
COMMITTEE ON WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES
THE CHAIRPERSON

Bureau of the Convention
Mr Valéry Giscard d'Estaing
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Brussels, 3 June 2002

Monsieur le Président,

First, may I recall the letter I sent to you on 15 February, where I expressed the concern of the European Parliament Committee on Women's Rights and Equal Opportunities with the unbalanced composition of the Convention, which indicated that the principle of parity democracy had not been respected. I also expressed a hope that you will do your utmost in order that women's rights and gender equality are promoted in the work of the Convention. I have yet had no reply to that letter.

With the present letter, I would like to inform you about an exchange of views with Women members of the Convention which was held in our Committee on 22 May 2002 with the participation of representatives from the Commission, its Advisory Committee on equal opportunities, the European Women's Lobby, European Women Lawyers' Association, Association of Women of Southern Europe and other representatives of the civil society.

A number of concrete proposals were put forward to compensate for the underrepresentation of women amongst the "conventionals" and to aim at an outcome of the Convention that reflects the aspirations of societies composed of active and concerned women as well as men. A consensus was established on two sets of proposals: a first set refers to organisational arrangements to be taken in the work of the Convention, the second already refers to substantive issues of a future constitutional Treaty. It was also agreed that these proposals should be presented to you and to all Members of the Convention, who will get copies of this letter.

The organisational arrangements are the following:

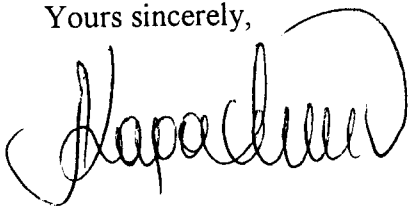
- In each of the working group currently created, one person should be specifically mandated to incorporate a gender perspective into the issues under consideration.
- A working group on gender issues should be created and presidencies of the working groups should be equally distributed between women and men.
- Gender expertise should be ensured in the secretariat of the Convention.
- Conventions should also be encouraged to call on existing gender expertise (in the Committee on Women's Rights and Equal Opportunities, in the European Commission, in academic institutions and in NGOs).
- A group of experts could monitor the work of the Convention from a gender perspective.

On the substance of a future treaty or constitution, a wide consensus emerged on the need for a stronger political and legal basis for gender equality. It was agreed that, inter alia, the following elements would contribute to this concern:

- Equality of women and men should be established as a clear general principle of the European Union, whether via the Charter, or in the Preamble of a Treaty or Constitution.
- A separate Title on gender equality should be introduced in the new Treaty.
- Balanced representation of women and men in decision making should be established.
- An article prohibiting gender discrimination, should have direct effect.
- The elimination of inequalities and promotion of equality of women and men (mainstreaming) should be a mission of the EU in all fields, including in activities presently under the second and third pillar.

Furthermore, it was agreed that our committee will do its utmost to "serve as a sounding board and a line of effective communication with women", as mentioned by a member of the presidium. In this respect, a close follow-up of these proposals will take place in cooperation with all interested parties, in order that women's rights and gender equality are promoted in the work of the Convention.

Yours sincerely,



Anna KARAMANOY

Copies: Members of the Convention