

European Women Criticise the Media

A Council of Europe seminar held on 21-23 June in Strasbourg, France met to discuss "The Contribution of the Media to the Promotion of Equality between Women and Men".

The discussions in which some 60 experts and media representatives – mostly women – from 21 European countries took part, focused on three major themes:

- the "role of the media as agents of social change",
- the "employment policy in media organizations" and
- the manner in which advertising perpetuates sex-stereotyping.

The seminar came out with the following conclusions:

–The media have a major impact on the social behaviour of individuals and should endeavour to mirror the current state of society and avoid presenting an out-moded picture; they must therefore portray women in the role they actually play in modern society, particularly in employment. Special adult education programmes should be devised in simple language for specially

disadvantaged groups of women (migrants, rural communities etc).

– As women are distinctly under-represented in posts of responsibility within the media themselves, specific opportunities for training (including branches traditionally reserved for men) should be made available for them and, where applicants have equal qualifications, preference should be given to women candidates until genuine equality of treatment has been achieved. Greater participation by women in planning programmes would also give them the chance to represent the feminine point of view in areas traditionally regarded as being a male preserve (politics, business, etc.). In the media, both men and women should take part at all levels and in all departments, particularly in editorial posts.

– There should be absolute respect for women's dignity in advertising. The effort should also be made to avoid portraying men as ridiculous or clumsy when confronted with household tasks; the same applies to women in technical matters. Above all, advertising should refrain from presenting aggressive, dominating or violent behaviour as the ideal male norm.

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1983/3, p. 39)