change, who were directly or indirectly a part of *Femmes pour l'Europe* and the European Women's Lobby.

7. Sources and bibliography

Archives and collections

Archives of the European Union in Florence

European Movement collection (ME)

Fausta Deshormes La Valle collection (FDLV)

Femmes d'Europe collection (FDE)

Altiero Spinelli collection (AS)

Archives of the European Commission in Brussels

Femmes d'Europe collection

Library of the European Parliament in Luxembourg

Archive of the Foreign Ministry of the Kingdom of Belgium

Archive of European Integration, University of Pittsburgh.

Bibliography

Baun, M. J. (1995). *The Maastricht Treaty as High Politics: Germany, France, and European Integration*. (4th ed., Vol. 100). *Political Science Quarterly*. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2151886>

Birrenbach, K. (1959). *Europe, The European Economic Community and The Outer Seven* (1st ed., Vol. 15). *International Journal*. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23595805>

Boccanfuso, S. (2021). *Ursula Hirschmann, Una mujer por y para Europa*. Icaria Editorial.

Briatte, A.-L. (2020). *Feminisms and Feminist Movements in Europe*. EHNE. <https://ehne.fr/en/node/12314>

Briatte, A., Gubin, E., and Thébaud, F. (2019). *L'Europe a une chance pour les femmes?* Éditions de la Sorbonne.

Burgess, M. (1984). Federal Ideas in the European Community: Altiero Spinelli and 'European Union' 1981–84. *Government and Opposition*, 19(3), 339–347. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44484268>

Calossi, E., & Cicchi, L. (2019). European Parliament political groups and European political parties: Development and relationship between two faces of the EU political system. *Quaderni del circolo rosselli.*, 39(2), 15-31. <https://cadmus.eui.eu/handle/1814/65862>

De Groote, J. (1992). European Women's Lobby. *Women's Studies International Forum*, 15(1).

De Groote, J. (1978). La liberté d'être une femme. *Les Cahiers du GRIF, Où en sont les féministes?*(23-24), 58-59. https://www.persee.fr/doc/grif_0770-6081_1978_num_23_1_2358

Denéchère, Y. (2009). Femmes, pouvoir exécutif et construction européenne. *Informations Sociales*, 151, 22-28. <https://doi.org/10.3917/inso.151.0022>

De Wolf, P. (2020). *Naming Themselves: A Militant Act for Feminists (1967-1991)*. EHNE. <https://ehne.fr/en/encyclopedia/themes/gender-and-europe/feminisms-and-feminist-movements/naming-themselves-a-militant-act-feminists-1967-1991>

Di Nonno, M. P. (2019-2021). *Fausta Deshormes La Valle: un'artigiana dell'informazione a servizio dell'Europa*. Universitat Sapienza di Roma. https://iris.uniroma1.it/retrieve/e3835323-10a7-15e8-e053-a505fe0a3de9/Tesi_Dottorato_Di%20Nonno.pdf

European Women's Lobby (EWL) (Ed.). (2001). *European Women's Lobby Annual Report 2000* (2-3, Special Edition ed.) [1990-2000, Ten years of activism for gender equality European Women's Lobby in the European Union]. https://www.womenlobby.org/IMG/pdf/Rapport_LEF_2000_EN.pdf.

Farina, B. M. (1995). Le nuove competenze del Parlamento europeo nel Trattato di Maastricht. In *Il Trattato di Maastricht* (pp. 63-71). Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane.

Forner, Salvador. (ed.) (2007). *La construcción de Europa. De las 'guerras civiles' a la 'unificación'*. Biblioteca nueva, Instituto Alicantino de Cultura Juan Gil Albert.

Gavin, Víctor (2007). *Europa Unida: Orígenes de un Malentendido Consciente*. Universitat de Barcelona.

Godby, R. and Anderson, S. B. (2016). European Integration: The Road to the EU and the Euro. *Greek Tragedy, European Odyssey: The Politics and Economics of the Eurozone Crisis*, 25–44. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvdf043j.5>

Goormaghtigh, J. (1954). France and the European Defence Community. *International Journal*, 9(2), 96–106. <https://doi.org/10.2307/40197989>

Gubin, E. (2007). *Eliane Vogel-Polsky, Une Femme de Conviction*. Institut pour l'égalité des femmes et des hommes. https://igvm-iefh.belgium.be/sites/default/files/downloads/13%20-%20Vogel-Polsky_FR.pdf

Gubin, E., Jacques, C., Rochefort, F., Studer, B., Thébaud, F., Zancarini-Fournel, M. and Perrot, M. (2004). *Le Siècle des féminismes*. Éditions de l'Atelier.

Hoskyns, C. (1991.). The European Women's Lobby. *Feminist Review*, 38, 67–70. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1395378>

Hoskyns, C. (1985). Women's Equality and the European Community. *Feminist Review*, 20, 71–88. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1394668>

Jacquot, S. (2001). *L'évolution d'un groupe d'intérêt public communautaire. Le Lobby européen des femmes depuis sa création.*, DEA de sociologie politique à l'IEP de Paris.

Lafon, C. (2020). *Lobby Européen des Femmes (LEF)*. EHNE. <https://ehne.fr/fr/node/12385>

Laurent P-H. (1972). The Diplomacy of the Rome Treaty, 1956-57. *Journal of Contemporary History*, 7(3/4), 209–220. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/259912>

Martin de la Guardia, R. and Pérez Sánchez, G. (coord.) (2001). *Historia de la integración europea*. Ariel.

Moravcsik, A. (2000). De Gaulle Between Grain and Grandeur: The Political Economy of French EC Policy, 1958–1970 (Part 2). *Journal of Cold War Studies*, 2(3), 4–68. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26925081>

Moreno Juste, A. and Núñez Peñas, V. (2017). *Historia de la construcción europea desde 1945*. Alianza Editorial.

Moreno Juste, A. (2014). Sueño, aventura y realidad del proceso de integración europea. *Rubrica Contemporanea. Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona*, 3. https://revistes.uab.cat/rubrica/article/view/v3n6_moreno

Nonon, J., Clamen, M. and Albert, M. (1991). *L'Europe et ses couloirs: lobbying et lobbyistes* (Paris ed.). Dunod.

Nord H. and Taylor, John. (1979). The European Parliament before and after Direct Elections. *Government and Opposition*, 14(4), 411–432. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44483318>

Offen, K. (2020) *Feminismos Europeos (1700-1950). Una historia política*. Akal.

Historia de las relaciones internacionales contemporáneas (J. C. Pereira, coord; 2nd ed.). (2009). Ariel.

Pinder, J. (2007). Altiero Spinelli's European Federal Odyssey. Symposium. Altiero Spinelli – European Federalist. European Parliament. <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/document/activities/cont/200712/20071218ATT16301/20071218ATT16301EN.pdf>

Ramot, M. (2006) *Le Lobby européen des femmes. La voie institutionnelle du féminisme européen*, Paris, L'Harmattan.

Segers, M.. (2010). De Gaulle's Race to the Bottom: The Netherlands, France and the Interwoven Problems of British EEC Membership and European Political Union, 1958-1963. *Contemporary European History*, 19(2), 111–132. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20749800>

Spaak P-H. (1950). The Integration of Europe: Dreams and Realities. *Foreign Affairs*, 29(1), 94–100. <https://doi.org/10.2307/20030817>

Strid, S. (2009) Gendered Interests and the European Union. The European Women's Lobby and the Organisation and Representation of Women's Interests. *Örebro Studies in Gender Research* 1, 325.

Zancarini-Fournel, M. (2020). The gender of '68. Encyclopédie d'histoire numérique de l'Europe. <https://ehne.fr/en/node/12330>.

Audiovisual sources

Chinikar, Haleh and Hubert, Agnès (2017). Éliane Vogel-Polsky, championne de la cause des femmes en Europe. Online: <https://bib.ulb.be/fr/documents/digitheque/personalia/eliane-vogel-polsky>

IEE-ULB, Eliane Vogel-Polsky: mère de l'Europe sociale. Online: https://soundcloud.com/iee-ulb/elaine-vogel-polsky-mere-de-leurope-sociale?utm_source=www.iee-ulb.eu&utm_campaign=wtshare&utm_medium=widget&utm_content=https%253A%252F%252Fsoundcloud.com%252Fiee-ulb%252Felaine-vogel-polsky-mere-de-leurope-sociale

Interviews

Silvana Boccanfuso, biographer of Ursula Hirschmann. (3 May 2023)

Maria Pia Di Nono, author of the doctoral thesis to be published on Fausta Deshormes La Valle. (22 May 2023)

8. Annexe

Table of contents

	TITLE	PAGE
1	<i>Appel aux Femmes d'Europe.</i> (1975). Archives of the European Union in Florence. ME collection. Reference: ME2274, 2-5.	119
2	<i>La participation des femmes à la construction européenne.</i> Speech by Ursula Hirschmann and Jacqueline de Groot. Archives of the European Union in Florence. European Movement collection. Reference: ME-2418, 141.	124
3	<i>Women of Europe Newsletter.</i> September-October 1990. No. 12. Archive of European Integration, University of Pittsburgh.	129
4	<i>Lobby Européenne des Femmes. Communiqué de Presse. Création de un Lobby Europeene des Femmes.</i> Archives of the European Union in Florence. Fausta Deshormes La Valle collection. Reference: FDLV-0024, 231.	130
5	<i>Lobby Européenne des Femmes. Historique.</i> Archives of the European Union in Florence. Fausta Deshormes La Valle collection. Reference: FDLV-0024, 234-246.	131
6	<i>Une Europe citoyenne sans les citoyennes? Par Gisèle Halimi et Eliane Vogel Polsky.</i> 1996. Archives of the European Union in Florence. Fausta Deshormes La Valle collection. Reference: FDLV 56, 398.	140

Appel aux Femmes d'Europe. (1975). Archives of the European Union in Florence. ME collection. Reference: ME2274, 2-5.

Groupe d'initiative
"Femmes pour l'Europe"

12, avenue Doileau
1040 Bruxelles
Tel. 736 12 33

APPEL AUX FEMMES D'EUROPE

L'unité européenne semblait, hier encore, en voie de réalisation. Au moment même où elle serait le plus nécessaire pour surmonter la crise et apporter sa contribution à la stabilité bien compromise du monde, la Communauté paraît menacée de décomposition politique, économique et morale.

Elle avait donné, avec des hauts et des bas, l'illusion d'être forte et unie. L'inflation et la crise pétrolière ont mis en lumière la fragilité de l'édifice. Demain, si nous n'y prenons pas garde, le "chaque pour soi" pourrait l'emporter sur la coopération, les nationalismes sur la solidarité, la domination américaine sur le partnership entre l'Europe et les Etats-Unis.

POURQUOI LES FEMMES ?

Dans une période aussi grave pour notre avenir à tous, le moment est venu pour les femmes aussi de faire entendre leur voix et d'assumer leurs responsabilités. Il ne faut pas se leurrer; ce qui a été acquis n'est pas irréversible. Avec l'inflation et le chômage qui frappent différemment mais fort, tous les pays, la tendance est grande de revenir au cloisonnement économique et culturel, dans l'espoir fallacieux de limiter les sacrifices ou de les faire supporter par le voisin. Si ce particularisme à courte vue devait l'emporter, toutes les promesses d'une société européenne plus juste et plus solidaire seraient menacées. Et les femmes seraient encore une fois parmi les premières atteintes, car les difficultés grandissantes serviraient rapidement de prétexte pour remettre en cause leurs conquêtes récentes dans tous les domaines; les statistiques de l'emploi sont là pour le prouver: ce sont les plus faibles qui font les premiers les frais de l'égoïsme.

Il faut donc que les femmes prennent une part active à la bataille pour une véritable unification européenne. Elles doivent gagner, dans ce domaine comme dans les autres, une influence correspondant mieux à leur importance numérique et au rôle qu'elles ambitionnent de jouer dans une société qui se veut à la fois démocratique et équitable.

.../...

L'OBJECTIF ET LE CONTENU DE L'EUROPE UNIE

Pour que l'Europe puisse devenir autre chose qu'une espérance, il faut parvenir à des transferts effectifs de souveraineté à une autorité commune véritable dans tous les domaines où l'unité est nécessaire. Les peuples européens doivent imposer à leurs gouvernements la réalisation d'une Europe dotée d'un GOUVERNEMENT compétent pour les grands problèmes de la politique étrangère, de l'économie, de la politique sociale, de la défense, contrôlé par un PARLEMENT EUROPEEN directement élu par tous les citoyens de nos pays. C'est dans une fédération que les Européens retrouveront le moyen d'influencer effectivement leurs destins, d'échapper à des divisions qui freinent le progrès et la justice et de s'opposer à l'emprise des puissances économiques internationales et à l'impérialisme des grands Etats.

La Fédération Européenne est l'instrument indispensable pour parvenir à :

- une unification économique fondée sur une planification démocratique qui assure le plein et le meilleur emploi;
- un contrôle efficace des grandes sociétés multinationales;
- une politique sociale garantissant l'égalité entre hommes et femmes, l'amélioration des conditions de travail, la participation active des travailleurs aux décisions économiques et sociales;
- une promotion de la qualité de la vie qui l'emporte sur la simple croissance des profits et des consommations privées;
- une politique de solidarité envers les régions les plus pauvres;
- une politique efficace d'aide aux pays en voie de développement;
- une politique de solidarité active avec les pays européens qui, sortant des dictatures fascistes, s'efforcent dans des conditions difficiles de se donner des structures démocratiques.

Les femmes qui ont signé ce manifeste en appellent en conséquence :

1. aux institutions de la Communauté européenne pour qu'elles exigent la réalisation de l'Union Européenne;
2. aux organisations politiques et syndicales pour qu'elles mobilisent leurs forces en faveur d'une Europe fédérale;
3. à l'opinion publique dans la Communauté, pour qu'elle manifeste sa volonté européenne avec une force telle que les gouvernements soient contraints d'agir.
4. ELLES EN APPELLENT PLUS PARTICULIEREMENT AUX FEMMES EUROPEENNES, POUR QU'ELLES AGISSENT EN FAVEUR DE L'EUROPE UNIE, PARTOUT OU ELLES LE PEUVENT, A TITRE INDIVIDUEL OU AU SEIN DE LEURS ASSOCIATIONS.

couper ici et renvoyer

"FEMMES POUR L'EUROPE"
12, avenue Boileau
1040 Bruxelles
Tél. 736.12.33

Bruxelles, avril 1975

Lettre d'accompagnement à l' "Appel aux Femmes d'Europe"

Chère Amie,

Un groupe de femmes de plusieurs pays d'Europe s'interroge depuis quelques temps sur l'absence des femmes dans la lutte pour l'unité européenne. Dans la partie qui se joue, les femmes sont aussi concernées que les hommes et leur absence devient inadmissible devant la crise actuelle, qui pourrait mener à l'effondrement des libertés, de l'indépendance et du bien-être de nos pays.

Notre groupe, réuni à Bruxelles, prend donc l'initiative de lancer un Appel à toutes les femmes d'Europe, organisées ou non, pour qu'elles prennent une part active dans la bataille pour l'unification de l'Europe.

Nous nous sommes d'abord demandé quelles sont les raisons fondamentales, d'abord de l'arrêt, et ensuite du déclin de la construction européenne.

On a longtemps pensé que l'unité européenne serait aisément atteinte en décidant d'unifier quelques secteurs de la vie économique et en confiant quelques responsabilités limitées à une bureaucratie européenne. De peur de limiter les pouvoirs politiques nationaux, cette construction a été édiflée sans avoir un centre de décision authentiquement supranational et sans participation ni contrôle démocratique. L'expérience a montré qu'après un bref départ heureux, dû à une conjoncture favorable, les Communautés se sont l'une après l'autre enlisées et que, désormais, ce n'est pas vers une intégration croissante que nous allons, mais vers la désintégration des structures déjà mises en place.

L'unité européenne ne se fait non plus par la méthode de la coopération entre gouvernements. Les Ministres ou Chefs de gouvernement peuvent bien faire des déclarations solennelles de bonnes intentions, mais, chacun d'eux étant lié à sa position nationale, ils ne réussissent pas à transformer leurs déclarations en une action unitaire réelle, pour ne rien dire du caractère profondément antidémocratique de ces conciliabules sur des documents préparés par des diplomates, sans participation des forces politiques de nos pays et même à leur insu.

Récemment les Chefs de gouvernement se sont engagés à tenir des élections européennes pour 1978 et ont chargé le Premier Ministre belge, Monsieur Tindemans, de rédiger un rapport sur l'union politique. Quelques temps après M. Ortoli, Président de la Commission des Communautés Européennes, a affirmé en plusieurs occasions que le moment était venu pour l'Europe de dépasser les politiques européennes partielles et impuissantes pour

.../...

"exercer pleinement notre part dans la souveraineté collective" en dégageant "les raisons de vivre et d'espérer d'une société étouffée par son propre progrès".

C'est dans cette reprise de l'élan européen - qui est encore purement intentionnel et ne doit donc pas nous inciter à un optimisme facile - que se place notre initiative. Pour que ces bonnes intentions ne se dissolvent pas devant les difficultés certaines des prochains mois, il est nécessaire de susciter dans tous les pays de la Communauté une attention vigilante et active. Seule en effet la pression d'une opinion publique avertie et exigeante permettra d'éviter que les projets d'union politique et d'élections européennes ne soient compromis, ajournés ou oubliés et de faire effectivement les premiers pas nécessaires.

Notre groupe, européen dès le départ, ne pense nullement à se substituer aux partis, mouvements et syndicats déjà engagés dans la voie de l'Europe. Il se veut ouvert et dynamique; il se propose d'intervenir dans les débats, travaux préparatoires et conférences européennes avec le double but d'y porter la participation des femmes et de prôner le développement supranational et irréversible des engagements européens.

Enfin, notre groupe partage l'idée féministe selon laquelle il faut agir en tant que groupe de femmes même lorsque des hommes se battent pour les mêmes buts. Il faut quitter résolument cette longue habitude qui nous a portées à ne justifier une action féminine séparée que pour défendre ou étendre des droits de femmes et à la refuser dans les domaines relevant de l'intérêt commun. Cette attitude a eu pour résultat que dans tous ces domaines - et surtout en politique - notre présence a toujours été marginale. Pour changer cet état de choses il ne faut pas s'attendre que les hommes ou les corps constitués par les hommes, qu'il s'agisse des Etats, des administrations, des partis ou des mouvements, nous cèdent gracieusement des places. C'est seulement en nous constituant en groupes de pression féminins que nous pourrions obtenir la partie d'influence et de pouvoir qui nous revient légitimement.

Comme premier pas nous vous prions de signer l'Appel ci-joint et de nous envoyer d'autres adresses de femmes susceptibles de le signer. Nous le rendrons public et l'enverrons à un certain nombre de partis politiques, de syndicats et d'organisations. En outre les femmes qui auront répondu à notre Appel constitueront un premier réseau pour les prochaines actions que nous envisageons, parmi lesquelles un week-end de travail sur "Les Femmes et l'Europe".

Amitiés.

"Femmes pour l'Europe"

La participation des femmes à la construction européenne. Speech by Ursula Hirschmann and Jacqueline de Groot. Archives of the European Union in Florence. European Movement collection. Reference: ME-2418, 141.

Rapport n. 3

LA PARTICIPATION DES FEMMES A LA CONSTRUCTION EUROPEENNE

par Jacqueline de Groot et Ursula Hirschmann Spinelli

Comment promouvoir la participation des femmes à la construction européenne ? Quelles sont les actions concrètes que nous proposerons aujourd'hui pour leur permettre de prendre une part active dans les décisions qui seront prises prochainement ? Tel est le thème de ce troisième rapport. Notre but, cependant, n'est pas seulement de faire entrer les femmes dans les structures existantes à égalité avec les hommes : nous croyons que les femmes doivent participer à la construction européenne pour y apporter des idées nouvelles, en infléchir la politique vers des solutions plus démocratiques, plus favorables à une certaine qualité de la vie.

A l'échelon national, des femmes prennent conscience de leurs responsabilités politiques et luttent pour devenir des citoyennes à part entière. Pour l'ensemble des femmes, toutefois, la scène internationale demeure un objectif plus lointain, voire sans intérêt ou inaccessible. Timidité ? Crainte de se laisser happer par des structures trop vastes ? C'est, pourtant, à l'échelon européen que se prendront les décisions les plus importantes des prochaines années. Sur ce terrain où tout, ou presque tout, reste à inventer, les femmes ne devraient pas avoir peur de s'aventurer. Elles pourraient, au contraire, contribuer utilement et efficacement à l'édification de cette entité nouvelle.

Les femmes sont aussi concernées que les hommes par le choix qui sera fait, dans notre partie du monde, entre le retour aux nationalismes et l'unité européenne. En effet, seule une Europe véritablement unie, dotée d'institutions fortes et démocratiques, pourrait empêcher, dans la conjoncture actuelle, l'inféodation de nos pays à l'une ou l'autre super-puissance, et garantir le développement du progrès social à l'intérieur de nos pays. Or, la construction européenne semble être, pour le moment, dans une impasse. On pourrait même parler de régressions dues à la pression des groupes sociaux et politiques les plus réactionnaires.

Dans son adresse à la conférence de Mexico, Françoise Giroud a parlé de "la force révolutionnaire, de la force de renouvellement immense que représente, aujourd'hui, la prise de conscience des femmes de leur propre servitude et la découverte qu'elles peuvent y remédier". Les femmes n'ont aucune raison de rester en arrière d'une bataille. L'Europe est un terrain encore relativement vierge sur lequel elles pourraient intervenir en nombre et avec la vigueur de leurs forces neuves. Moins impliquées que les hommes dans les structures existantes, elles peuvent se montrer moins respectueuses des contraintes héritées du passé et plus prêtes à innover.

Les femmes, en particulier, apportent à la construction européenne la richesse de leur expérience quotidienne des difficultés concrètes de la vie. Elles ont été confinées jusqu'à présent dans certaines tâches domestiques, familiales, de secours individuels. Qu'elles tirent leur force de cette faiblesse ! Dans les débats souvent très généraux des sociologues et des économistes, qu'elles posent les questions terre à terre, finalement les seules importantes : que signifie telle ou telle décision pour la famille du mineur de Charleroi ou pour le viticulteur des Pouilles ? Celles qui ont eu pour mission principale de mettre au monde et d'élever les enfants, d'assurer la consommation familiale, de veiller à la santé de leurs proches, de mettre quelque charme dans la grisaille quotidienne, n'entrent pas dans les structures d'une société patriarcale axée sur le profit pour y partager le pouvoir, mais pour orienter

.../...

différentement les décisions, pour changer l'ordre des décisions. Loin d'abandonner leurs soucis, elles veulent les partager avec ceux qui se sont trop exclusivement préoccupés de croissance et de productivité. En même temps, elles acquerront la faculté de traiter des problèmes individuels au niveau de la société.

Essayons de préciser les formes de notre action. En particulier, nous, "Femmes pour l'Europe", qui voulons-nous rassembler autour de nos projets ? Où voulons-nous être présentes ? Sur quel terrain allons-nous concentrer nos efforts ?

Pour que les femmes participent activement à la construction de l'Europe, il faut qu'elles soient présentes dans toutes les instances de sa promotion et dans tous les organes de décision. En même temps, il nous faudra poursuivre un travail de réflexion et de recherche pour que les femmes qui accéderont aux postes de décision puissent travailler efficacement. Or, la politique européenne s'élabore depuis une trentaine d'années dans les institutions de la Communauté, dans des organismes professionnels et syndicaux qui font pression sur elle, dans les mouvements politiques qui, au niveau international ou au niveau national, luttent pour l'unification européenne. Sauf quelques rarissimes exceptions, les femmes ont été exclues des prises de décisions. Toutefois, cette constatation générale ne suffit pas pour déterminer notre travail : pour mener une action efficace, il nous faut connaître les mécanismes de ces différents organes et décider, chaque fois, de la stratégie la plus utile à la réalisation de nos objectifs. Nous voudrions, donc, les passer en revue et suggérer quelques revendications concrètes qui pourraient être discutées au cours de ce séminaire et faire peut-être l'objet de résolutions.

* * *

*

Les femmes dans les institutions de la Communauté

Le Conseil de la Communauté étant composé de ministres nationaux, c'est à l'échelon national que les femmes doivent se battre pour obtenir des postes ministériels et pour faire partie des nombreux groupes d'experts qui assistent le Conseil. Il convient d'ajouter que les mouvements de femmes devraient s'intéresser davantage aux décisions internationales et faire connaître leurs points de vue sur les problèmes discutés en Conseil de ministres.

En ce qui concerne la Commission, rien ne s'oppose à ce que des femmes soient commissaires, sauf la force de l'habitude. Depuis la naissance de la CECA, en 1952, dans la Haute Autorité, dans les Commissions successives, et enfin dans la Commission unifiée qui est nommée tous les quatre ans, les gouvernements procèdent à des dosages savants entre les nationalités, les partis, les syndicats. Jamais on n'a pensé à assurer une présence féminine. La prochaine Commission sera nommée fin 1976 et entrera en fonction en janvier 1977. Nous avons donc un an et demi pour monter une campagne contre cette discrimination exemplaire. Il faut obtenir que les marchandages entre pays visant à maintenir une représentation équilibrée des différentes tendances politiques, religieuses, linguistiques et autres, tiennent compte aussi de la nécessité d'une représentation des deux sexes.

De manière plus proche, cependant, nous souhaitons que la Belgique donne l'exemple : Monsieur Simonet vient d'annoncer son prochain départ de la Commission. Nous savons tous à quels minutieux calculs les responsables belges vont se livrer pour procéder à son remplacement. Une seule question risque de ne pas être posée, mais nous la posons : le prochain commissaire sera-t-il un homme ou une femme ? La réponse évidente pourrait ne pas être la même pour tous !

.../...

Faut-il préciser qu'étant donné la composition actuelle de la Commission, nous pensons que de toute évidence, Monsieur Simonet devrait être remplacé par une femme.

Dans son fonctionnement, la Commission est assistée par de nombreux groupes d'experts et par des comités de gestion. Divers organismes féminins réclament depuis environ cinq ans la création d'un Bureau d'information, de documentation et d'études qui traite les aspects féminins de tous les problèmes relevant de la Communauté. Un projet a été ébauché et abandonné. Nous demandons qu'il soit repris et qu'il soit procédé rapidement à l'installation de ce nouveau service de la Commission.

Au Parlement Européen, la présence des femmes est ridiculement insignifiante : 11 femmes sur 198 députés.

Nous avons déjà dit notre prise de position en faveur d'un Parlement élu au suffrage universel direct. Cependant, il ne suffit pas que nous demandions, il faut encore que nous apportions notre contribution à la préparation de ces élections qui ne sont évidemment pas faciles à organiser.

Nous proposons la création d'un groupe ad hoc dont les tâches, dans le cadre des prochaines campagnes électorales, pourraient être variées : veiller surtout à ce que la préparation de ces élections ne s'enlise pas et que les obstacles pratiques ne servent pas de prétexte pour faire avorter le projet; attirer l'attention des femmes sur l'importance de ces élections; encourager les femmes à y prendre part comme électrices et comme candidates. Pour ces dernières, le groupe ad hoc devrait servir de mouvement de pression et d'appui logistique. Le groupe pourrait soutenir les candidatures féminines dans les différents partis nationaux et fournir aux femmes qui se présentent les informations qui souvent leur font défaut. Les candidats masculins sont, en effet, le plus souvent présentés par des groupes qui, par la suite, leur préparent et organisent le travail. La plupart des femmes sont plus isolées.

Dans le projet de convention au Parlement Européen concernant les premières élections, le soin de choisir le mode de scrutin est laissé à chaque pays. Il est certain que le type de bataille que devront mener les femmes pour pouvoir se présenter et pour se faire élire dépendra des lois électorales nationales. Le groupe ad hoc pourrait faire une étude comparative des différents systèmes, à partir de laquelle il pourrait donner des conseils pratiques adoptés à chaque cas.

Un autre point important pour les femmes est la décision de prévoir un certain pourcentage de députés européens qui ne seraient pas membres des parlements nationaux. Si, en effet, le cumul des mandats national et européen restait obligatoire, les femmes seraient automatiquement aussi mal représentées à l'échelon international qu'elles le sont actuellement au niveau national.

Le Comité Economique et Social et le Comité Consultatif assistent le Conseil et la Commission pour les affaires intéressant le Marché Commun et l'Europe et pour les questions relevant de la CEEA. L'un et l'autre sont formés de représentants des catégories intéressées par la vie économique et sociale. Les femmes constituent certainement à l'heure actuelle une de ces catégories avec ses difficultés et ses revendications spécifiques. Elles devraient donc pouvoir faire entendre leurs points de vue au plus haut niveau.

Y a-t-il au Comité Economique et Social des représentantes des femmes ?

.../...

Quant à la Cour de Justice, il n'y a aucune raison pour que des femmes, qui sont déjà d'excellentes juristes et magistrates dans leur pays, ne puissent pas exercer les mêmes fonctions au niveau international. Nous pourrions proposer à l'association des femmes juristes de prendre en charge cette revendication au moment du prochain renouvellement de la Cour.

Les discriminations à l'encontre des femmes dans l'administration des Communautés ont déjà fait l'objet d'interpellations au Parlement européen : comment la Commission qui recommande aux Etats membres une politique égalitaire entre les sexes tolère-t-elle chez elle une situation aussi mauvaise que celle qu'elle condamne ailleurs ? Les femmes sont nombreuses à la base et de plus en plus rares au fur et à mesure que l'on monte dans la hiérarchie. Les goulots d'étranglements sont nombreux et devraient faire, chacun, l'objet de critiques et recommandations appropriées. Mais entrer dans le détail serait long. Nous préférons demander que la Commission fixe un quota de femmes à respecter à chaque niveau. 50 % serait normal puisque les femmes font 50 % de la population. Néanmoins, pour une première période à déterminer, nous pourrions accepter 20 %. Tant que le quota ne sera pas atteint, entre deux candidats de qualification comparable et de sexes différents, la femme aura la préférence. C'est une revendication très modérée mais qui n'aura d'effet que si un comité est spécialement chargé de veiller à son application, avec le pouvoir effectif de s'opposer à toute nomination qu'il jugerait non conforme.

L'accession des femmes aux postes responsables à l'intérieur des institutions communautaires est un problème qui concerne d'abord les femmes qui travaillent dans ces institutions. Elles connaissent les rouages qui grincent, les règlements écrits et tacites qui s'opposent à leur promotion. Elles sont bien placées pour proposer les solutions les plus efficaces. Néanmoins, un appui de l'extérieur pourrait leur être utile. "Femmes pour l'Europe", en particulier, s'interroge sur la meilleure manière de les seconder dans l'action qu'elles ont déjà entamée.

Nos réunions peuvent être pour les femmes qui travaillent dans les Communautés une occasion de se rencontrer en dehors de la hiérarchie qui, malgré les objectifs de sororité, risque de la diviser sur le lieu de travail. Nous pouvons aussi leur faciliter les contacts avec les groupes nationaux et les mouvements de femmes qui doivent les soutenir. Nous voulons devenir un groupe de pression qui alerte l'opinion, les mouvements de femmes, les syndicats, les partis politiques et, aussi, les autorités responsables dans les institutions communautaires. Notre efficacité sera renforcée par une étroite collaboration avec les femmes directement intéressées.

"Femmes pour l'Europe" et les mouvements européens

Les mouvements européens sont nés pendant et tout de suite après la deuxième guerre mondiale, à un moment où s'était fait cruellement sentir la nécessité de dépasser d'une manière définitive et radicale les structures nationales. Des hommes qui s'étaient battus contre les dictatures, et des hommes d'Etat, les plus clairvoyants, comprirent que l'Europe était la seule voie possible pour assurer le progrès économique et social, la consolidation des institutions démocratiques, l'indépendance de nos pays qui, divisés, seraient forcés de s'inféoder à l'une ou l'autre superpuissance. Les mouvements européens susciterent un certain enthousiasme, l'espoir d'une solution pacifique durable aux conflits qui nous avaient déchirés. On commença à faire l'Europe, par étapes, avec de nombreuses hésitations, des soubresauts, des retours en arrière.

.../...

Pendant les premières années de la construction européenne, les forces de gauche jouèrent assez souvent un rôle de frein, dont il faudra, un jour, faire l'histoire. On était loin de l'internationalisme socialiste, même si certains hommes et des fractions de partis luttèrent opiniâtement pour faire l'Europe, la plupart ne comprenant pas l'importance de l'enjeu. Ils s'y montrèrent hostiles, au mieux, ils s'en tinrent à l'écart. Peu de partis optèrent résolument pour l'Europe dès le début. Les partis communistes refusèrent une unification qui risquait de les couper de l'Union Soviétique. Les partis socialistes furent divisés entre eux et à l'intérieur d'eux-mêmes. Traumatisés par leurs expériences récentes, certains jouèrent à fond la carte nationaliste. Les motifs invoqués furent différents dans chaque pays : la soit-disant indépendance nationale, ou une alliance souhaitée avec les communistes, ou une politique économique à préserver des influences étrangères. C'est ainsi qu'un projet qui de par sa nature était de la gauche fut repris en charge par les forces modérées. L'Europe progressa, mais sur une voie économique plus conservatrice que si elle avait bénéficié de l'appui massif de la gauche. Privée d'un vaste appui populaire, elle fut bâtie sur des assises trop bureaucratiques.

Pour nous qui voulons intervenir ici et maintenant dans le développement de l'Europe cette histoire n'est pas sans intérêt, mais elle appartient au passé : aujourd'hui, la situation change. La gauche est en train de regagner le terrain perdu grâce surtout aux syndicats et à certains partis politiques qui comprennent la nécessité de mener une action concertée au niveau européen en face du capitalisme transnational et multinational et de la paralysie des institutions européennes actuelles. Le nouvel intérêt de la gauche pour l'Europe devrait insuffler une vigueur nouvelle aux mouvements européens.

Par rapport à ces mouvements, le groupe "Femmes pour l'Europe" entend maintenir une attitude de libre collaboration : nous les soutiendrons, nous nous joindrons à eux, chaque fois que leurs prises de position et leurs propositions iront dans le sens de l'accélération et de la démocratisation de la construction européenne. Nous nous réservons le droit de les critiquer à haute voix s'ils se montrent trop timides ou sans imagination dynamique.

Le rôle des commissions féminines à l'intérieur des partis politiques

A peu près tous les partis de nos neuf pays comprennent des commissions féminines, mais celles-ci restent souvent confinées aux problèmes dits féminins. En acceptant cette division des tâches imposée par le pouvoir mâle, les femmes sont dupes : elles s'occupent très mal de leurs affaires en se laissant enformer dans des domaines secondaires et on n'accédant pas aux niveaux de décision. Nous pensons que si certains problèmes présentent des caractères spécifiquement féminins, il n'y a pas de problèmes particuliers aux femmes : ils concernent tous la société dans son ensemble et tous les problèmes de la société intéressent les femmes. Nous considérons, donc, comme une de nos tâches essentielles, d'éveiller les femmes à leurs responsabilités politiques, de les encourager à exiger leur participation aux prises de décision à tous les niveaux, y compris au niveau européen.

Nous souhaitons que les femmes membres des "commissions féminines" soient suffisamment motivées pour élargir leur champ d'investigation et d'action aux dimensions de l'Europe. C'est particulièrement important au moment de la campagne pour ou contre l'élection du Parlement au suffrage universel. Nouvelles venues à la politique européenne, les femmes s'apercevront vite de la

.../...

EUROPEAN WOMEN'S LOBBY

Women now have yet another instrument to ensure their voices are heard in Europe. On 21 and 22 September, the Constituent Assembly of the European Women's Lobby was held, marking an essential stage in the work carried out over the last few years by many European women and women's associations.

The Constituent Assembly brought together more than 70 delegates from the various Member States who adopted the Statutes of the Lobby, elected delegates for the administrative body, adopted a budget and prepared the first work programme.

The Bureau (the Lobby's administrative body), elected by the General Assembly, consists of twenty members, one from each Member State and eight from the European Associations. Ana Vale, member of the Portuguese Conselho da Comunidade das Mulheres Feministas, was elected President. Vice-Presidents are Anna Caribaldi from the European Movement and Eva Eberhardt from the European Women's Coordination Organisation. The General Secretariat is based in Brussels, and the Lobby's activities will be coordinated during its first year by Jacqueline De Groot. The Secretary General will be appointed shortly.

The decision to set up a Lobby was taken in 1987. The aim is to have an influential structure open to all women's organisations in order to ensure better defence and representation of their interests at national and European level.

The Lobby, comprising women with a wide range of political and philosophical opinions and from all social backgrounds, will exert pressure on and raise awareness in European institutions and national authorities.

An autonomous organisation, the task of the Lobby is to follow closely the development of draft legal measures and Community programmes, put forward suggestions for the adop-

WOMEN OF EUROPE NEWSLETTER

NEWS
ON THE EQUALITY POLICY
OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY

Dear readers,

Welcome to the "European Women's Lobby".

This project, which was pursued with tenacity and hope for several years by many women's associations - and by the European Commission's Women's Information Service which has consistently encouraged and supported it - is now being realised (given its background and the circumstantial and social context) at just the right time: the time when there is a resurgence of NGOs. On the eve of the major changes occurring with the 1992 deadline, the more responsible and dynamic NGOs are wondering about the role they can play in the achievement of the 92 objective to ensure that the European citizens they represent are face up to the challenges and take advantage of the opportunities.

Of course, the women's organisations (I am in a good position to know this) did not wait until now to act as intermediaries for the citizens of Europe, offering the institutions a dialogue with a view to informing them of the needs and aspirations of the people they represent. Without this constant, stimulating presence, the policy of equal opportunities would not be what it is today, and we would not have the same number of women in the European Parliament, nor the progress in the debate in our societies that we have now. I am convinced of this.

But it is true that in a changing society where the changes are occurring not only in the area of economics but also in the social arena, and in a society which is more abstract and multi-

dimension of women in terms of responsibility.

The General Assembly decided on a series of priority areas for short and long-term action. These include budgetary issues, the Third Community Action Programme on Equal Opportunities, the Social Charter, the impact of the European Structural Funds on women, employment (including atypical forms of work), the fight against poverty, women and development, and relations with women from Central and Eastern Europe. The Lobby will also exert pressure to ensure rapid adoption of any proposals for directives that are pending and for the effective implementation of existing Community legal instruments.

Coordination: Jacqueline De Groot,
11 avenue du Mercator, B-1110 Brussels.

COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

THIRD ACTION PROGRAMME

The Commission has just adopted (17 October) the Third Action

Programme on equal opportunities (1991-1995), marking a new stage in the policy of equal treatment. The Programme proposes a more integrated and more global strategy compared with the two previous programmes. It is in keeping with the new socio-economic context (completion of the Single Market and demographic decline), and is based on the conviction that the improvement of the professional integration of women is an essential dimension of European economic and social strategy. This new Action Programme is a continuation of the second one, and opens up new horizons while reinforcing certain principles and objec-

Européenne des Femmes. Communiqué de Presse. Création de un Lobby Européenne des Femmes. Archives of the European Union in Florence. Fausta Deshormes La Valle collection. Reference: FDLV-0024, 231.

*Lobby Européen des Femmes
European Women's Lobby*

COMMUNIQUE de PRESSE

CREATION DU LOBBY EUROPEEN DES FEMMES

Les femmes pourront désormais faire entendre plus fort leur voix en Europe. L'assemblée générale constituante du nouveau Lobby européen des Femmes, une organisation autonome représentant des associations nationales et européennes des 12 Etats membres de la CE, s'est tenue Bruxelles les 21 et 22 septembre 1990. Au cours de cette réunion, plus de 70 déléguées ont finalisé la création du Lobby, ont décidé d'un programme de travail et ont élu vingt déléguées pour constituer son premier organe administratif.

Si la législation communautaire a été souvent en avance dans le domaine de l'égalité sur celle des Etats membres, les femmes sont toutefois convaincues de la nécessité de faire pression pour progresser. Le Lobby a l'intention de suivre l'évolution des projets de mesures juridiques et de programmes de la CE, de faire des suggestions pour l'adoption de nouvelles directives, de faire campagne pour garantir que les politiques sociale et économiques communautaire n'ignorent pas les besoins des femmes (particulièrement les plus marginalisées et les plus vulnérables) ainsi que d'encourager le recrutement et la promotion des femmes aux postes de responsabilité.

Pour atteindre ses objectifs, le Lobby exercera sa pression sur les différentes institutions de la Communauté européenne et disposera d'un Secrétariat-Général à Bruxelles. La Secrétaire-Générale sera nommée prochainement. La Présidente du Lobby est Ana VALE, du Consultivo da Comissao da Condição Feminina au Portugal et les deux Vice-Présidentes Anita GARIBALDI du Mouvement Européen et Eva EBERHARDT de la Coordination européenne des Femmes. En travaillant avec une structure d'organisations européennes de femmes, des groupes de coordination nationaux et d'associations de femmes et d'associations membres correspondants, le Lobby disposera d'un accès direct aux diverses opinions et demandes de plus de 100 millions de femmes.

Une force significative du Lobby tient au fait qu'il rassemble, du Nord au Sud de l'Europe, des femmes d'un large éventail d'opinions politiques et philosophiques et de toutes origines sociales.

Au cours des douze prochains mois, le Lobby concentrera son action sur le IIIème Programme d'action de la CE en faveur de l'Egalité des Chances. Cette action visera notamment à préserver les engagements déjà pris par les programmes d'action précédents. Le Lobby fera également pression pour une adoption rapide des projets de directive en souffrance, pour la mise en oeuvre effective des instruments juridiques communautaires existants et commencera à travailler sur diverses autres questions.

Contact: Jacqueline DE GROOTE, Coordinatrice,
1A Place Quetelet, 1030 BRUXELLES. TEL. 02.517.88.90

Lobby Européenne des Femmes. Historique. Archives of the European Union in Florence. Fausta Deshormes La Valle collection. Reference: FDLV-0024, 234-246.

LOBBY EUROPEEN DES FEMMES
EUROPEAN WOMEN'S LOBBY

HISTORIQUE

La première Assemblée générale du Lobby européen des Femmes, qui s'est tenue les 21-22 septembre 1986 à Bruxelles, est l'aboutissement de plusieurs années d'un travail accompli par de nombreuses femmes et associations de femmes.

A leur quatrième colloque européen tenu à Londres en novembre 1987, les organisations participantes prirent une résolution portant sur la création d'une "structure d'influence ouverte à toutes les organisations de femmes intéressées pour exercer une pression efficace sur les institutions européennes et nationales, afin d'assurer une meilleure défense et représentation des intérêts des femmes ... dans le contexte d'une Europe unie".

L'autre origine du projet remonte à 1974: au groupe "Femmes pour l'Europe" créé par Ursula Hirschmann-Spinelli. Il convient de rappeler le rôle d'Ursula Spinelli qui vint de mourir à Rome le 8 janvier 1991 après une vie consacrée entièrement à la construction d'une fédération européenne et à la cause des femmes. La maladie qui l'a frappée dès 1975 empêche Ursula de réaliser complètement son projet, mais on peut considérer le Lobby européen des femmes comme la version contemporaine de "femmes pour l'Europe".

Après la décision de Londres, il fallut trois ans de travail, mené avec le concours financier du Service d'Information Femmes de la Commission européenne, pour préparer la première assemblée générale constituante. Ce délai fut nécessaire pour que le lobby devienne le projet de la grande majorité des organisations européennes et nationales de femmes dans les douze Etats-membres.

En avril 1988, quarante déléguées de diverses associations de femmes, nationales et européennes, se sont réunies à Bruxelles. Au cours de la réunion, elles ont élaboré les principes et les objectifs de base du nouveau Lobby. Elles ont également chargé six des déléguées présentes de coordonner le travail de consultation nécessaire avant d'arriver à un accord final. Les propositions furent envoyées à toutes les organisations de femmes intéressées, et au cours de l'année qui suivit une série de réunions nationales et internationales furent organisées pour examiner l'idée du Lobby et ses fonctions. Le "Groupe des Six" fut élargi à neuf et devint le Comité organisateur de l'assemblée générale.

L'assemblée constituante, tenue à Bruxelles les 21-22 septembre, a réuni plus de 70 déléguées et permit de finaliser ce travail: d'adopter les statuts, d'élire les membres du Bureau, d'adopter un budget de fonctionnement et de préparer un programme initial de travail.

PROPOSITIONS DE CHARTE POUR UN LOBBY FEMININ
AUPRES DES INSTANCES COMMUNAUTAIRES EUROPEENNES

Des organisations de femmes réunies à Londres les 5 et 7 novembre 1987 et à Bruxelles les 29 et 30 avril 1988 ont décidé de créer un lobby féminin. Ce lobby, ouvert à toutes les organisations de femmes intéressées, a pour mission d'exercer une pression efficace sur les institutions européennes et nationales afin d'assurer une meilleure défense et représentation des intérêts des femmes vivant dans les Etats membres de la Communauté et afin de promouvoir entre la Communauté Européenne et les pays du Tiers-Monde une coopération qui intègre pleinement les femmes.

En créant ce lobby, les membres constitutives veulent se donner un instrument d'action. Elles souhaitent rassembler sur des programmes précis le plus grand nombre de femmes possibles. Il serait utopique de vouloir parler chaque fois au nom de toutes les femmes. Toutefois, les actions menées par le lobby contribueront à établir un réseau de solidarité de plus en plus large entre les femmes de la Communauté Européenne.

I - OBJECTIFS

- 1) L'égalité des droits et des chances entre les femmes et les hommes est l'objectif fondamental et le terrain d'action privilégié du lobby.
- 2) L'orientation générale des politiques communautaires intéresse le lobby. Ses membres, en effet, refusent de se limiter à des revendications d'égalité au sein de politiques établies sans la participation des femmes. Celles-ci veulent et doivent participer à la résolution globale des grands problèmes de société.
- 3) La cohésion économique et sociale de la Communauté Européenne est une condition indispensable à l'instauration de l'égalité dans le progrès.

II - COMPETENCES

Le lobby pourra notamment :

- surveiller la mise en oeuvre de directives, de programmes d'action et autres mesures relatives à ses objectifs,
- faire pression en faveur de propositions législatives,
- demander de nouvelles directives,
- donner son avis sur des propositions législatives émanant des instances européennes,
- informer ses membres sur l'orientation de politiques générales,
- rassembler des études et des statistiques européennes et nationales utiles à son action, ou pouvant être utilement rediffusées auprès de ses membres,
- informer ses membres des manifestations et travaux en préparation auxquels elles auraient intérêt à participer,
- soutenir la candidature de femmes à des postes de responsabilité au sein des institutions européennes.

III - METHODES

- Le lobby se dotera des moyens nécessaires pour informer très rapidement, éventuellement dans l'urgence, ses membres des interventions possibles et de leurs modalités pratiques.
- Il s'efforcera d'obtenir le maximum d'adhésion à son plan d'action.
- Il cherchera à obtenir un statut consultatif auprès des institutions européennes.

IV - CIBLES

Les cibles du lobby sont :

- les instances européennes : le Conseil de Ministres, la Commission, le Parlement; le Comité Economique et Social,
- les instances nationales concernées par la politique européenne.
Aux plans nationaux, le lobby n'agira qu'à la demande et avec le soutien des coordinations nationales.

V - AFFILIATION

- Les membres du lobby sont des organisations de femmes, ou des sections femmes d'organisations mixtes.
- Peuvent demander leur affiliation au lobby des organisations européennes et des organisations nationales.
- Sont considérées comme organisations européennes, des associations ou des sections femmes d'organisations européennes qui ont des membres dans au moins 4 pays de la Communauté. Dans 5 ans ce chiffre devrait être porté à 7 pays.

Pour faire partie du lobby, une organisation européenne doit avoir clairement inscrit l'égalité des chances et des droits parmi ses objectifs.

- Sont considérées comme organisations nationales :
 - des coordinations nationales regroupant un nombre d'associations qui sera fixé par pays suivant le chiffre de la population totale et les réalités associatives nationales.
 - des associations nationales ayant des sections sur tout le territoire du pays et ayant un nombre minimum d'adhérentes. Ce nombre sera fixé par pays en fonction du chiffre de la population globale.

Pour faire partie du lobby, une association nationale doit avoir fait preuve de préoccupations européennes.

- Les demandes d'affiliation seront adressées au Secrétariat permanent qui les examinera et les présentera au Conseil d'Administration.
- Le nombre d'associations membres du lobby n'est pas limité, mais bien celui des membres de l'Assemblée Générale (voir plus loin).
- Dans un premier temps, on cherchera au moins une organisation nationale dans chaque pays membre.
- Tous les membres du lobby sont régulièrement informés par le Secrétariat permanent des projets et des réalisations du lobby.
- Un membre du lobby n'est pas obligé de souscrire à tous les points du programme. Il peut à tout moment se retirer, ou rester membre mais refuser d'appuyer une action même décidée par l'Assemblée Générale.

VI - ORGANES

Des structures provisoires, légères, flexibles sont mises en place pour une période de 2 ans. Elles pourront être révisées à la lumière des premières expériences.

1) L'Assemblée Générale

a) Les membres

- L'Assemblée Générale est composée d'un nombre égal de représentantes d'associations européennes et d'associations nationales. Chaque association européenne a une représentante à l'Assemblée Générale. Le nombre de sièges à répartir entre les pays membres ne peut pas dépasser le nombre de sièges attribués aux associations européennes. Le nombre de sièges nationaux sera réparti suivant un double critère : la population globale de chaque pays et son nombre d'associations membres du lobby. On veillera à ne pas défavoriser un pays qui a réussi à créer une seule coordination nationale. Les organisations nationales s'entendent entre elles pour choisir leurs déléguées à l'Assemblée Générale.
- Lorsque le nombre d'associations européennes atteindra 60, ces règles seront revues.

b) Rôle

- Elle établit les règles de fonctionnement du lobby et son propre règlement intérieur.
- Elle définit les domaines d'intervention du lobby. Le lobby ne pourra intervenir que dans les domaines qui ont été déclarés de sa compétence.
- Elle établit son programme d'action. Un programme d'action doit obligatoirement relever d'un domaine qui a été déclaré de la compétence du lobby. Il définit l'orientation politique (pour ou contre un projet de directive par exemple) que prendra l'action décidée.
- Elle élit les membres du Conseil d'Administration par vote écrit sur des listes préparées par le Secrétariat Permanent.
- Elle approuve le rapport d'activité.
- Elle approuve les comptes.
- Elle vote le budget.

- Elle peut décider de la création de groupes de travail auxquels elle confie des missions spécifiques.

c) Prises de décision

- La prise de décision dans un lobby doit nécessairement faire l'objet d'un consensus. Celles qui ne sont pas d'accord ont toujours le droit de se retirer, ou de déclarer explicitement qu'elles ne s'associent pas à telle ou telle action. En revanche, celles qui votent une proposition doivent s'estimer suffisamment nombreuses et représentatives d'un très grand nombre de femmes de la Communauté Européenne pour pouvoir mener une action efficace.
- Les règles de fonctionnement du lobby et de l'Assemblée Générale devront donc faire l'objet d'un large consensus. Plutôt que de parler des 2/3 ou d'une majorité d'un total impossible à chiffrer, il vaut sans doute mieux fixer un minimum de départ : par exemple, 12 associations européennes et des associations nationales dans 7 pays de la Communauté Européenne. Par la suite, des modifications aux statuts pourraient être adoptées à une majorité des 2/3 des votes. Toutefois, il faudra toujours veiller à un certain équilibre entre les grands et les petits pays, entre le Nord et le Sud.
- Les domaines de la compétence du lobby sont décidés à une majorité des 2/3 des votes.
- Un programme d'action est adopté à une majorité des votes qualifiée selon des critères géographiques.

d) Réunions

- L'Assemblée Générale se réunit au moins une fois par an.
- Le Conseil d'Administration ou plusieurs membres du lobby peuvent prendre l'initiative de convoquer une Assemblée Générale Extraordinaire, à condition d'en prévoir le budget.
- L'Assemblée Générale se réunit à Bruxelles, à moins qu'un pays membre n'invite l'A.G. à se réunir chez lui, en offrant le supplément budgétaire nécessaire!
- Les débats de l'A.G. sont présidés par les membres du Conseil d'Administration à tour de rôle. Le Conseil d'Administration répartit les présidences de séances entre ses membres.

2) Le Conseil d'Administration

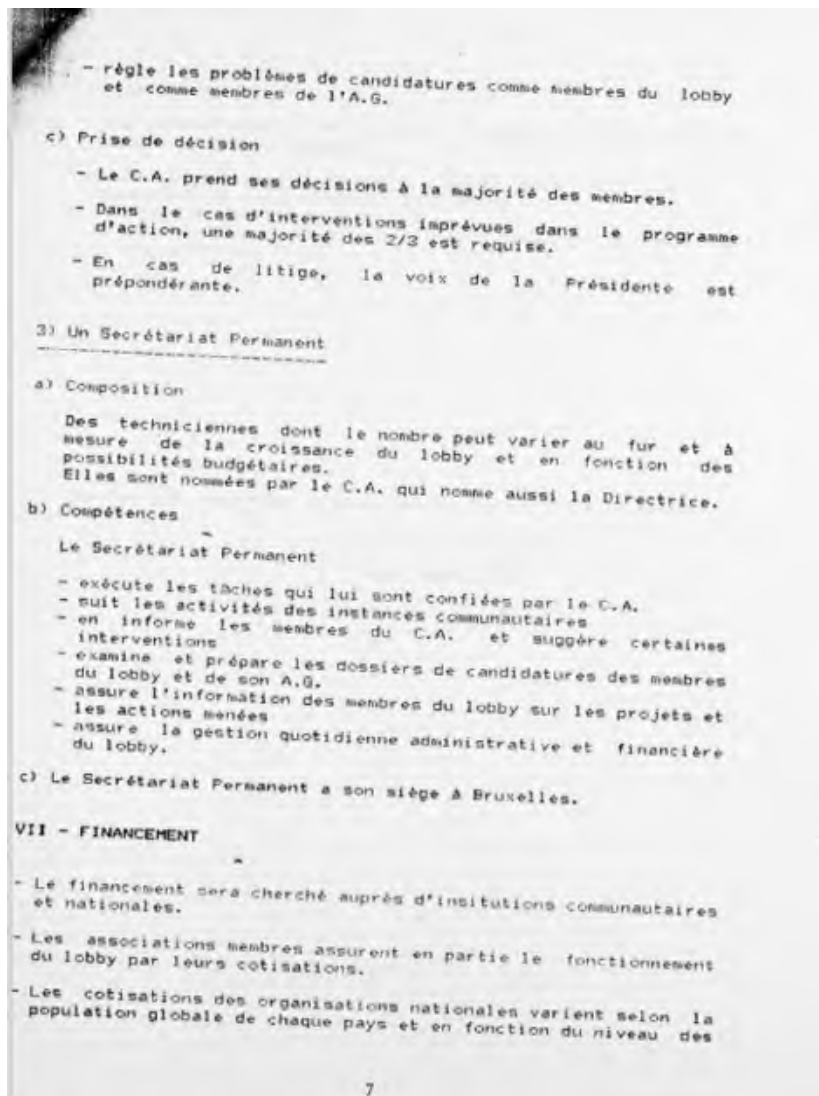
a) Composition

- Le C.A. est composé de 15 membres, élus à titre individuel, pour un mandat d'un an renouvelable deux fois.
- Après 3 années, une interruption minimum de 2 ans est exigée avant une seconde candidature.
- Les candidatures sont présentées librement par les membres du lobby.
- Le mode de scrutin garantit au moins une membre de chaque nationalité pour laquelle il y a une candidature et au maximum deux. Les membres du C.A. appartiennent indifféremment à une association européenne ou à une association nationale, sans qu'il y ait de répartition fixe des sièges entre ces deux catégories (voir note jointe).
- Il n'y a pas de suppléantes. En cas de départ d'un membre du C.A. en cours de mandat, son siège est laissé vacant jusqu'à l'Assemblée Générale suivante.
- Le C.A. élit une Présidente et répartit entre ses membres les tâches à accomplir.

b) Compétences

Le Conseil d'Administration

- exécute le programme d'action fixé par l'A.G. Pour chaque intervention, il prendra soin d'indiquer les associations qui l'ont mandaté
- peut prendre des initiatives en cas d'interventions possibles imprévues si ces interventions se situent dans un domaine qui a été déclaré de la compétence du lobby
- présente des propositions de programmes d'action
- présente un projet de budget
- convoque et prépare les A.G.
- rédige le rapport d'activité
- prépare le rapport financier
- nomme et révoque les membres du Secrétariat
- dirige le travail du Secrétariat
- peut faire appel à des expertes



salaires nationaux.

- Les cotisations des associations européennes varient suivant le nombre de leurs membres.
- Une association membre du lobby peut lui verser une contribution supplémentaire volontaire
 - . pour son fonctionnement
 - . pour une intervention spécifiée à condition que celle-ci ait été votée par l'A.G.

Toutes les remarques et suggestions doivent être envoyées à :

Jacqueline de Groot
11, avenue de Mercure - Eté 4
1180 - BRUXELLES

Tel. 02 - 217.90.20

Une Europe citoyenne sans les citoyennes? Par Gisèle Halimi et Eliane Vogel Polsky. 1996. Archives of the European Union in Florence. Fausta Deshormes La Valle collection. Reference: FDLV 56, 398

