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## Eurobarometer on women and EP elections: politics still a male dominated world

Most women want the next European Parliament to guarantee equal pay for equal work, promote day care facilities for children, include child-minding years as pensionable years and combat violence towards women, according to a Eurobarometer Flash survey presented in the EP on Wednesday on opinions and expectations of European elections. The poll shows significant variations among countries, but a common view is that European politics is a male-dominated world.

Additional research published on Wednesday showed that women also give priority to consumer protection and public health measures.

### Different perspectives

European Parliament Vice-President Rodi Kratsa-Tsagaropoulou said "On the eve of the International Women's Day and the forthcoming European elections this special Eurobarometer and the socio-demographic analysis give an added value to our efforts to come closer to the European citizen. They offer to us, at the European and national levels, important elements about female voters such as their expectations, their image of the EU, their priority policies to be defended or discussed during the campaign, and their participation in politics at European level. This is of a great significance as 83% of women and 76% of men agree that women can bring a different perspective to politics".

European Commission Vice-President Margot Wallström said: "Eurobarometer results show that a large majority of Europeans agree that men dominate politics and that women can bring a different perspective. A democracy which does not make enough room for 52 per cent of the population at the decision-making table is no real democracy at all. A concrete opportunity for change will present itself soon, when European Parliament elections take place at the beginning of June. Decisions are made by those who turn up! Let's work together so that as many Europeans as possible and at least as many women as men will take this opportunity to get out on polling day and use their vote for candidates who believe in issues which are important to them."

### Media visibility

Professor Susan Banducci, of the University of Exeter (UK) highlighted the importance of the campaign period and how female candidates' visibility in the media has an impact on female voters' participation. Angela Buttiglione, Director at RAI Television in Italy, spoke about apathy towards politics in general and said she was "almost convinced that women don't want to go into politics since they want to do other professions".

### Women "holding back"

# Press release

Mercedes Riederer, Editor-in-chief of Bavarian Rundfunk in Germany and like Mrs Buttiglione a woman pioneer in political journalism, said that areas of concern to women today are more difficult to generalise. Angela Mills Wade, Executive director of the European Publishers' Council, said she didn't believe that a lack of female participation in politics or elsewhere was due either to a lack of ability or a lack of legislation, but rather to women "holding back".

Pilar Martín, director at RNE-Radio in Spain, said she had always been against quotas and instead advocated building social conditions that facilitate having both a career and a family. Irini Karanasopoulou, political editor at TA NEA in Greece, underlined that flexible working hours should be possible for both women and men. UK writer and broadcaster Beatrice Campbell claimed that men's attitude to housework has changed little, asking "what will the next generation's revolution be?".

Closing the seminar, Women's Rights Committee Chair Anna Záborská referred to research on areas of interest to female voters and said "their priority list reflects the work of our committee and if we want women to be interested we must communicate what we do". As an example the committee's work, rapporteurs Edite Estrela and Astrid Lulling presented their draft opinions on the family package.

## **More than 40,000 people surveyed**

35,000 women and 5,500 men in 27 countries were interviewed by telephone on their perceptions of European politics and more specifically on equal opportunities. The objective of the poll, commissioned jointly by the European Parliament and the European Commission, was to get a clearer idea of women's expectations of the European Union in the run up to the elections of 4-7 June, and in the context of International Women day on March 8.

## **Politics: 'a male-dominated world'**

The majority of women surveyed, and also of men but in a lower proportion, agree that politics is a male dominated world, the percentage being especially high in the Czech Republic, Poland and Portugal. Most respondents would like to see more women in politics, up to half of the interviewees wishing to see at least 50% of MEPs being women, but only a minority, 10%, considering the use of mandatory quotas to be effective. When choosing a candidate, the most important factor for women is experience in European issues, 10 points above political orientations. In deciding their vote, 37% says they decide on the basis of campaign issues, while 29% says that they always vote for the same party. For 25% of respondents, the personality of the candidates was the key factor. Men tend to give the same weight to experience and political orientation, according to the survey.

When answering the Eurobarometer Flash poll, 46% said their interests as women were not well represented in the EU, with 39% feeling they were well represented. Women in Luxembourg, Netherlands and Denmark were the most satisfied with how Europe takes into account their interests, with Latvia, Bulgaria and Hungary at the opposite end.

## **Policy priorities**

To ensure equal opportunities in general, the majority want more efforts to end the pay gap and to combat violence against women. Equal access to employment is cited in third place.

To promote family - work balance, the next European Parliament should be acting in different areas, such as including child-rearing years in the pensionable period and facilitating access to childcare facilities, according to the majority of responses. Differences in this area persist on a national basis, with women in Slovenia, the Netherlands and Romania considering that their personal lives were least hindered by work obligations, and at the other end of the spectrum women in Greece, France and Slovakia finding it the hardest. Those with highest education levels were the ones most likely to say they find difficulties in reaching an adequate balance.

# Press release

The majority of women report that they do not feel discriminated by gender, with 32% reporting the contrary, with the biggest percentages in Sweden, Greece, Finland and Hungary. 13% still feel discriminated against at home, this percentage being higher in the UK (21%), Greece (21%) and Ireland (17%).

## **Consumer protection and public health**

The European Parliament also published today a research study on previous polls, with the aim to explore difference in attitudes between women and men on general European issues and showed that women would like Europe to be more active in consumer protection and public health.

Based on the answers to previous polls over a period of 18 months, the socio-demographic research, commissioned by the European Parliament, confirms that women are more negative than men regarding the economic situation, the risks of globalisation and the impact of the euro.

When asked how often do they discuss politics with friends, the gap between genders is obvious: 34% women never do, compared to 23% of men. The analysis, amongst other, shows that women give priority to consumer protection, public health, whereas men give higher priority to the fight against terrorism and climate change. Women feel themselves less listened to in politics than men and are, on average, less interested in European issues. But in the last European elections in 2004, their participation rate was overall the same as for men.

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