

Training Course  
on Gender Equality

SCHOOL OF POLITICS

Instant Book

**Friday 14th January 2005**

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## **Introduction**

The "School of Politics" training course is part of the action promoted by the Municipality of Venice – the Council Office of Citizenship of Women and the Culture of Differences within the European project "Sister Cities Going Gender" - Programme Relating to the Community Framework Strategy on Gender Equality (2001-2005).

The training course was carried out in January 2005 at the Candiani Cultural Centre of Mestre (VE).

The Onlus Synergic Association was in charge of carrying out the entire training course and preparation of the acts that are presented here, which bring together the reports presented by the various speakers that intervened during the five training days.

Our thanks to the Municipality of Venice, in particular to the Council Office of Citizenship of Women and the Culture of Differences, the Citizenship Service for Women and the Head Office of International and Community Politics for their collaboration.

## **Councillor Loredana Aurelio Celegato**

Council Office of Citizenship of Women and the Culture of Differences

*Greetings and presentation*

Good morning to you all, I would like to begin this important event *a training course* called "School of Politics" that implements the action of each individual partner, within the "SISTER CITIES GENDER GOING" Project, financed by the European Union in the Management Programme on Equal Opportunities.

I would like to thank you for being here today and for having taken part in this training initiative, the second one that the Council Office of Citizenship of Women has organised on these subjects. An important tradition that underlines however the bitter observation of the poor presence of women in politics and in policies.

More than eighty participation requests were received (we have defined a limit of 50), none of us really expected this important result, which is highlighted even more by the modern element, compared with the previous course, related to the heterogeneity of the applicants: Councillors from neighbouring Municipalities, women from Associations, graduate and graduating females, housewives interested in implementing their awareness of these subjects, women that belong to representative organisations of politics (Citizens councils, Committees and Equal Opportunity Commissions), Public Administration employees: Municipalities, Provinces and Regions; teachers, women registered with Parties. Just one regret, the absence of men.

In any case I believe that this is a road that we can follow but it is most of all an instrument par excellence that can be recognised by women.

Before moving onto the speakers, I would like to briefly summarise the project, its aims and the objectives to be achieved.

The city of Frankfurt on the Main is the Leader, the city that has sensitised the Council towards active participation in the project and the network of partners counts about a dozen other countries in the Union.

The Council Office of Citizenship of Women and the Culture of Differences immediately perceived the project as an important opportunity for its territory, a useful experience for an effect on the presence of women in the public network, starting with the development

and the technical/practical skills that we know that women have acquired in more than thirty years of hard commitment in the various fields of social life.

If on the one hand it is true to say that the practices undertaken by female movements in the last twenty years have had a strong impact and have been of a transformational nature, on the other hand we can see how the impact in the public network in general and in Institutions has still not reached a level of equal representation.

The hypothesis of the project is the existence of a close bond between “strengthening the professional role” and therefore trust in oneself in the field of employment and the consequent promotion of the presence of women in the public scenario and in particular in the political scenario.

In my opinion it is necessary to focus on the relationship between women and power, the methods used by women to handle or to be subjected to power, and through which she communicates with other women or with men. It is important to understand how politics can be transformed into something radically different when it takes on a female nature, thanks to the peculiarities of women, their creative potential, the application of good practices matured during their reaction practices.

A subject of central thought for the development of empowerment<sup>1</sup> and gender mainstreaming<sup>2</sup> is in fact the peculiarity of female subjects: it is true that women involved in politics concentrate on different subjects than men? In general, everything related to the quality of life is often dealt with by women as they are much more exposed to stress and the discomforts that it can create due to the specific social position that they hold.

The context upon which the action of the project is based starts with the observation that Italy is going through a huge change with regards to its political system and also organisation and the objectives of Public Administration. The two aspects of change (the political system and public administration) are related also in terms of the social development of women. The civil society has changed drastically by not only modifying its relationships between genders but also between generations, social groups and cultures. The rate of political female presence in Italy is very low at all levels, it varies from 10.1% in Parliament to 14.6% in administrative Assemblies through to 11.5% of the last European Parliament elections. The situation of the Government is not reassuring at all.

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<sup>1</sup> With this term I do not mean female access to power but the recognition of female authorities.

<sup>2</sup> By main-streaming I mean the position of women at the centre of associations and institutions in order to encourage and stimulate the contribution of new ideas, values and action.

The objective of the project is to create a territorial network capable of exchanging and creating a synergy in "training initiatives", with regards to general mainstreaming at various levels. We do believe that we have definitely launched this network process, and the training project financed by the Commission for Equal Opportunities of the Veneto Region is proof of this and it will begin with a political training course in February 2005, for a total of 40 days of training.

Our aim is not to unite different projects that are born throughout the territory in order to satisfy specific requirements, but not even to simply merge separate experiences; with this aim we have attempted to strengthen "the interpretation of genders" of emerging phenomenon and therefore to activate the initiatives that take into consideration the existence of a wider form of territorial relations.

The seminars introduced in the training course, satisfy true demands expressed by women themselves.

The project organised in this way, thanks also to the collaboration of the Onlus Synergic Association who was in charge of preparing the training course, definitely indicates how the direction of development of the concrete presence of women experiences these moments and I hope that it will allow us to collect and identify new solutions, new directions in order to reach full political participation of women.

Today we will start this course with a subject of global importance, the speakers will investigate the subject of the globalisation of rights and good political practices for the development of women with all of us. An in-depth study of the intermediary system and the public space for women awaits us tomorrow. Other appointments are for next Friday and Saturday and we will conclude with the subject of the gender balance in the light of transparency and social control.



## **Umberto Musumeci**

Company manager, expert in Social Responsibility of Enterprises

*The impact of economic activities on the social condition of women in a globalised world*

*The economic world can be analysed in the light of the importance of human rights and the repercussions of economic activities on people's lives and the environment. In this perspective Musumeci discusses the issue of globalisation both as a company manager and as a volunteer for Amnesty International (for twenty years).*

The correlation between the violation of human rights and poverty is undermining peaceful coexistence in the world. On the one hand the effect of what we call globalisation has certainly raised the quality of life for many populations, on the other this has contributed to an increase in poverty in other parts of the world.

At the same time globalisation has caused exclusion and injustice that in turn has caused, or has been the effect of, internal and international conflict and violence. Just think that in 1990 2 billion 700 million people lived in conditions of absolute poverty and in 2000 this figure has become 2 billion 800 million, which means that the effect of globalisation has not improved statistics. It has only improved the standard of living of those who were already well off. These statistics come from the World Bank.

There are other issues to consider:

- Slavery is on the increase: 27 million slaves in the world that range from the cocoa pickers in Costa Rica, to over half a million women from Eastern Europe forced into prostitution in the West each year, to minors who are victims of the sexual market.
- The nation states are increasingly losing power. The nation-state no longer self-governs its own social and economic policies due to a series of internal (federal or regional structure) and external (competition) types of conditioning.
- Indeed, all the world's economy is undergoing strong competition, which develops, for example, to attract investment from the multinational companies (400 billion dollars in the last 25 years). Obtaining investment in poor countries means fierce competition among those that desperately need investment.
- Thus, when our international representatives talk about growth and progress, we should ask ourselves what kind of progress is being discussed. For each dollar

spent by the United Nations in peace missions, 2000 dollars are spent on war, and many researchers in industry work in the production of arms. The cost of an hour of war is equivalent to the monthly wage of 86400 workers. A fighter-bomber is equivalent to 4000 health clinics.

- Debate about reducing the cost of labour ignores the consequences that are also disturbing for Europe. Such as a poor health service; job precariousness; discriminatory employment and unfair dismissal; low salaries and flexible hours; the unbalancing of the family system and the crisis in the role of women.
- The International Pact for Civil and Political Rights and the International Pact for Economic and Social Rights came into force in 1976 in 140 states. The expression "without distinction of sex" was used for the first time, and then gradually became part of national constitutions in a series of laws and regulations that seem natural to us now, but was not so up to a hundred years ago. In 1979 the International Convention on the abolishing of all forms of discrimination against women was introduced, specifically dealing with the issue of discrimination and therefore safeguarded women's rights. This Convention was ratified in 165 states and was then implemented with a protocol that the United Nations adopted in 1979, although it only came into force in 2000, thus quite recently.
- Globalisation fosters Export Processing Zones (EPZ), special zones like free trade areas, where countries or regions in the world guarantee factories tax and environmental exemptions, but above all social ones. This affects salaries, working hours, hygiene, trade union rights and discrimination. There are 24 million women out of 27 million people working in these zones. In 1976 there were 24 developing countries where the EPZs operated, but in 2000 these increased to 96. In other words, the number of countries establishing free trade zones to attract investment has quadrupled.
- However, new lands to conquer lie also across the Adriatic. Many of our companies have found a new market, some also in a positive manner. However, even here low labour costs have become the only tool for competition, with the result that often good family men go and install factories in countries where they would never send their own children to work. As regards this phenomenon, there is an extremely

interesting study made by the Fondazione Nordest on delocalisation, where it has finally been discovered that delocalising to reduce costs is fundamentally useless. In this scenario women no longer want only to be beneficiaries of support: they only exist because their work costs so little. Nowadays women want to have an active role in a changing society. Therefore, social transformation needs to be implemented, to modify living conditions and to make women go from being passive to active protagonists. This implies independence and power, earning an income, having a say to gain independence, redressing unfairness and bringing into play a series of initiatives that in the end will have results even inside the family.

## **Mara Mabilia**

Cultural anthropologist

*Gender inequality and the role of women in development policy*

This discourse will address some women's issues - gender and the role of women in development policy - bearing in mind that progress has been made to gain greater awareness that is careful not to rely on automatism, as this does not work on a cultural and social level.

The first issue is the formulation of analysis tools that are necessary to interpret women's development issues. The first step, in conceptual terms, is to understand the importance of the term *gender* and the possible active role and specificity of women in human development.

Ardner, a British anthropologist who had an untimely death, wrote that women are rather like the cows of the Nuer (population in Sudan): they are watched but not talked about.

A reflection to mean that the models of society that have been created, have been created by men for men, proposing thus a biased worldview. According to Ardner's definition, women are a "muted group", where the term *muted* means a group that is *inarticulate* rather than *silent*. The position of women and their specificity does not emerge in a different light because the question of their position as regards diverse aspects of social issues is not discussed.

This example leads to a consideration of some international co-operation policies that have been made since the end of WWII, where women have played different roles but where actions in favour of women have been, and often still are, conceived by men, or conceived through the predominant structure based on the male model on which women rely either directly or indirectly, explicitly or implicitly.

The *Welfare Approach*: established immediately after the end of WWII, when the dynamics of co-operation began to be more precisely formulated. The colonial authorities, development agencies or NGOs identified women solely in the role of mother and wife. Development policies for women then were restricted to food education.

The *Welfare Approach* was criticised in the early 1970s and was replaced with a new approach called "*Women in Development*" where the intention was to regain and emphasise the active role of women.

"*Women in Development*" was set up, thanks also to the feminist movement in Western countries and above all to specific research on women in developing countries, where the idea of women as solely mothers or wives was rejected. Women were later promoted as productive members of society and active contributors to economic development, and the difference in status and power between men and women in terms of their relative economic contributions were analysed. This led to the introduction of projects for women and their access to resources. This impact, this new approach to women, produced a series of studies and urgent debate on the issue of women, resulting in the integration of women in development strategies. All of this led to a new definition of work and family assistance, the importance of domestic work finally visible.

However, this approach was later criticised, because it ignored the reproductive role of women and the complexity of inter-family relations. It also overlooked the impact of division and of social relations that could restrict women's economic choices and opportunities, concentrating on women as an isolated element or as a uniform group.

Some advice: making certain reflections on the role of women is certainly important, but they should not remain solely principles because the important thing is *how* to implement these definitions and *how* and *how much* society as a whole should reorganise itself around them.

Thus, at the end of the 1970s the issue of *gender* gradually emerged, and the expression *Gender and Development* was coined.

The introduction of the concept of gender was meant to distinguish between biological sex and social gender. The socio-cultural origin of gender was considered, that is to say a process, something which *evolves*, that is *created*. The concept of gender caused a re-thinking of the concept of *equity* in the distribution of resources. It was then thought that resources were to be allocated directly to women and the analysis of gender was used as a diagnostic tool in programming.

The next stage was *Social Relations Analysis* that studied relations, structures, and social processes that determined the subordinate position of women. It believed that the mere re-allocation of resources did not necessarily lead to equality; it saw the division of work

between men and women as a form of social relation that created interdependence and not separation; it challenged the idea that the improvement of women's economic status would increase their decision-making powers; it highlighted the political dimension of women.

*However, speaking specifically about women and thinking about their needs, both practical and strategic leads to other issues in terms of "equity" and above all empowerment in the so-called developing countries.*

If the socio-economic gap heavily penalises women, it penalises them precisely because it also sanctions *cultural deprivation* that puts women in the position of being unable to respond to an explicit request for services. Here we can see how dramatic the consequences of the concept of *cultural deprivation* are on health and on the ability of women to take part in development within the community.

When we speak of *empowerment*, we speak of something that cannot be conferred but must be self-generated, that is to say the result of a process, an acquisition through education, for example, but also through the opportunities that society is able to offer. *Empowerment* should not be understood as an aim in itself, but as a tool to reach an objective, for that *freedom of action* mentioned by Mary Wollstonecraft over 200 years ago.

*Equality* has been used in contrast to *equity* on occasion of the Peking Congress on the condition of women (1995). *Equity* means "fair" or "just" treatment, but within a different natural role, a term (and concept) put forward by Arab and Central American countries (I seem to recall also the Vatican) that undertook to guarantee women citizens fair treatment but not the same kind of rights as those enjoyed by male citizens. *Equality* does not mean the negation of diversity, but equal opportunity in the access to all political, social, human, reproductive and legal rights.

*Accountability* means government transparency and real commitment.

*Gender* as mentioned above, refers to social diversity between men and women, a diversity which is not adequately interpreted by the term *sex*.

*Gayle Rubin defined gender as "a set of processes, adaptations, modes of behaviour and relations with which every society transforms biological sexuality into products of human activities and organises the distribution of tasks between men and women differentiating*

*one from the other ". This definition is quite different from the term "sex", as biological diversity between men and women.*

"The concept of gender radically poses the problem of the social construction of belonging to one sex or the other. Indeed, it denies the chance for the condition of women, that is to say the practical ways in which women's positions and experiences are viewed, to be analysed separately from the condition of men" (adaptation of a quotation from Piccone Stella and Saraceno, 1996).

Therefore, considering gender in this context means drawing attention to relations, to the disparity between men and women, not only from an economic point of view, but also from a welfare point of view. A view that gathers together power relations, highlighting the fact that it is no longer possible to measure the level of the welfare, democracy and culture of a society while ignoring the degree of inequality between the sexes that the same society allows, reproduces and fosters.

In short, what does considering gender mean?

It means bearing in mind the different roles that men and women have in society, differences which are the result of ideological, historic, economic, social and cultural factors.

In many countries gender determines access to institutions, work, resources, health and social services, the power to act autonomously, the image of the person's own sexuality and relations with others.

*According to Amartya Sen, one hundred million women are missing, because they are without rights, because they are considered persons who are denied the right to be self-sufficient and to be aware of their rights, sometimes being denied the right even to exist.*

Therefore, Amartya Sen says that the importance of *gender* as a decisive parameter for economic and social analysis must be considered. He also adds that "the conversion of women's actions is one of the principal mediators of economic change and its consequences are closely linked to many central aspects of the process of development" (1996).

In any case, we should not think of investing in women without investing in their rights and in *empowerment*, because if we do then we burden and ultimately weaken them. For example, a project for an ethics bank in Tanzania was designed especially for women because it was said that they were more reliable than men were and they managed

money better, and this is perfectly sound. Nevertheless, these women need support and help, because they have to attend to their job in addition to their family, children and themselves. It is thus important to demonstrate those aspects of equity, empowerment and gender that often remain mere definitions of principle.



**Alberto Fantuzzo**

Sales Manager of Banca Etica

*Development strategies with a view to genders. The case of Banca Etica*

Banca Etica is a bank that establishes connections with people that have money, savers and therefore in a certain sense it acts as a treasure chest, with entrepreneurs, those that collect savings and finance. It is subject to inspection by the Bank of Italy, to Italian and international regulations, therefore it does not have any special conditions. Article 5 of the statute of the Banca Etica contains the benchmark of the institution: attention towards non-economic consequences, efficiency and sobriety as a component of ethical responsibility, equal distribution of profit, transparency, and participation in company choices.

When it was opened, about six years ago, the first branch opened on 8th March, there were nine employees in Padova, there are now 100.

Some figures related to 31/12/2004: the bank has a share capital of approximately 17 million Euro, it is a popular, ethical bank, there are shares of € 51.60 each, you can become a shareholder with just 5 shares. From the 24,40 share holders at 31<sup>st</sup> December, approximately 21,000 of these are physical individuals and approximately 3,000 of them are regions, provinces and municipalities, shortly to include the Municipality of Venice, there are parishes, arc circles, the main ONG's, the world of equitable-joint and several sales, the world of social cooperation. These are the shareholders of Banca Etica. Speaking of a company social responsibility course means, and subsequently translated into practice, equal opportunities. As far as the outside world is concerned a lot of choices have been made, how Banca Etica has attempted to simplify the financial mechanisms, no share investments and no speculative investments have been made, there are no derivative shares, structured shares, these things that are often proposed to normal savers, the ones that are normally less interested in the risks of traditional banks. We have chosen very special ethical funds, but Italy, for example, unfortunately as in the case of many other statistics, is not listed. Italy is in the second from last position in the OCSE classification of countries, because for example the Amnesty report on prisons is negative,

as the GDP percentage allocated in developing countries is too low, because the power of information is too concentrated. Therefore, some elements will be assessed, in companies controls are made with trade unions if employment contracts are respected, if equal opportunities within companies really do exist, if female and male staff are on equal levels or not. This is also a path that the bank has been following for some time with regards to social company responsibility and an area of products to be sold to customers so that customers make investments that create a principle of equal opportunities, as a consequence or as a starting point.

Equal opportunities in credit. As far as Banca Etica is concerned equal opportunities should exist for everybody, not only between genders: it tries not to distinguish between genders, or religious beliefs, political preferences, social conditions or patrimonial conditions. For example the statute indicates that one of the main principles is mutuality, that is to say that everybody is the same as far as money is concerned, at least they should be. With regards to the principle of transparency the web site includes a list indicating the name and surname of the individuals that have been given money. They have not been designed for women. As far as we are concerned, the fact that equal opportunities exist and can already be found in the principle of ethical and jointly liable finance results in the fact that for us women there are, by and large, potentially, equal opportunities in terms of social cooperation, international cooperation, female entrepreneur activities, micro-credit for company start-up periods.

## **Francoise Bertinchamps**

Partner Co-ordinator Ethics Bank Venice

*Third Millennium objectives for a more humane economy*

Amartya Sen, born in Bengal in 1933 and Nobel Laureate for Welfare Economics in 1998 said that: "Progress does not consist in an abundance of material goods, but above all in a process of social transformation that eradicates the main sources of non-freedom like ignorance, disease, lack of democracy and the indiscriminate exploitation of environmental resources".

In his book, "Development as Freedom"<sup>3</sup>, Amartya Sen advocates the active role of women for social change: "...on the respect and attention for women's welfare they act with varying degrees of energy, such as: their own ability to earn an independent income, find work outside the house, own property, read and write, take part in decisions that do not necessarily concern the family."

The "Report on Human Development" by the UNDP reminds us that 5% of the wealthiest men in the world earn an income that is 114 times greater than that of 5% of the poor. People living on less than 1 dollar a day make up over a fifth of the world's population.

In September 2000, 191 UN countries signed the "Millennium Declaration", undertaking to create a better world. The Declaration identified 8 aims, measured through 48 indicators, to be reached by 2015. The 191 countries undertook to pursue these aims together and to use them to identify needs and development priorities at an international level:

The eight aims of the Millennium are to:

1. Eradicate extreme poverty and famine: The aim is to halve the percentage of people that live on less than one US dollar a day and to cut by half the percentage of people who are starving.
2. Guarantee primary education for everyone: By 2015, in every country in the world, boys and girls will have the opportunity to attend primary school and get their diplomas.
3. Promote gender equality and women's empowerment
4. Reduce the infant mortality rate of children under five to two thirds of that of 1990

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<sup>3</sup> "Lo sviluppo è libertà", Amartya Sen, Mondadori Editori, 2000

5. Improve mothers' health, cutting the annual death rate of mothers by three quarters compared to that of 1990
6. Fight HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and other endemic diseases
7. Ensure environmental sustainability, integrating principles of sustainable development to halt the destruction of environmental resources
8. Promote world partnership for development, primarily in four areas: : co-operation for development, foreign debt, international trade, technology transfer and assistance

**The common pursuit of these aims can contribute to a united and fairer world.**

The UNDP report in 2003 reveals that Italy is 21<sup>st</sup> as regards the Human Development Index (calculated as the average of indices relative to life expectancy, literacy and income). Yet, if we just consider Italy's GDP, Italy is 16<sup>th</sup> in the table.

*Italy is to be found below the average concerning the index for gender empowerment, which takes into consideration women's place in politics, the economy and business, and the distribution of overall wealth. From this point of view it is situated below many Eastern European countries, as well as Israel, Botswana and Namibia.*

*Among 91 countries, Italy comes out best as regards the criteria "gender and education", whereas it is below the average as regards the "gender gap in economic activities" (in the context of a fairly equal distribution). It is also below the average as regards women's access to power or empowerment. Non-agricultural employment rose from 36.5 in 1990 to 40.6 in 2001, while the proportion of income earned by women compared to men was 40%. In Italy in 2001 women made up 44% of the total workforce in the professional and technical sectors, 19% were legislators and managers and 12% were MPs.*

In my opinion, a humane economy means creating social networks that are nodes, relations and flows, in order to increase social benefits. It should be an economy where every factor is fairly recompensed and is not wasted, an economy where men and women, their rights and the environment are safeguarded. From this point of view, social participation, human capital and social commitment as practised in the various associations, NGOs and co-operatives are a huge asset that are often not economically assessed, yet they generate human development and are expressions of freedom.

## **Umberto Musumeci**

Founder of the "Nuovi Equilibri" Association

*Moldova: a micro-entrepreneurial project aimed at women*

In this intervention Musumeci proposes to illustrate, through a concrete example, what the Italian civil community, in particular, can do to intervene in a specific situation of a country which, even if small, still has large internal problems.

Banca Etica is collaborating in order to create a project that proposes the development of female micro-entrepreneurial activities in Moldova, or Moldavia, located between Romania and the Ukraine. The objective of this project, based on the experience of an ONG that has already been working in Moldova for three years in the field of micro-credit, does not only guarantee the possibility for women to start their own working or professional activities, perhaps by funding the acquisition of a sewing machine required to work etc, but also to create the presuppositions and social and environmental conditions so that this activity can continue and develop, with the limits of the local economy, avoiding for example one of the huge problems that leads to intervention of husbands or men in these activities. In Moldavia there are 4 and a half million inhabitants and the forecasts of international organisations indicate that at least one million of them, that is to say 20%, are people that live abroad, people that were forced to leave in a desperate search for work, any kind of work, legal or illegal. In this context the position of women, subject to very important risks, is difficult because liberalization in this country has led to the compression of people's right to employment and the elimination of jobs etc. Consequently, the majority of these one million people that live outside of the country are women searching for employment.

In detail, the project aims at allowing female Moldaves to start small family micro-companies: the project also includes the possibility of creating between an Italian company and, for example, a group of women a laboratory that uses machines that are no longer used in the Italian company, that are transferred free of charge and that can be used to start this activity. Therefore on the one hand existing instruments are used, which would be anti-economic to abandon, and on the other hand these people are not forced to buy new machinery. Banca Etica is undergoing advanced contacts with the Chamber of

Commerce, with Unioncamere and with some small and medium sized enterprises of the Veneto region in order to develop this objective. The intention is to create between 50 and 100 micro-companies, a political rather than financial commitment. This will then be published, training courses will be held for Moldave personnel and also for some department heads, for example in Italy, experience exchanges will be carried out between Italian companies and these small foreign companies, on site work will be carried out so that entrepreneurial skills can truly emerge. This project has aroused a lot of interest and some international organisations are supporting it with financial investments, as this is a three-year project with the objective of creating between 200 and 350 micro-activities with a remarkable relief within the working environment, not only economic but also social.

## **Laura Guadagnin**

Representative of "Centro Donna" and "La Settima Stanza"

*Local communities, global communities. Who welcomes who? "From Centro Donna to..."*

*"I should speak of companies in this context, but to tell the truth I can only speak about the companies that we will create, in the development of the real meaning of Centro Donna and what Centro Donna has been, in a much larger project of centres, of international homes for women, of a multi-cultural nature, it could not be any different for the peace of women in the world."*

The first intention is to create a base in Forte Marghera. This would allow for the history and the life of Centro Donna of Mestre not to be separated from the life of a new centre which is also related to the City of Venice, which has been stripped of places for women. It should be an area that provides hospitality for foreign women, in terms of cultural exchanges with the university, but most of all hospitality on various levels of reception and need. Therefore an area for permanent individuals but also a base for associations and for meetings with immigrants. It should include a study centre for different cultures and religions to be found in the city, therefore relationships between women and their religions and cultures and it should also include research on women and religions, women and spirituality. A study centre for the peace of women throughout the world, with suitable spaces, in a network, therefore equipped with everything that is needed, but also spaces for comfort and rest for adults and for children, contact between various generations, with the presence of Auser, which is another association for the elderly, which in Venice has a rather small office and which includes all of the problems that are related to the invisibility of separate existences. This also applies through the council. The council is a participation organisation that belongs to the Municipality of Venice, organised by the advisors and councillors and accepted by the local administration as a result of all of the work carried out by group politics of Centro Donna. Therefore it was an instrument that was desired but also a success in female movement, a bridge as a distinctive sign of this policy that lies at the top with everything that has led to years of comparison, dynamics between women, between the groups: years of reports, inequality, fostering, symbolic mothers. Life

and literature: earnings of reality that led to the dominance of a form of female community above pure representation, in the council and also in Centro Donna.

Earnings and the capability of creating companies, of creating communities, of recognising the differences and willingness to listen. On various levels, favouring the community form rather than emancipation, individualist that creates a good combination with the political logics also of a patriarchal globalisation. Therefore the line of emancipation that will remove a vital limb from the goodness produced by women, will become engaged with a patriarchal kind of globalisation. An example of inclusive practice compared with diversity can be found in the case of catholic women which at the beginning of Centro Donna were not considered in a positive manner because feminism has had a strong left-wing influence.

We have learned to go beyond this logic and to see women in their humanity, so what has this produced? It had produced the discovery and work on the dimensioning of interior aspects and the lay spirituality of women. This has led to the creation of a common language between them, a way of creating a community and finding common goodness and change. A kind of search for truth, the impersonal nature of goodness, that is to say something that goes well beyond group identity and personal identity and that has created a road that a part of female movement is still crossing.



## **Maria Sangiuliano**

Consultant and Researcher on gender equality, Mediaculture p.s.c.a.r.l

*Differences? Stereotypes and obstacles towards intercultural dialogue between women.*

*Reflections starting with some concrete experiences.*

Intervention proposes to intertwine an analysis on the debate underway with regards to international feminism between women "from the Northern" and "from the Southern" parts of the world and extracted from intercultural relations between women in other countries, providing some local experiences such as the multicultural "Centro Donna" project

The most urgent, open and available themes are related to the deep-rooted and often unconscious trends in the "Western culture" (and also in a "western culture" (and also in a kind of "Western" kind of feminism) in considering women from "other" cultures as victims of motionless traditions or individuals to be saved, hardening of the debate between women that are often subject to it. The question is rather delicate in the current scenario which sees women, in general, exploited by those that follow (or communicates in order to magnify the perception of) a clash between civilization and use the liberation of women as a key element of war intervention as exportation of 'democracy'. It is important to get to the bottom of these problems in order to create the assumptions for solidarity between women in a context of globalisation in which permanent war plays a role that is more and more important. The subject is articulated on a subjective level and also on the political level of equal opportunities. From a subjective point of view, as occurs in any kind of relationship, the key mechanism of relationships between different women (in terms of culture but also social classes, generations, religious beliefs, sexual inclination etc) is to reflect fears and desires, a mechanism in which stereotypes play an important role, positive stereotypes as well as negative stereotypes, upon which the fears of alternation are represented. On the basis of reflections, the relations of symbolic and material power are articulated. With regards to gender equality politics in the countries involved in the phenomenon of immigration, a redefinition and reformulation of the same is essential, something that takes into account how females are no longer just 'autochthonous' women: the multi-cultural dimension should be kept in consideration as a transversal

priority that crosses specific initiatives for empowerment and the visibility of the skills of migrating women, something that in Italy is unfortunately becoming more and more frequent.

Title of the intervention: **Quotas and other strategies to increase female representation: the case of Norway and the subject of the “difference” of women in politics**

The report that will be presented will contain the results of research and work carried out on behalf of WWIFUN (a Free International University for women) with the objective of concentrating on the strong points and the limits of use of affirmative action and in particular the quota of political representation, studying a specific case of Norway. Research has combined a critical analysis of existing literature with 20 interviews with privileged witnesses (members of Parliament, administrative employees and political individuals that belong to different parties, female movement activists, university students). The subjects faced and that will be summarised in this intervention will cover the history of the integration of quotas in internal regulations and in party statutes, but also in the laws of the State of Norway which was the first to set the objective of “giving a good example” in the application of quotas to non elective appointment organisations. The strategies through which women have been successful (transversally to the party-political groups and in synergy, sometimes conflicting, with the female movement) will be explained in detail, which with the female movement have achieved a good dose of creativity to overcome, even in an “imperfect” manner, exclusion from power of the representative policy. The Norwegian experience illustrates how an almost equal representation does not mean tout court overcoming of the patriarchal structures of society, for many reasons and in many environments even more solid in Nordic countries, so much so that the majority of the people interviewed have decided to oppose the North-European stereotype principle as the land of gender equality, right from the beginning. It will be interesting to see how the subject of gender equality has been integrated into political rhetoric of the Norwegian state, how it became a part of the characteristics features of the ‘nation’ and how this is often an obstacle for women in setting even higher

objectives. The same Norwegian feminism has among other things, as a strong reasoning in the promotion of quotas and the inclusion of women in politics, concentrated a lot on the subject of 'differences' represented by women in handling power: the difference of women, from an explosive element and a true bearer of change, was subsequently integrated in the official representations of politics and in the common sense of the main political actors, often confining, even today, with gender stereotypes that risk caging and limits the political life of women.

## **Marie Louise Niwemukobwa**

CID Export, Centro Idea Donna

*From diversities, the awareness of the human rights of women*

Why did I come to Italy? In 1990, at the end of my secondary studies, I received a scholarship financed by the Italian government that has starter development cooperation aimed at my home country, Ruanda. So I come over to study Economic Science and Banking in Udine. So I started my contact with Italy, a country that I knew nothing about. As soon as I arrived in Italy, precisely on 25th December 1990, I found a completely different world from my own. I do not mean to say that there is more than one world, but due to the diversities, even by the way I was looked at I felt different. In good and bad I learnt a lot and I gave preference to my interior growth in an attempt to enhance myself. My contact with women starter after my return from Ruanda (February 1997) where I returned in October 1994 so that I could see the tragedy of the genocide with my own eyes. When a country goes through a war the first thing that is cancelled are human rights. And who are the first victims? They are women and children. Adults decide to start wars and as far as I'm concerned women are adults. And what is the role of adult women in deciding or going through wars? In this way I started to work on this subject in order to find an answer but also to provide my own contribution. After this experience my return to Italy pushed me closer to female associations and cultural associations of immigrants by continuing to develop art inside of me as a way of making my own statement.

I began with the "Centro Donna" in the Municipality of Venice and the "Centro Idea Donna" (CID) association in 1997. After one year I became a part of the Council of the Citizens of the Municipality of Venice with regards to my contact with Italian women. On the other hand I used to go and meet foreigners and I took part in their celebrations. In this way I managed to get to know women from different communities. This passage with immigrants was made even easier by the collaboration, which began in February 2002, with the private radio station "Radio Base Popolare Network", in which I dealt with information on women and the rights of immigrants.

Now more than ever I feel a strong destre to work in close connection with women for women because the evidence collected from Ruandan women and from Italian stories,

especially in Venice, I realised that women have a huge responsibility, if we really want a better world in which to live. We are people, women, mothers and the right education for our children, male or female, may change the world for the best. Together it can be done.

## **Maria Pia Miani**

Architect - Spokeswoman for Centro Idea Donna

*The 'Aurora Diembering' Project, Senegal*

"Aurora Diembering" is a rural development project integrated by the CID Association, which was set up in 1993. It fosters women's empowerment in sustainable growth in third world countries, and is based on ideas and proposals, project sharing and the full participation of organised women; on making the most of human and cultural resources on the territory and on the conscious use of renewable natural resources.

The project takes place in the lower Casamance region on the border with Guinea Bissau, south-west of Senegal, and concerns the northern area – to the west of the Rural Community of Diembering with a population of about 12.000 inhabitants; it is organised by the CID Association in close co-operation with 7 Groupements des Femmes (Co-ordination of women for collective work in the neighbourhoods and villages) in the town of Diembering and the 10 Groupements in the villages of Boujouje, Cachouane, Nikine, etc; the local partner for work co-ordination and for administrative relations is for the moment the Parish of Diembering, represented by the former Head of the College Catholique (high school) Abbè Christian Manga, now Head of the Seminary in Ziguinchor, capital of the Casamance region.

Apart from the creation and implementation of agricultural projects and scholarships, the project intends to set up a literacy programme, as well as a vocational training programme for the workers in the Groupements and the young people who require it, in order to satisfy the necessary requisites for the establishing of Groupements des Femmes in NGOs and obtain legal recognition by the State. Conditions will thus be met in order to designate the Groupements as local partner of the CID.

The project aims to supply technical assistance in the short and long term, financial aid and training necessary to create small infrastructures and micro-credit for productive activities, with "rotation funds", with a programme of activities in the sectors of human resource development:

- agriculture, education, food and health, conservation training, small productive remunerative activities, integrated and compatible tourism, environmental protection, research and enhancement of local history, culture, traditional medicine and traditions.

The project's aim is to modify the situation created by over thirty years of war in the zone between pseudo supporters of national independence and the main army; to improve the living conditions of the population, to foster and sustain the renewal and reorganisation of activities and social life. Recently, following a political change in government leaders, the situation has noticeably improved and this encourages the hope that peace will finally come to the Region.

## **Anna Maria Zanetti**

Journalist

*Women and the Media. Shadows and light of a difficult and unresolved relationship.*

The Italian intermediate system and space for females: an extremely vast subject. The concept that creates the setting for this intervention and that the mass media experience in the market, they are an economic product, they are "goods". But there is another concept that should be kept in mind: the question "women and mass media" is an essential element in order to discuss real, participated and applied democracy.

We will speak of the numerous shadows that exist in the relationship between information and women but also some lights that can be found along the way. As far as shadows are concerned, we will speak for example about the diehard stereotypes of women and the under-presentation of female worlds.

However, when we speak about light we mean a profession that is becoming more and more available to women (in terms of journalism but also television entertainment that has "moved" – even with several restrictions – this representation of female worlds); we can say that feminism has influenced generations and sexes and languages and habits and cultures.

### THE SHADOWS

The media play an important role – some say *a growing importance* – in transforming the perception of reality, in redefining social situations and even in contributing and modifying relationships between generations and sexes. However they are still very far – and this is plain to see – from a sufficient interpretation of the female society. All in all: the press, television, radio, new media (electronic forms) do not offer a balanced picture of the variety of female representation and their contribution to society. The cultural and social transformations that women have acquired in the last 30 years (and that have represented the sole bloodless revolution of the last century) have not been sufficiently registered or elaborated by the mass media system. The female category of managers confirms this (the small number in our country). Female journalists confirm this (Norma Rangeri, from



the Committee for Equal Opportunities from the Order of Journalists said: *"on the TV but also in printed material, the diversity of the roles of real life, of the complexity of the image of women does not exist"*). "Normal" women confirm this, all of us that read newspapers and watch TV and we are all unsatisfied readers, un happy TV viewers (*the growing level of dissatisfaction of female readers towards the press in general and dissatisfaction of TV views is clear - beyond figures –due to the kind of programs shown on TV, trash TV etc*). The UNO (Peking 1995, Fourth International Conference on women) confirmed this and defined the constant transmission of negative images and degrading images for women as the area of crisis.

However some research carried out confirms that: "reality is represented by the media in a distorted manner".

We will speak about some of these, which briefly show how this image is practically *"independent of reality"*.

## DAILY PRESS

Research in this field has been carried out by Gioia Longo, an anthropologist from the University La Sapienza of Rome: the title is *"MediaDonna. Images, contents and contexts of women in the press"*. It was commissioned by the CPO of the Presidency of the Board and was presented in March 2003.

The "female model" that the daily press has underlined is substantially traditional and, in any case, it denies visibility to many "new" realities of Italian women. The presence of women on the front pages of newspapers has a very limited space which is reduced to politics, culture and economy. A lot of importance, however, is given to beauty, fashion and the family. Lots of space and lots of words are dedicated to women in entertainment and women that have been subjected to violence (the women in crime news). Women involved in politics are decisively "under represented".

Briefly, the choice of the press is not at all neutral and it constitutes a powerful brake towards the emergence of the new position of women that already exists in the general cultural imagination and in many realities of society. From these results we can see that women in Italy still manage to go ahead *despite* what is written or not written about them in the daily press.

## WOMEN WITHIN THE MEDIA MACHINE. FEMALE JOURNALISM.

*In the media men find positive models and images through which they can identify themselves (the press and audio-visual means speak about men, on average, five times more than women) much easier than women. However, we have seen that information gives us the idea of a world in which women are still invisible.*

So let's go back to the self-evident point: just like politics, information also requires several sources and individuals in order to create full representation of the various faces of society, a society that is so composite, so rushed, which is developing faster and faster.

Women, the public or the "female public figures represent, may represent a new slice of the market: and an extra push to reconsidering journalism as a service, as the construction of truth and the survey of truth, as a strong push to returning to this constitutional principle of the profession as a question of objective necessity. Taking this bet consciously and responsibly may be the solution towards removing the reservations of "unsatisfied readers" and unhappy female TV viewers. Therefore information pluralism must be sustained, which means considering that democracy lies in the hands of women and therefore they must be conscious and convinced that new languages, styles and perspectives must be created so as not to increase the faults of democracy, to speak about women in a fundamental sector of common living as is the case of communication.

## **Raffaella Lamberti**

President of the Orlando Association

*Applied communication and democracy*

My intervention will speak about the various contexts of communication, while the stereotypes that I am interested in are not really the same ones that interest women, but the stereotypes that represent feminism. Working in a centre, such as the Bologna centre, I see very young people, in the last few years this has led to the well awaited arrival of dozens and dozens of young women, female immigrants. Therefore I am very interested in the approach that bears in mind the gender difference and considers individual differences, this is to say that the stereotype that we must fight against and which we are actually fighting, is not only women represented in the traditional media that is not capable of giving back wealth and the new experiences that many women are going through in the world (as we have already correctly said), but the stereotype of achieved equality, of the fact that we are ok, and also that feminism is something pathetic that women used to do a long time ago... they used to take off their bras, they demanded sexual freedom, they wanted to be like men. All in all, it is something that says "it has all been done already, what's left to be done?"

We are in a region in which Franca Bimbi has worked hard and with great ability. In a text in a book that she used to extract a balance of feminist studies, women and genders in a sociological environment – Franca Bimbi, *Between differences and alterations*. The *Studies of women as proof of cultural pluralism*, in Franca Bimbi (by), *Differences and inequalities. Perspectives for gender studies in Italy*, Il Mulino, Bologna, 2003. – Bimbi states that we are faced with a challenge with which we must go well beyond the pure differences between genders in order to deal with other kinds of differences, such as cultural differences and affectionate preferences. We must recognise the fact that feminisms have provided an important contribution to the cognitive value of difference(s), refusing the sole male individual, with his valence model and his individual powers. Having opened that passage means, for example, these are the examples provided by Franca Bimbi, that after the success of an unusual feminine subjectivity, different kinds of affectionate preferences are self-represented.

The Centre for Women is currently a public space that presents the web of physical, virtual and intermediary spaces. What does "public space" really mean? Briefly: people of my age and who live, for example, in a city like Bologna, were used to living in the square, friendly and political chit chat, that civil passion for which you spend a lot of your life doing things with others and you discuss how you would like your city to be, what you would like to do for the "love of the world", according to an expression of Arendt..

With the revolution of the new media, we have decided that the physical public space should become virtual together. Today there are a lot of young women and not so young women that meet up, face to face or on line, around the ServerDonne and they use channels and sources of information or in turn they produce information and sources. In the last two years there has been an average access of approximately 18 million hits; these have not all been done by readers but the figure is an approximate indication of the vitality of ServerDonne.

I would now like to speak about social communication and the choices made at one point in order to promote active female citizenship. Each one of you has been provided with a copy of the female political Agenda "A desirable city". It deals with the work carried out in 2003, tired of female under-representation and all convinced that in the cultures of female politics we have never only been interested and we will never only be interested in representation alone.

However, in 2003 we decided to deal with three different aspects at the same time: and I will speak of this social communication and in particular of the aspect that I call "applied democracy". Through the use of various meeting and verbal techniques, central action was aimed at women from cities outside of political areas: it has taken time and you have a copy of the agenda. The second level was related to a campaign on the female vote that began in 2004, accompanied by a consistent activity in combining different female paths, which I will also speak about.

The process of construction of the Political Agenda of Women and having managed to decide each single part, having worked for two days in 300 without any real confusion and dispersion, after having met during the 5-6 month period approximately 600 completely different women through individual interviews and various kinds of groups (*focus group, future search*), to then write a report on about ten of them, this was an experience of effective participation. So I would like to go back to participation and to some of

numerous and univocal meanings: participation seen as "I advise you" is the opposite of participation seen as "let's decide together". The method that we have chosen is "*Open Space Technology*" - OST (see <http://www.openspaceworld.org/>), but there are many more. Refer also to the Urban Adventure project by Romano (<http://www.avventuraurbana.it/>), a group of town planners and social workers from Turin who were the first in Italy to carry out participated development with OST and other methods to handle problems such as: Where should incinerators be put? How can extraordinary and efficient access be made to ordinary bureaucratic administration?, How can we make sure that in a district divided by a specific city, the conflicting parties accept each other and learn to live together? And the rest. They do not use gender analyses, but together we have been able to discuss a desirable city for men and women, and we will act on subjects such as: Which is the right nursery for children?; How can I intervene in the living conditions and traffic conditions of the X District of Bologna and I prefer the coexistence of different generations and people that live there? As we can see, for all of this suitable methods for a complicated society are required.

## **Silvana Mura**

The European Centre of Initiatives

*Guide Lines for the introduction of gender perspectives in institutional communication*

The comments that I will provide this morning derive substantially from a project that has been financed by funds of the E1 Measure of the POR Lombardy Region, therefore support to female participation in the market of employment, and this ended in September of last year. My intervention was based on the role that institutional communication can play in supporting and promoting equal opportunities in employment and in the society. I will try to start with a comparison between commercial communication and institutional communication, therefore a comparison between different logics that regulate the mechanisms of communication: related to profit those of commercial communication and aimed at dialogues with male and female citizens involved in institutional communication. Therefore a kind of communication that is not related to profit but to the promotion of behaviours, of models that also respect male and female identities.

We will start with an analysis of gender models directed towards commercial communication. We studied a specific aspect, that is to say the representation of male and female models within the employment market, inquiring into which male and female professional models are represented in commercial publicity. What has emerged from the analysis of the meaning of the communication campaigns of these means of communication? Some even more interesting figures: publicity still makes huge use of the female image, of the female body and parts of the female body. Results show that female professional roles are generally marginal. The use of the female image is still tied to aesthetics, the care of functions and once again the function of seduction. In the representation of professional roles the use of male subjects is still predominant. However which are the professional models represented? On the one hand the amount of professional models: greater variety of the male models and less variety of the professional female models. Furthermore an occupational "gender gap" exists, therefore a division between male models and female models. First of all horizontal segregation: the type of female models mainly represents roles of looking after children, the home, the elderly, social work, teaching. Segregation also from a vertical point of view: the female

models involved in important roles or in any case that allude to such important roles are almost non-existent.

Besides the difference between male and female professional models (male models are much more varied while female models are mainly related to assistance work) the use of traditional models that represent a simplified gender identity continues to exist.

The Guide Lines have been prepared during the project in order to stimulate institutional communication so that it can stimulate a change in the representation of gender models.

First of all the "Guide Lines" have been designed as a reference document for the people in charge of communication of public Organisations in order to guide them towards the creation of institutional messages that take into account the gender perspective.

In particular they are aimed at central communication offices and training and employment centres with the intention of affecting the campaigns for the promotion of human resources within the labour market.

Constant and rapid development of the labour market also requires that institutional communication reviews and adapts the professional models represented.

The guide lines exhort to providing visibility to the male and female models, a minority but real, that find it hard to confirm themselves and that communication does not appear to recognise.

The first Guide Line exhorts to "Transversality".

What does this mean? Adoption of the idea of equal opportunities between men and women as a cultural value that must be promoted and shared within the organisation.

The second Guide Line is equity: extending the promotion of services traditionally aimed at women at the male target and introducing the female target in a transversal manner into messages and other campaigns. If a multi-subject communication campaign is carried out for example on Employment Centres, attention must be made to the use of male and female images in order to indicate that the service is aimed at men as well as women.

Complexity is the third guide Line. At this point we must ask institutional communication to make a further effort, besides representing equal opportunities. This means transmitting images of women in non traditional professional roles and on the other hand men in professional roles that are not typically male. The Guide Lines are always accompanied by good practices that simplify the meaning of words.

Complexity on how to represent the division between family roles of caring. Communication does not only not represent family roles of assistance but it always represents them in association with the image of females. Therefore, if it is possible to associate these subjects to the figure of men in order to involve men in the private sphere.

In order to summarise this we have the Orientation Map towards Development designed to be functional step by step for those involved in communication within public organisations. Therefore the objective, as I said at the beginning, is a proposition not a censure, to launch provocations or to create a discussion or cultural debate around this subject because we believe that perhaps existence of stereotypes in communication is also a cultural problem.



## **Anna Tempia**

Gender Researcher Milan

### *Time management programmes in the municipal territory*

In the 1990s Venice developed various initiatives on this issue, and now Local Government has decided to deal with it in the last few years, in order to promote work/life balance.

Law n. 53/2000, with the provisions contained in item VII, has fostered Trade Union competencies in promoting co-ordination of city time management, already provided by law n. 142/1990, comma three of art. 36.

The tool is "Time Management Programmes in the Municipal Territory" (art. 24), which municipalities with more than 30.000 inhabitants can develop singly or in association with others, while municipalities with fewer than 30.000 can work in association with others.

What is dealt with to create these programmes?

These programmes deal with two dimensions simultaneously: the system of city time management and the most appropriate procedures to change time regulations (that are the result of agreements accumulated over time).

But hours and times make up a system, that is to say something that stays together because there are connections between the different sectors, but where each sector can be autonomous. Working in a systemic manner means first of all examining this galaxy that is the social organisation of time, to assess the relationship between offer and demand of time and benefit, which are expressed by those who carry out productive and institutional activities in the territory and by those who live in this territory on a long- or short-term basis.

Precisely because the temporal dimension interconnects many different subjects and activities together, it is important to be able to assess what occurs through mutual adjustment resulting from change and whether this represents an improvement or not in the quality of life.

But it is also important to promote the best possible co-operation between the subjects concerned, which cannot be taken for granted for various reasons. In many cases needs and aims involved could clash, while the ability that each has to represent the obligations of the other could remain vague.

Who is in charge of implementing time management programmes?

Law n. 53/2000 art. 23 says that it is the municipalities that should implement "the provisions of art. 36, comma 3 of law n. 142/90". The exact words are that "...The Mayor, on the basis of regional and council regulations, also has the role of co-ordinating opening and closing times of shops, public services, as well as opening times to the public of local government offices, in order to promote services that are more user-friendly".

The beneficiaries of these decisions are certainly those that live in the city, and who make use of its services. But there are also the so-called "temporary populations" made up of those who are there for work, study, tourism, or for other various personal reasons.

The Mayor has a direct field of action, which is limited to local government offices, but he is also responsible for co-ordinating and balancing the times of other sub-systems – other minor administrative offices, shops, and public services – which are, however, autonomous,.

The Mayor's role of co-ordinating and balancing in these cases does not provide for a direct intervention in these activities, nevertheless it allows the Mayor to exercise an important privilege, which is to ask the subjects to assess the impact of temporal changes and to acknowledge ways of shifting rigid times and hours, in order to identify better solutions to ensure wider scope for interventions aimed at improving work/life balance.

## **Francesca Torelli**

Research graduate – University of Venice

*Parental leave in future legislation*

The law n. 53/2000, on the one hand, strives to eradicate traditional and cultural models according to which it is women who satisfy family needs, whether it be looking after children or the elderly. On the other hand, the law also stresses children's' rights, reconsidering some institutions in relation to the rights or interests of this subject, rejecting traditional definitions of the mother as sole beneficiary of protection and hence rights.

The first and greatest challenge of this law is to eradicate cultural models.

The new law on parental leave should help to avoid discrimination. When the law regulates parental leave the issue of equal opportunity should always be borne in mind, so as to create conditions whereby it is exactly the same thing if an employer takes on a woman or a man with children, since both can obtain leave. This set is still not real even today. When I interviewed the entrepreneurs in this region, the main problem that emerged was not the five months of maternity leave, but the period afterwards. The entrepreneurs noted that employees with children tended to be more absent from work or less efficient, in other words less productive for a long period. The reasoning underlying laws on parental leave is thus the following: if men also started caring for children, taking leave if the children were ill, employers would no longer find it convenient to take on a man rather than a woman. Indeed, it would be more convenient to hire people without children, but in statistical terms this is hardly feasible. Hence, if the law on shared care should be successful, the employer will have to accept the fact that every now and then the workers have to satisfy family needs. In my opinion, this is one of the most positive regulatory changes to obtain equality also in the workplace.

Provisions for maternity leave have been innovated, in the sense that women can choose to shift the period, from two months to a month before birth, if she is in good health, so that she has four months after the birth. Of course, a medical certificate is necessary to prove that the woman is in good health and that the work would not endanger the woman in her particular condition.

A similar protection in economic terms is provided for self-employed women that have a right to pay for five months, calculated on 80% of the normal income. They also have a right to pay for a further three months after maternity leave. Professional women also have a right to this pay.

Paternity leave is the compulsory leave taken by the father. It is not a right that he has in a direct manner, but it is rather an indirect right. The father has the right to this leave when the mother decides not to take what is her right in cases such as: death of the mother, illness, desertion of the child by the mother or sole custody to the father decided in court. When it is the father who is solely responsible for the child for legal or physical reasons, he has the right to the three months leave after the birth of the child. This aspect has also been revised, in the sense that the father can take all the leave not used up by the mother.

The father does not have the right to paternity leave when the mother is either a housewife or a self-employed worker or a businesswoman and wants to go to work. In other words, when looking after the child in the first few months after the birth is the mother's choice.

Parental leave means not only looking after the physical, but also the psychological and moral needs of the child. The figure of the father has a different role to that of the mother. The child needs a father figure, hence the presence of both parents in childcare. Another change as regards parental leave that could encourage men to take advantage of it is the fact that it can be taken altogether or broken down into days. This means that a worker can take Monday off and regularly go to work the rest of the week. Actually, this type of leave is still not very popular, as parents usually take leave for longer periods, the minimum duration being a month. In my opinion, this is one of the reasons why men take so little leave. They are afraid to lose their role in the workplace, especially if they have a responsible position (this applies also to women). It is true that by law once parental leave is finished people have the right to the same position they had before taking time off, but this is often not the case. In fact, after an absence of six months the worker often finds that he/she has a less important role in the workplace.

One of the impediments to a wider use of parental leave by men is to be found in the reduced income while on leave.

To remedy this it is worth taking leave day by day. In the first place, the period of time is lengthened in which work and family care can be balanced. Indeed, breaking down leave means having one hundred-and-eighty days (instead of six calendar months). In the case of a worker who takes two days off a week, he/she will be able to do so for ninety days, in this way covering a period of almost two years. This means that it is possible to look after the child for four days out of seven, until he/she is over two years old.

Therefore, after having provided a brief but hopefully explanatory outline of the present regulations on parental leave, and highlighting some of the positive aspects of the new provisions, it can be affirmed that the tools exist and we have to learn how to use them.

## **Simonetta Gatti Zara**

Deputy Chairwoman of the Equal Opportunities Commission in the Veneto Region

*New strategies in companies to foster work/life balance*

**Up until recently the problem of balancing work and life was considered to be solely a private problem that women above all had to solve. Nowadays most people agree that this is no longer the case, that everyone is involved and that the problem is not only restricted to the private sphere of workers and companies.**

**It is an issue that comprises the whole of society and its institutions.**

It can be said that the need to devise strategies for reconciling work and life arises out of the combination of two factors:

On the one hand, the current transformations in the strategies for time management and in the lives of men and women, above all in young people; on the other the undergoing transformations in the labour market.

The strategies adopted to foster work/life balance are focussed on three main areas:

1. Working conditions, parental leave and work flexibility in order to promote more time flexibility in the labour market (*measures adopted to support women's employment*)
2. Economic resources, including taxes (*aimed at protecting families*)
3. Work organisation systems such as child care, schools and their services (*these favour the combination of paid work and family responsibility*)

The "slogan" - to promote, support, monitor and provide incentives for work/life balance policies - is strongly recommended by the European Union. Indeed, all members of the European Union should reach a quota of 60% of women workers by 2010.

Today the percentage of women workers in Italy is 50,7% with an unemployment rate of 5,2% (percentage of men workers 75% - unemployment rate 2,2%); will another 10% of women workers in the next five years be able to enter the labour market? What tools will help women to meet this challenge?

**The "turning point": law n.53 / 2000 and its application**

The real turning point in my opinion is when law n. 53/2000 of 8 March came into force, fostering work/life balance from both a legislative and cultural point of view. This contains *Provisions for maternity and paternity support, entitlement to care and training and time management* (better known as *laws on parental leave*) and aims to *promote balance and harmony between work, life, education and relations*.

Moreover funds are given to:

- **training programmes** to reinsert the workers once they return after parental leave, in particular to foster upgrading of skills to deal with possible structural innovations or changes in organisation that occurred during the worker's absence. Privileged company programmes are those that aim to insert the worker in the same position that he/she had before he/she left;
- **projects** that allow the substitution of the self-employed person during leave.
- Since 2000, subsidies from the labour Fund of up to 20 million Euro have been available, 50% of which earmarked for companies with up to 50 employees.
- Actually, no measure however flexible or innovative is in itself a solution as regards work/life balance, but each measure needs to be integrated with the next.
- As a result of these measures there has been an increase in **positive family-friendly contracts** in some companies, which encourage better work/life conditions through innovative strategies, and the role of Trade Unions in promoting support activities which meet the workers' needs for flexibility.
- Many agreements have improved the application of **Part time** in companies- (horizontal, vertical, mixed)

Part-time work has proved to be a valid tool to increase the employment of particular categories of workers, such as young people, women, the elderly and workers out of the labour market. It is a stable relationship, not precarious, which allows more flexibility for the company on the one hand, and on the other it satisfies the workers' family needs.

Negotiating time and supporting people's decisions to offer assistance in the family can become a key element in upholding the workers' rights and overcoming gender inequality, removing the causes of discrimination based on gender.

Patrizia Marin

Chairwoman of the Equal Opportunities Commission in the Veneto Region

*Active Fathers. A Project to raise awareness in the region*

The three countries contributing to the project "Pères Actifs", Italy, Belgium and Luxembourg, have all created laws on the issue of "parental leave". Italy has a law entitled "Provisions for maternity and paternity support, entitlement to care and training and time management" of 8th March 2000, n. 53.

However, it has emerged that few fathers have taken advantage of this opportunity until now, either because the fathers are not aware of the law or because it is little known in the workplace.

In Belgium, for example, it is only since 1<sup>st</sup> July 2002 that fathers have been able to take paid paternity leave for ten days. An awareness-raising campaign in the country is therefore important and necessary to ensure that fathers know about these opportunities and take advantage of them. The Ministry of Employment and Law, project leader, has decided to promote a series of activities in favour of this.

It is thus believed that an adequate awareness-raising campaign "active fathers" is necessary and useful within partner countries for everyone working in the public and private workplace.

The main aim is to encourage fathers in the twenty-first century to actively express their paternity in order to arrive at a fair sharing of parental tasks and to aim at a reconciliation of work and private life.

**Project Objectives:**

- To allow men to take an active part providing information and raising awareness in public administration to encourage men to play an active role as fathers.
- To gain an increase in the number of fathers that use parental leave and an increase in demand.

**Beneficiaries:**

- present and future fathers;
- public and private employers;



- employees and the self-employed;
- social workers.

**Approach and methodology:**

- to organise debates on the changes in roles (through training centres, but also the media, TV etc.)
- to raise awareness among the male population through the theatre
- assess results using research tools

**Activities:**

- To create a campaign of information: publicity, brochures, information leaflets, creation of a web page;
- To prepare training modules;
- To prepare a play (to be defined);

**Expected results:**

- An increase in parental leave
- An increase in "best practice" both in the public and private sector

The project is to have four trans-national meetings in order to co-ordinate stages in the project.

**Approximate meeting dates:**

1. December 2002      Brussels
2. April 2003          Brussels
3. June 2003          Venice
4. October 2003        Luxembourg
5. November 2003      Venice

**Partners:**

Project Leader

Belgium                  Ministry of Employment and Work - Brussels

Luxembourg             Ministry for the Promotion of Women - Luxembourg

Italy                        **Veneto Regional Council - Venice**

- **Regional Commission for Equal Opportunities**
- **Planning Department**
- **Information and Communication Department**

**Project duration:** 15 months

## **Activities**

The proposed activities to increase information and awareness are the following:

**SEMINARS / CONFERENCES** on the issue of equal opportunities and on law n. 53, of 8th March 2000: " Provisions for maternity and paternity support, entitlement to care and training and time management ";

- ☞ **INFORMATION SHEETS** on the principle aspects of the law to be disseminated in different places (family clinics, health clinics, public offices etc);
- ☞ **INFORMATION DESK** in various authorities that constitute the partnership, issuing information on the opportunities provided by the law;
- ☞ **WEB PAGE** on the site of each partner included in the project, containing information on the law as well as on equal opportunities, with links to other more specific sites;
- ☞ **MEETINGS** in companies or between different companies to allow comparison of different points of view in order to find a common line of action;
- ☞ **POSTER CAMPAIGN** outside and inside buses and trains.
- ☞ **TRAINING SESSIONS** in the various courses promoted by training bodies;

The contents and programme of implementation will be defined by all local Venetian actors together, establishing a work table at regional level which will meet at regular intervals, co-ordinated by the Veneto Regional Council.

## **Alisa Del Re**

Political expert

*The stages leading up to the modification of Article 51 in the Constitution.*

Article 51 in the Constitution is located within the "Positive Action Policies" and is primarily an instrument to implement the presence of women in decision-making areas. According to criteria drawn up in a recent study (2004) by the *World Economic Forum* to determine gender inequality in industrial society (wages, employment, politics, education, quality of life) Italy is only 40th on the list, and much further down on the list than neighbouring European countries.

Indeed, Italy is below Argentina, (38th), China (37th), the Russian Federation (24th), France (21st), the United States(16th), Germany (14th), Canada (10th) and England (7th). The top five on the list are: Sweden, Iceland, Norway, Denmark and Finland.

It is the first time since the UN Peking Summit (1995) that gender inequality has been studied in 53 countries (of which thirty are members of the OECD, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development).

The results for Italy are alarming and thought-provoking. In Italy equal opportunities are present in the Constitution. Art. 51 was modified for this reason in February 2003: there is no discrimination as regards legislation, yet the actual relationship between men and women reveals that discrimination does indeed occur (the figures obtained at an international level confirm this). Therefore, local government decision-makers should devise strategies to identify areas of gender inequality, in order to promote and guarantee equal gender opportunities through public policy.

Italy took part in the Peking Summit; it has a Ministry for Equal Opportunities and a Commission for Equal Opportunities at a Regional, Provincial and local level; it has a Councillor for Equal Opportunities at a national, Regional and Provincial level and thus displays a strong framework for Equal Opportunities. Nevertheless, this framework has been unable to shift Italy in relation to gender equality at an international level, nor even at a European level.

Italy finds it difficult to create its own conceptual resources that would enhance awareness and raise it to a European level, both because it has adopted the point of view of making the most of gender difference (which is likely to confirm present conditions) and because the predominant culture is impervious to gender issues.

The issue of gender refers to the specifically male and female role and relationships in everyday life, and how each perceives the other.

The concept of gender, as opposed to women's conditions, is not restricted to analysing solely discrimination or oppression by men. The point of issue is more radical, analysing the social issue of belonging to one gender or the other.

Furthermore, the issue of gender denies the chance for the condition of women - meaning the concrete manner in which women's social ranking and experience is analysed, including subordination and oppression - to be analysed separately from that of men.

Gender offers types of relationships between the sexes, but does not identify the differences either between the sexes (constituent and social differences), or within the sexes, between individuals. Just as each person has his/her own original and particular story based on social position, where he/she was born.

In other words, the uniqueness of the sum of all these differences that make up a person is not taken into account. Therefore, even when equality is implemented in gender relations, this does not mean that the attainment of equal opportunities will necessarily constitute new social relations.

For example, the concept of gender is not present in the political sphere, where there are few women with decision-making roles. Women are considered at most as an added factor, restricted to procreation and assistance.

This is what administrators imagine when they think of women: when we asked more detailed questions about gender policies, they replied: "We have built nurseries for women!" as if all women were young mothers. As if children never grew up.

Such a low conception leads to the conclusion that an idea of gender within politics is not to be found in the culture of the Local Government political administrators.

This type of exclusively reproductive collocation is also a visual collocation, which in politics has a high political significance. As you know, politics is representation.

Women represent the other, whereas the norm is male. Thus, in this type of politics that means representation, the otherness of women is not readily accepted.

### *Today*

Before the modification of art. 51 there was the Constitutional law n. 2 of 2001 for the re-examination of the regions with special statutes, which ensured that the regulation could promote the presence of women.

Then Title V of the Constitution was modified, which states that regional laws are obliged to remove any kind of impediment that could prevent both men and women from gaining access to political roles.

The exact wording of art. 51 in the Constitution modified on terms of equality (Gazzetta Ufficiale n. 134 12 June 2003) is the following:

*"Citizens of one or the other sex are eligible for public office and for elective positions under equal conditions, according to the rules established by the law. To this end, the republic adopts specific measures in order to promote equal chances for men and women."*

In truth our Constitution in the first part, and in particular in art. 3, adopts indifference rather than equality towards gender. This article says: "of one or the other sex", meaning that it speaks of indifference as regards sex. Indifference to gender in Italy is part of the country's culture, and ensures that all references to equality of sexes on an international level are not taken into account.

One has only to think of the International Pact on Civil Rights which is part of the Human Rights Charter; The United Nations Summits, not only Peking, New York and Vienna, but also the World Summit on Human Rights, the one which affirmed that women's rights are human rights; the Cairo Summit in 1994 on population and development, which laid the foundations for the social role of women seen by various religious denominations, for example the control of the body and procreation. There is also the Convention on the Elimination of any kind of Discrimination Against Women, the CEDAW: this convention was held in 1979, and signed by Italy in 1985. In this Art. n. 7 states that the countries that have signed must adopt adequate measures to eliminate discrimination against women, in public and political life.

We have not respected the aims of the convention, even though we signed it, because Italy can do so, since the Constitution prevails, which in this case states that equality is "without distinction of sex".

Moreover, the Declaration of Iula in 1998, now the World Association of Local Governments, states in art. 12 that the systematic integration of women strengthens democracies, and the efficiency and quality of activities.

"If local government intends to meet the needs of both sexes, it must rely on the experiences of both, through equal representation at all levels and in all decision-making sectors that are concerned with government responsibility".

Thus we have international references that are not applied in Italy and it is in this framework that we can talk about the modification of art. 51 in the Constitution.

Principally it can be said that such a modification has not produced any results yet, not to mention a modification in electoral laws.<sup>4</sup> Why is there a delay in the application of equality in electoral laws? These are not enough, being necessary but not sufficient. What is now being asked is a precise commitment on the part of elected local representatives on this specific issue: the issue of equality. It could be a good start in order to go from the "participation" of women in decision-making to "sharing" it.

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<sup>4</sup> Except for law 8 April 2004 n° 90 (Regulations on the election of European MPs and other provisions concerning elections to be held within 2004 (G.U. n.84, April 2004) that states that one or the other sex cannot hold more than two-thirds of the candidacy and the limit will be established at a national level. Parties which do not comply will have their electoral refunds reduced.

## **Maria Sangiuliano**

Consultant and Researcher on gender equality, Mediaculture p.s.c.a.r.l

*Quotas and other strategies to increase female representation: the case of Norway and the subject of the "difference" of women in politics*

The report that will be presented will contain the results of research and work carried out on behalf of WWIFUN (a Free International University for women) with the objective of concentrating on the strong points and the limits of use of affirmative action and in particular the quota of political representation, studying a specific case of Norway. Research has combined a critical analysis of existing literature with 20 interviews with privileged witnesses (members of Parliament, administrative employees and political individuals that belong to different parties, female movement activists, university students). The subjects faced and that will be summarised in this intervention will cover the history of the integration of quotas in internal regulations and in party statutes, but also in the laws of the State of Norway which was the first to set the objective of "giving a good example" in the application of quotas to non elective appointment organisations. The strategies through which women have been successful (transversally to the party-political groups and in synergy, sometimes conflicting, with the female movement) will be explained in detail, which with the female movement have achieved a good dose of creativity to overcome, even in an "imperfect" manner, exclusion from power of the representative policy. The Norwegian experience illustrates how an almost equal representation does not mean tout court overcoming of the patriarchal structures of society, for many reasons and in many environments even more solid in Nordic countries, so much so that the majority of the people interviewed have decided to oppose the North-European stereotype principle as the land of gender equality, right from the beginning. It will be interesting to see how the subject of gender equality has been integrated into political rhetoric of the Norwegian state, how it became a part of the characteristics features of the 'nation' and how this is often an obstacle for women in setting even higher objectives. The same Norwegian feminism has among other things, as a strong reasoning in the promotion of quotas and the inclusion of women in politics, concentrated a lot on the subject of 'differences' represented by women in handling power: the difference of

women, from an explosive element and a true bearer of change, was subsequently integrated in the official representations of politics and in the common sense of the main political actors, often confining, even today, with gender stereotypes that risk caging and limits the political life of women.



## **Loredana Aurelio Celegato**

Councillor of the Citizenship of Women and the Culture of Differences at the Municipality of Venice

*The amendment of the Article 51 of the Constitution. A resource or a limit?*

For some years now an important debate on the need for affirmative action for women, applied to the field of political representation, has been carried out in Europe and in Italy. In Italy, in particular, this discussion is articulated around which action can and should be taken to reduce the huge gap that exists between female participation in professional, social and cultural life, and the substantial absence of women in political and institutional life.

In September 2001 the draft law containing modification of the constitution was presented for the first time, with final approval on 20th February 2003. A constitutional law draft aimed at modifying the first paragraph of article 51 of the Constitution, through specific reference to the principle of Equal Opportunities for access to public offices and to election appointments.<sup>5</sup>

The law encountered a lot of resistance, some of which was not groundless, and different models of thought: if on the one hand the introduction of a principle of equality into the Constitution, especially with reference to election appointments, means referring to the possible regressive valence, why is the paradigm of differences seen as minority strengthening the general prejudice that is to be opposed actually introduced? On the other hand there is a drastic need to invert the trend in order to fill that deficit of representation that constitutes a serious problem in our political system.

It is important to overcome the deep-rooted definition of the parties as "des cénacles masculins<sup>6</sup>" that reproduce their own gender identity. Even with regards to the controversial problem of quotas, it appears that Article 51 may be an important step

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<sup>5</sup> "All citizens of both sexes may have access to public offices and to election appointments in conditions of equality, according to the requirements defined by Law. For this reason the Republic promotes equal opportunities between women and men". This article should be acknowledged in the preparation of city, provincial and regional statutes.

<sup>6</sup> Janine Mossuz-Lavau, as defined by this historical French women. I remember that the constitutional principle of equality for access to election assemblies allowed France to adopt the mechanism of quotas, which led to the rebalance of female representation.

forward, but extending the possibility of women that want to be part of politics is definitely not the only solution.<sup>7</sup>

The reform was necessary, but not sufficient, it is necessary to create a debate within the city, by involving all citizens, it is important to destroy common places, the legends according to which *women are not really interested, they are not present, they are not influential on the territory, they are not trained*. It is important to prove that there are lots of women that want to achieve this important result and furthermore reflect on the kind of representation that complicated modern societies require, and the challenges and goals of contemporary democracy. It is important to open up and to express an effective representation of the males and females excluded, those capable of representing the differences and specificities within a multiform and complicated society, in order to demonstrate full and complete vitality.

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<sup>7</sup> Italy holds the sixty-ninth position in the world in terms of the number of women in Parliament, preceded by all North European countries (Sweden in first position) and by many African and Asian countries, from Congo to Mozambique, from Turkmenistan to Laos.

## **Franca Marcomin**

City Council Chairman for time management, quality of life, town services and diversity awareness - Municipality of Venice

*The amendment of the Article 51 of the Constitution. A resource or a limit?*

A large section of the women's movements continue to discuss the unbridgeable gap between the massive presence of women in the social sector as compared to a minor presence in the political sphere and decision-making.

Basically, women are not a uniform group or a lobby that have to be represented by women.

Something totally different is "networking" practised by many women in the movements, in the relationships between women who are elected and those not elected, between women in institutions. However, networking is not and a law and cannot become so, since it is a practice and is already political. Politics does not only mean institutions and government, but also what is carried out in the workplace, when we go shopping, in care and assistance - activities that have always created communal life and civilisation.

Many women do not place great importance on institutions and parties, believing them to be dying structures not worth the expenditure of energy to help them survive, since power is in their hands and in the politics of the workplace, in relationships, and in assistance - politics of love and not violence which is to be found in the wielding of power. Whereas other women believe in local and international government through the institutional structures that equip democracy.

I would like to cite some enlightened words by Alessandra Bocchetti: "The women's great revolution has yet to be completed. We have changed our lives, our way of thinking and our world view. It has been both exciting but also painful, because it has struck the deepest chords of feeling. We have freed ourselves of patriarchal oppression in the private sphere, but above all in our minds. We thought we had finished. Whereas the patriarch still exists deeply rooted in the public sphere, in the shape of the State itself. Therefore, we must concentrate on this and try to bring it down and start the second stage in the struggle which will be hard, because men will not only have to leave their jobs, but will also have to change the way they see themselves, which is rooted in the idea of a State

governed only by them to which women have access through cooption. A State can be described through its laws and its symbolic places of power. Our State only speaks of men, and thus does not tell the truth, which means that it cannot function well. It is up to women and their allies to improve the story" Catania 1998.

In the Council there are no power mechanisms, because we are an organisation of participation and not on the level of political decision-making. We do not handle a large budget (5000 Euro a year), we do not have any incentives or days off to carry out our activities. It is sheer hard voluntary work, like the associations which are also part of the organisation. This frees us from the dynamics of structured and rigid institutions, but it also means that enormous effort goes into our work which, if not recognised as such, leads to an examination of the effectiveness of our actions and the sense of going on with this work.

We practice a policy of representation and combine this with a policy of relations amongst ourselves: this is the reply to the question put forward by Alisa Del Re, holding together networking between women, the practice present in the women's movement and politics of representation and delegation which is inherent in institutions, in a transversal manner between women where possible and in the projects created together. At the same time we are certainly in disagreement on various issues such as the presence of troops in Iraq, where we have a different ideological position to those of women from the Centre-right parties.

I would like to remind people that the modification of article 51 occurred when the Centre-right was in government. Why was this not done during the previous Centre-left legislation? Would things have been different and how would they have been different? We can discuss our political preferences and analyse them, but women have not gained power through the two phases of democratic conquest and women's rights, but through women's movements and their struggle as women. What unifies us is the fact of being women, and through us and our differences we can continue to create communal life and civilisation as has always been the case in history.

## **Luana Zanella**

Green MP – L'Ulivo Party

*The amendment of the Article 51 of the Constitution. A resource or a limit?*

The need to reform article 51 of the Constitution arises from the sentence of the Constitutional Court n.422 of 1995, in which the regulations that had introduced mechanisms to correct inequality between the sexes in elective institutions were declared unconstitutional.

The system of "quotas" or other measures, present in nearly all the electoral systems in Western Democracy, considered useful for redressing distortions that could otherwise undermine the solidity of democratic order, were declared incompatible with the Constitutional Charter. According to the speaker Judge Mauro Ferri, in the sphere of political representation, it is impossible to differentiate between - and these are the exact words - "identical boxes". However, art. 3 of the Constitution acknowledges and safeguards equality among citizens regardless if they be men or women. Female subjectivity is not acknowledged as juridical, but only as a secondary specification which is not essential to the individual. We are accepted in the *polis* regardless, and not because, of being women. The difference between men and women is cited as one of many differences: social, cultural and anthropological. This is evident also because it complies with modern political and economic theory that stresses the abstract, neutral and universal individual, ignoring differences: the *person*. This is a male mask, which incorporates and annuls the female element.

Actually, women have been fighting against the ambiguity of the *grammar of rights* since the nineteenth century, confirming the lack of neutrality in the concept of *person*, and the lack of universality in the basic principles adhered to by the person. In 1866, when the right to vote was extended to coloured people, women took advantage of this to put their names on the electoral roll, having fought for this for years. It was at this point that the XIV amendment to the American Constitution was made, in which it was made clear that *person* meant a person of the male sex. As we know, this contradiction was later overcome, a victory for women's rights and for the explosiveness of female subjectivity in

history. In the twentieth century, women burst in on the historical scene and transformed society and culture, starting with themselves. A reflection in the legal system of this change was unavoidable. Women had political rights, gradually being accepted into society and the elective institutions. However, this was at a price: they had to give up defining themselves as sisters and conform to the ways and dynamics of politics shaped by the exclusive community of men through the centuries. Male resistance to the other sex as regards the meaning of politics and the different reasons and procedures is still very much present and should be discussed. Political and theoretical debate on this issue is well known. From Carla Lonzi and his "Sputiamo su Hegel" ("Spitting on Hegel"), to Luce Irigaray, with "Speculum", to the prolific feminist production, most notably Luisa Muraro, in Italy, more than anywhere else, critical debate as regards male conventions and procedures in politics have continually cited the conflict between the sexes and the inability to contain this within the pre-established order. This leads to a reduction of the innovative spirit and the drive towards change, and also impedes what could otherwise be a major contribution to civilisation by the women's political and cultural movement.

The weakness in the whole mechanism of the equality theory lies in the reduction of the importance of women's demands, upsetting and deconstructing the traditional legal paradigm, which does not contemplate specific identity or allow for female difference, except as a child-bearing body to be controlled (as can be seen by the recent laws on artificial insemination) or "almost subject", granted personal improvement through equal opportunity. The theory on equality has inspired the reformulation of art. 51, the moderate outcome of a rather disappointing Parliamentary debate.

Woman who are politically interested and wish to take part in institutional activities have to find answers that are more effective than those of the equal opportunity policies.

Faced with an evident political deterioration and the wide gap between this and the country's social and cultural situation, women have the opportunity to stake their differences as a driving force to change politics through procedures, aims and language, so as to open up new horizons and guidance also for men.

I cannot imagine equality without difference, but this should be a difference that interacts, that can even clash, without negating or destroying the other - a difference that can give generously. Only in this way can we really give birth to another world.

## **Patrizia Marin**

Chairwoman of the Equal Opportunities Commission in the Veneto Region

*The amendment of the Article 51 of the Constitution. A resource or a limit?*

The need to reform art. 51 of the Constitution is part of the general issue in a difficult period for representation and an inadequate democracy.

Article 51, in its present form, has the merit of being fully integrated in the existing constitutional equilibrium and of allowing a sort of balance between the different constitutionally acknowledged and safeguarded values. Indeed, the wording used not only respects the intangibility of the principles contained in the first part of our Constitution, but may also be considered as a specification of art. 3, paragraph 2, or rather intrinsic equality.

By now all political parties are aware of the gap between women's presence in the workplace and cultural and social areas, and their presence in politics and institutions. It was therefore believed that art. 51 should guarantee intrinsic and not only formal equality for all citizens in the field of political rights.

In fact, the old wording of art. 51 guaranteed the possibility for all citizens "of one or the other sex" of being elected, and thus fully realised the principle of equality sanctioned by article 3, comma 1. The modification was intended to promote equal opportunity, without predetermining any kind of guaranteed result. Nevertheless, it permitted a higher starting point. In this sense we can speak of a "redressing" of representational imbalance, such that it does not affect the contents of political rights which remain neutral, but at the same time can weigh on the causes that determined the imbalance.

The common conception of political representation, understood to be a formal equality between holders of political rights, is historically deeply rooted in the idea of the state of rights. No one wants to modify the common idea of representation that we have inherited from the liberal State, to return to a corporate, pre-modern view of political representation. Nor does anybody want to undermine the principle of formal equality in any way, which is guaranteed by the current wording of art. 51. What is needed, however, is integration, a correction of the distortions that prevent ideal representation from becoming real.



The function of the new article 51, in its widest sense, is to guarantee compliance with the Constitution of positive actions adopted by the legislator. It does not provide specific indications on the initiatives to be taken, nor does it preclude further, more incisive legislative intervention. It will be up to the legislator to consider the context in which the positive actions are to be located, the specific historical moment when they will be adopted and their intrinsic transience.

The gap between women and politics was even more alarming if compared to the high female presence in public office where transparent procedures are the norm. Transparency, procedural correctness and a greater number of women were linked together. The discussion led the different representatives to conclude that the modification of art. 51 was not only useful, but also necessary, as did the constitutionalists.

It is therefore interesting to see that France, having the same difficulty as Italy in dealing with the low participation of women in politics, through self-regulation of the different political parties has been the first to consider revising the Constitution. The experience of France has shown that constitutional revision has greatly stimulated ordinary legislation to provide greater assurance, sometimes arriving at a partial predetermination of some of the results of the Council elections. There has also been minor intervention in the case of national representation, through incentives that create real equality of opportunity and not directly from the results.

This shows how the modification of art. 51, apart from its undeniable symbolic value, can play an essential role in stimulating the legislator into innovating the present system. Indeed, the modification of art. 51 not only seems to be useful but it is also necessary. On the other hand, both Anglo-Saxon countries and continental Europe have been discussing the type of representation required by complex modern society, and the kind of challenges and goals to be reached by modern democracy. Nowadays, only democracies that will be capable of opening up, of expressing real representation even of those usually excluded, and that will represent difference and specificity in a complex society, will succeed in expressing its total vitality. This is the underlying principle governing the modification of article 51.

## **Tiziana Agostini**

Equal Opportunities Consultant

*The politics of equality and rewriting of article 51 of the Italian Constitution*

*A brief historical excursus on equality*

Recognition of the political rights of women in Italy came about in 1945. Despite the meagreness, 3.7% of the total, the female content of the assembly contributes in a very important manner to the recognition of legal equality between the sexes. Only in 1963 the preclusion of access to public offices was eliminated, in particular to Magistracy. In 1975 the new family right was approved and during the same year Tina Anselmi presented a law draft on the equality of wages at work. Once legal equality was achieved between the genders, in the Eighties the idea that it was not enough just to declare it became more important, but specific intervention was required in order to achieve it in a concrete manner; international organisations such as the UNO and the European Economic Community supported these ideas.

With regards to the female world the idea of "segregation" is introduced, that is to say the exclusion of women from social worlds normally covered by men.

This is about training segregation and professional segregation in a horizontal and vertical direction.

In 1984 the Italian government under socialism set up the National Commission for Equal Opportunities between men and women. In 1987 the Veneto Region set up a similar commission for its jurisdiction through the law 62. The Eighties may even be defined as the "decade of quotes", that is to say the period in which an attempt was made to elaborate legal and regulatory instruments to promote the presence of females where it is non-existent or where there is a very poor presence. The idea of "affirmative action" is also elaborated, a measure aimed at promoting the presence of females in fields or markets in which such presence was absent or residual, with temporary promotion of the disadvantaged sex through different kinds of projects or initiatives in order to rebalance the situation.

The "affirmative action" was introduced into legislation at the beginning of the Nineties, through the application of specific measures and aimed at promoting the presence of women in society.

*From democracy to "equal" democracy: the first proof of affirmative action with regards to elections*

For the first time in 1993 affirmative action was applied to the electoral legislation approved. Article 5, paragraph II and article 7, paragraph I of the law 81/1993 *Direct election of the mayor, of the president of the province, of the town council and of the provincial council* (modified by subsequent law 415/1993) introducing the proportional criteria between the genders in the creation of the lists of candidates for city elections. In turn article 1, letter e) of the law 277/1993 *New norms for election of Members of Parliament* indicates that the lists presented for attribution of seats in a proportional manner, in the case that they include more than one name, must be made up of male and female candidates in an alternating order. Finally article 1, paragraph VI, of the law no. 43/1995 *New norms for the election of councillors of the Regions in an ordinary statute* indicates that in every regional and provincial list none of the two sexes may be represented in a measure of more than two thirds of the candidates.

In the political elections of 1994 there was a huge increase in the number of females: 92 female delegates were elected to the Chamber, 14.60%, and 29 female senators, 8.92%. With the ruling number 422 of 1995 the Constitutional Court declared all of the regulations that allow for an obligatory female presence in the lists as illegitimate. Against this confirmation, formally unexceptionable, but with predictable results, there have not been any revolts or influential stances of disapproval. We can only remember the opposing statement of the regional Commission for Equal Opportunities of the Veneto Region.

In the political elections of 21st April 1996, the total number of female members of parliament obviously fell drastically: from 92 to 70 female delegates, from 29 to 26 female senators; in current legislation, in the absence of anti-discriminatory regulations in Parliament there are 64 female delegates in Parliament (81.39%) and 25 female senators (7.9%).

*I remember that these percentages would have been halved if the DS party had not maintained an anti-discriminatory self-regulation in candidate applications.*

*The debate starts once again: re-writing of article 51*

The basic problem that affirmative action has raised is its compatibility with the constitutional principle of equality: when affirmative action is inserted into electoral regulations, the profiles of constitutional legitimacy are extended to the democratic principle of political representation.

Formal equality is essentially seen in negative measures, substantial equality requires positive support and incentive intervention. In our system the two faces of equality are both coded, therefore it is necessary to legitimise affirmative action through balancing techniques. The ruling 422/1993 by the Supreme Court, that had cancelled all of the laws related to the rebalancing of representation referred to article 3, but in particular it was an important part of article 51, paragraph I (the rule of total equality for the right to passive electorate that does not allow for exceptions). For this reason parliamentary discussions aimed at removing these obstacles for a real pluralist institutional representation, of which female presence is a central element, starts right from article 51 of the constitution, in order to overcome the reasons that led to cancellation of the regulations containing positive action of an electoral nature. Anticipated by the debate within the Bicameral Commission in the previous legislation, in the sitting held on 19th February 2003 the current Parliament approved the *Constitutional law as modification of article 51 of the Constitution*, published in the Official Journal no. 134 dated 12<sup>th</sup> June 2003.

The main objective was to provide constitutional cover to the introduction of affirmative action in order to encourage the access of women to public functions and in election functions. The law no. 90 of 8th April 2004 *Norms related to the election of members of the European Parliament and other regulations related to elections to be carried out during the year 2004* (Official Journal no. 84 of 9<sup>th</sup> April 2004) immediately established that in every list the number of candidates of the same sex could not exceed 2/3 of the total number of candidates.

*Reform of the V title of the Constitution and new regional Statutes*

We must remember that before the reform of article 51 important anti-discriminatory regulations had been introduced, such as the reform of Title V of the Constitution and of the Statutes of the Regions with special statutes.

In particular the new paragraph 7 of article 117 is extremely important as the Constitution indicates that the regional laws must remove all obstacles towards total equality between men and women.

Re-writing of the regional statutes and of the relative electoral laws is very important in order to rebalance representation, also in order to provide concrete instruments that may help to eliminate the difficulties of women being elected.

I must remind you that the number of females elected in regional councils is currently 97 against 973 men and 13 females against 120 men are councillors. Reading these figures highlights the permanent North-South difference, with the highest number of women elected in Trentino Alto Adige and the lowest female presence in Puglia, with no women at all in the council and on the board, and the influence, on this level of representation of political belonging.

In particular the Veneto Region has not created a new statute and a new electoral law and therefore during the next elections in spring, female candidates of our territory will be faced with the traditional mechanism of single preferences, which traditionally favours the most famous candidates (and this is not the case of women), the more patronage individuals (and this is not the case of women), those that use solid apparatus (and this is not the case of women), those that provide important resources (and this is not the case of women).

Other kinds of electoral mechanisms should have been and should be considered, not only political tricks but concrete instruments to promote skills and talents, that have nothing to do with writing the name of a candidate on the ballot paper.

I refer to the regulations adopted by the Tuscany Region, which has created a new statute and a new electoral law. In this case it includes the abolition of the preferential vote, replaced by the list vote on the basis of candidates from regional and constituency parties, indicated directly on the ballot paper. The so-called "list" is replaced by regional candidates. The presence of at least one third of candidates within constituency lists is

obligatory (the equivalent of current provincial electoral constituencies) and elections follows the order of the position of male and female candidates.

To conclude we must point out that the rebalance of representation is an objective that is not to be ignored in our country, but the real question that hides behind this problem is still open: the reality of a society in which the influence of women in cultural, social and professional fields has increased in quantity and quality, but which is still based on a male-only political and institutional system.

## **Giovanna Badalassi**

Gender Budget Analysis Consultant

*Gender Budget Analysis as observed in the Province of Genoa. The case of the Municipality of Sestri Levante*

The City Council Office for Labour Policy and Vocational Training in the Province of Genoa has presented a study on the analysis of the Public budget with particular reference to gender, applied for a trial period to the budget of the Municipality of Sestri Levante, partner in the initiative.

The aim is to develop new and more effective planning tools in local government policy: European directives for the promotion of local development and adequate participation of women and men in the labour market have moved the City Council Office to critically examine the tools of analysis used to plan local policy.

Awareness of social and economic equality based on gender diversity has determined the need to create tools that closely integrate work and social policy, which support the family and above all assistance and care.

Only by combining and co-ordinating policies implemented by various qualified local authorities in the same territory can the tools be used most effectively for the promotion of employment for women.

The trial in Sestri Levante aims to propose an application of international guidelines at a local and territorial level, integrating previous interpretations of gender. The role of Local Government as regards gender diversity, at a municipal and provincial level, should be carefully assessed: daily direct contact with the needs of citizens and work competency, services for minors, families and weaker sectors, offer the institutions tools to develop gender policies in a more positive and effective manner.

In keeping with this premise is the fact that the analysis model of the study is above all practical, offering a working document to guide administration on gender-sensitive decisions. It does, however, keep theoretical contribution as a constant reference point.

It is therefore advisable to recall the four objectives underlying Gender Budget Analysis: equality, efficiency, transparency and awareness. Equality stresses the apparent neutrality of budget decisions: since expenses that are most important for gender concern current expenses, these can be included in future budget cuts, thus creating discriminatory gender policy. Efficient management means enhanced awareness of the territory and thus an improved use of resources and better co-ordination between qualified bodies. In the budget framework and overall policy that emerges, transparency means identifying the areas that are most concerned with gender diversity, and their margins of discretionary powers. Awareness implies the need for administrators to be part of this initiative, agreeing on objectives so that gender prospects can be included among decision-making tools and policy planning.

The principal targets of the study are clearly local government administrators who apply gender budget analysis: it is evident that a body that willingly takes part in this type of research is already aware of gender issues.

Thus, the first priority of the project was to prepare a practical handbook later used in the municipality of Sestri Levante which took part in the initiative.

The proposed methodology analyses and reworks data on the population, on services and on the authority's budget in four stages:

- a definition of potential demand for gender-sensitive services
- budget reclassification by issue
- an analysis of the offer of services
- a matching of demands in the territory with services through the use of appropriate gender ratings

This method helps to understand the population's requirements, the local authority's response to these requirements through its services, and costs and types of funding to be analysed.



## **Mara Bianca**

Spokeswoman for City Councils

*Gender Budget Analysis in the Municipality of Venice*

The issue of Gender Budget Analysis has been discussed for the last ten years in the sphere of Equal Opportunities.

It was only between 2003-04 that the Council decided to experiment with adopting a method approaching Gender Budget Analysis also in Venice, with the first trial periods in the use of 'social and participation budget'.

The Council is a body in the Municipality of Venice having the role of promoting the presence and contribution of women in city government and was established by a Council Statute.

In the last few years this body has been balanced between 'equality' (a sphere which is assigned institutionally) and 'diversity' (which is the spirit of a large number of women who are involved). The decision to remain poised between the two is compulsory owing to the composition itself of the body. It determines a certain type of organisation of its initiatives and interventions, and of the methods and practices to which these initiatives are adapted. Inevitably, concrete initiatives and interventions are those that succeed in getting on well with the ambiguous nature of the Council.

The issue of Gender Budget Analysis posed a kind of contradiction because on the one hand its potentiality was perceived precisely in relation to the institutional work of the body, but on the other hand this could only lead to problems in trying to involve a large number of people, due to the complexity of the issue, lack of qualification or specific cultural preparation on these themes, and the highly specific and elaborate process of formulating the budget which is difficult to check.

In any case the Council committed itself to holding some meetings with the Council Budget administrator, Dr. Giampaolo Sprocati, who allowed the process to get under way, picking out people within the structure who could co-operate in drawing up work plans and acquiring useful material.

At this point, last Summer, plans were drawn up as follows: on the one hand the Council would identify a sector in the Administration that could be interesting in itself and that

could establish the sphere of research in the first part of the experiment, and on the other could be the material for research in the early experimental stages, and on the other the local government office would verify the possibility of acquiring resources to support this project. In particular external consultation was thought to be useful in supporting research, and at the same time research was undertaken at the local universities to find students who were willing to attend vocational courses co-operating with this project.

The Council chose the sector on culture.

Generally speaking the idea was to:

1. acquire non-uniform data by gender on the use of cultural initiatives and activities;
2. acquire non-uniform data by gender on people involved in services providing and distributing cultural activities;
3. determine the sum of resources and their distribution.

Apart from physical impediments that rendered the process more difficult there were various problems that still have not been solved:

- the difficulty of finding a convincing format for the project. In fact, most projects that include co-operation between various public and private bodies, with significant technical and financial support are obviously more successful and there is a wide gap between this and our reduced means.
- problems in balancing authenticity and meaning that according to the Council the project should have had, in particular ensuring a virtuous circle between inside and outside (the administration) and between high (professional competence) and low (no specific technical training yet the desire is to have one's say in establishing gender citizenship), and a technical and operative dimension without which the project cannot stand.

At this point the situation is a stalemate which we hope to be able to solve soon, perhaps with a few more resources. Lastly, the Municipality of Venice has agreed to take part in the Project PLEIADI (*percorsi di gender auditing negli enti locali per innovare le pari opportunità* - gender auditing methods in local authorities to innovate equal opportunity), promoted by the Ministry of Welfare through law n. 125 which envisages adhering to a network of public institutions (municipalities and universities) that will implement a guided

and monitored Budget Gender Analysis. The leader of the project is a private subject. The future realisation of this project with the participation of the Municipality of Venice would enable the acquisition of resources above all for support and monitoring, but also the chance to be in a network.

It should be stressed that it is thanks to the explicit request of the Council that this meeting has been able to take place and I hope that the incentives and suggestions discussed here can be effective in taking up discussion in the future.

## **Natalia Izzi**

Equal Opportunities Consultant from the Municipality of Rome

*Participation Budget: the experience of the Municipality of Rome*

The participation budget is a political project that enhances local resources and differences through the promotion of processes of conscious autonomy and dealing with refusal of the hetero-direction trend of the market. It is a kind of globalisation from below, which combines traditional institutions of typical decisions of delegated democracy with other decision making institutions that involve the majority of individuals representing the social and economic context of the area.

In Rome, the pilot experience of the XI Municipality considers the importance of the role carried out by the primary decentralization structures, with a view to creating a procedure of good local administration and to redesign the general role of the local government as not just an instrument of administration but also of local government.

The "Sensitisation" Project was launched in February 2004 with the constitution of an operative team and sharing of the action to be undertaken with the Delegate Councillor of the Participation Budget (PB) of the RM XI Municipality. Subsequently the Project was presented to the spokesmen (elected in January) during a public meeting held in the Council Chamber of the Municipality.

The Project team was introduced into the district Assemblies in March.

Seven districts were involved:

SanPaolo/Marconi;

Ostiense;

Ardeatina/Tormarancia;

Montagnola;

Garbatella;

OttavoColle/Tintoretto;

Roma70/Rinnovamento;

On the whole 1498 citizens took part in the meetings<sup>8</sup>.

Since the beginning of the Project there have been 790 participants, 53% of which were males and 47% females.

The age groups of the participants were divided up into 5 groups:

Group 1 = no minors (14-18 years of age);

Group 2 =170 youngsters between 19 and 35 years of age;

Group 3 =161 adults between 36 and 50 years of age;

Group 4 =170 adults between 51 and 65 years of age;

Group 5 =154 elderly 66 years of age or more.

Working activities with the highest level of representation are classified in seven categories.

30 students; 82 pensioners; 60 employees; 38 professionals; 13 unemployed; 3 temporary employees; 11 other.

During the meetings an "assessment module" was distributed (which indicated the level of appreciation of various moments during the day (welcome; group work; management of discussion; notes). Through the choice of a value of between 1 and 7 (1 is unsatisfactory and 7 very satisfactory) each participant was invited to express his opinion in order to facilitate evaluation of the quality aspect of the project.<sup>9</sup>

With regards to the PB process in its entirety, we can see:

The homogeneity of the participants in terms of gender (table 1)

The absence of minors in the PB process (table 2)

The homogeneity of other age groups (table 2)

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<sup>8</sup> This figure corresponds to the total number of participants from the different stages of the PB process: election of the spokesmen (January 2004) ; District assemblies (February – March 2004); Plenary Assemblies (May-June 2004).

<sup>9</sup> Filling in the form is optional.

The belonging of many people to organisational structures (District Committees, Centres for the Elderly etc) (informal data)

The important presence of youngsters between 19 and 35 years of age, in some districts such as Garbatella and S. Paolo where youth associationism is very common also due to the territorial presence of the University Roma Tre.

For this reason important work has been carried out in order to define, at any time, the forms and rules of comparison, in an attempt to facilitate and support people that are not used to taking part in extended discussions. Therefore establishing forms of discussion and most of all succeeding in having them observed at all times was the fundamental element of the participation process sustained by the team.

It has emerged that the activation of a numerically suitable work team, capable of supporting the entire process and which can update and involve those involved *in itinere* during execution of the work, may be useful.

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