

The Situation and Prospects of Gender Equality in Hungary and in Europe

A follow-up publication on the S&D Group's conference on 18 November 2010

CONFERENCE ON GENDER EQUALITY

S&D Meeting in Budapest

The Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament held a group meeting in Budapest in the middle of November 2010. On the fourth day of the meeting, a conference was held jointly with the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, where the group expressly focused on human and citizens' rights, and gender equality.

In this publication we summarized the lectures given at the conference.



GOVERNMENT'S SOCIAL POLICY IS CATASTROPHIC

We need help from Europe

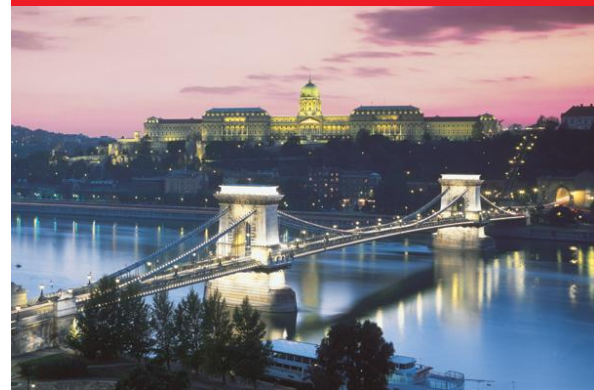
'The government uses all possible tools to mask unemployment data. Keeping women at home is a good way to do that. At the same time, this policy is not effective, all studies show that more children come to the world when women are present on the labor market, feeling safe,' said the Hungarian MEP in her lecture. Zita Gurmai also asked fellow European politicians to raise their voices whenever the Hungarian government breaches basic human and European values.



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Group of the Progressive Alliance of
Socialists & Democrats
in the European Parliament



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WELCOME FROM THE FRIEDRICH EBERT FOUNDATION

The Most Effective Way to Step Up for Gender Equality is to do it at the European Level

In the name of the Friedrich Ebert Foundation Heinz Albert Huthmacher welcomed the participants of the conference. He said that the most effective way to step up for gender equality is to do it on a European level, that is why such events were important.

He stressed that the Friedrich Ebert Foundation has always considered gender equality as a crucial issue, that is why they took part in the organization of the conference, that is why they created their platform called "Women and society".

Heinz Albert Huthmacher is the director of the Budapest office of the Friedrich Ebert Foundation.

More information on the office:
<http://www.fesbp.hu>

**FRIEDRICH
EBERT
STIFTUNG**



COMMEMORATION CEREMONY

Remembering Anna Kéthly

The vice-president of the European Parliament, MEP Miguel Angel Martínez, the former president of the Hungarian Socialist Party, Ildikó Lendvai, and current president of PES Women, MEP Zita Gurmai paid tribute together to the second Hungarian female MP, by visiting her memorial tablet at her former school.

Mr Martínez said in a short speech that he was proud that during the 60s he had the chance to personally meet Kéthly who impressed him very much: "This fragile, gray-haired woman had an unbelievable ardor and a determination of principles, and followed world events with a youthful curiosity". Besides her audacity, she was farseeing and saw the European situation quite factually. Already then, in the 60s, she said that Hungary could never be free

without a free Europe – therefore she opted in favour of a free and integrated Europe.

The visit took place during the S&D group meeting in Budapest.

Miguel Angel Martínez is a Spanish MEP and the Vice-President of the European Parliament.



WE SHOULD CONCENTRATE ON THE DIMINUTION OF DISADVANTAGES

Poverty Became Female Faced

Katalin Koncz, professor at the Corvinus University of Budapest, said in her lecture that the situation of Hungarian women deteriorated since 1989. Their employment rate has decreased, they have less chance to return to the labor market and their participation in political decision making has decreased as well. Female unemployment, on the other hand, has increased, while poverty became female faced. According to Koncz, European Union norms are not considered as a forcing obligation in Hungary, because the Union does not impose sanctions in this field.

She stressed that the disadvantage of women is fewer when it comes to full time employment, the real problem is part time employment, which still bears discriminatory traits.

Concerning the political participation of women, she noted that only 8.8 percent of legislators were women following the 2010 elections, with which Hungary ranks 140th among 186 countries, and precedes only Malta in the EU. She stressed that even if

we wanted to diminish stereotypes, for example in school books, it's hard if the majority of families work according to these stereotypical schemes. She considered that therefore we have to concentrate on the diminution of disadvantages.

Katalin Koncz PhD is professor at Corvinus University of Budapest and director of the Women's Studies Center.

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SOCIAL POLICY OF THE GOVERNMENT IS CATASTROPHIC

We Need Help from Europe

Hungarian MEP Zita Gurmai delivered a speech during the conference. She said that Hungary was in a difficult situation and that it would be more and more difficult for women as well.

She noted: "The current government, when in opposition, lied about the situation of the economy. Although the Bajnai government managed to mend the budget by the beginning of 2010,

there was absolutely no room for tax cuts. Fidesz decided that it needed additional incomes. Therefore it waded through the rule of law, the Constitutional Court, through sacred private property rights, and through the pension funds of the Hungarian people that has been accumulating for long years. The economic policy of the government is the policy of confiscation, the budget is a house of cards, which may shatter at any moment."

Zita Gurmai considered the social policy of the government just as catastrophic, especially when it comes to its effects on



child bearing. "The government uses all possible tools to mask unemployment data. Keeping women at home is a good way to do that. At the same time, this policy is not effective, all studies show that more children come to the world when women are present on the labor market, feeling safe". At the end of her contribution, MEP Gurmai asked fellow European politicians to raise their voices whenever the Hungarian government breaches basic human and European values.

MEP Zita Gurmai is vice-chair of the Committee on Constitutional Affairs and president of the Women's section of the Hungarian Socialist Party.

Her website: <http://www.gurmai.hu>

CHILD BEARING SHOULD BE A COMMON SOCIETAL ISSUE

Complex, long-term plan needed

Member of the presidency of the Hungarian Socialist Party (MSZP), Ágnes Kunhalmi, considered that encouraging female work, attainment of female economic independence are important steps towards gender equality – however, it is hard to obtain results thanks to the gender pay gap and stereotypes.



Considering the childcare services for children between 0 and 6, she noted that founding a family should be a common societal issue, and under a complex long term plan we should amend the imperfections in childcare, and harmonize labor market tools among member states.

Ágnes Kunhalmi is a Member of the presidency of the MSZP.

MARITA ULVSKOG

Orbán Gave Us No Answer

The Swedish MEP noted in a short contribution that during their stay in Budapest, they had the possibility to meet the members of the Hungarian government, that includes no female minister. As she said, PM Viktor Orbán could give no concrete answer, when he was asked about his government's outdated, family centered policies towards women.

BRITTA THOMSEN

We Should Prepare for a Demographic Crisis

The Danish MEP noted in a contribution that besides the economic crisis, it is the demographic one we have to be prepared for. By 2025 10% of the population will be over 85, 90% of which will be women. Therefore it is very important to harmonize pension systems, where differences may be great due to maternity leaves, she said.

CARMEN ROMERO LÓPEZ

We Should Battle for our Goals at the EU Level

In her lecture, the Spanish MEP said that while in the 70s adultery was a crime in Spain, and women had no right to vote, now their proportion in political decision making is over 40%. She said that it could not have been possible without the Spanish socialists, the quota system, the modification of the electoral law in favor of women, and without many adult formation programs made available to women. At the end of her presentation, Romero Lopez declared concerning the EU 2020 strategy that the goal concerning the 75% employment rate cannot be carried out without the more active participation of women. She considered that we have to fight on an EU level to obtain this goal, but local cooperation was also necessary.

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WE SHOULD NOT FORGET RURAL WOMEN

Put an End to Stereotypes

Belgian MEP Marc Tarabella at first talked about his report that proved to be quite important, as it stood out for paternity leave, for measures against the gender pay gap, and for sexual and reproductive health rights. Concerning paternity leave, MEP Tarabella stressed that a consistent EU level legislation would be necessary.



As for stereotypes, he noted that we should not be surprised to see a woman work in a “masculine” field, and we should not be surprised to see a man work in a “feminine” field. He called attention to the fact that campaigns are needed in order to burn anti-sexist pictures into the collective

subconscious, so that no one is surprised to see a woman drive a bus or a man being a nurse. The Belgian MEP stressed at the end of his lecture that it was important to be able to reconcile work and private life. “Key questions are flexibility in time and in access to work, without which mothers cannot get on”, he said. As a conclusion, he asked his colleagues not to forget rural women, who sometimes have greater disadvantages than city-based women.

MEP Marc Tarabella is member of the Women's Rights and Gender Equality Committee.

His website: <http://www.tarabella.eu>

SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES SHOULD BE DIFFERENTIATED

It's Love and Responsibility That Matter

German MEP Jutta Steinruck at the beginning of her lecture presented the German family policy. At first, she talked about the so called “Ehegattensplitting”, under which the income of spouses are added together, then divided into two.

She underlined that this type of taxation favors married couples without children, while in households where there is a big difference in income, it strengthens the classical conservative family model, according to which the man is the primary breadwinner. The higher income of the man is thus taxed less, while the lower

income of the woman is taxed more. Ms Steinruck stressed: we have to face the new social realities. She considered that the notion of family is much more differentiated than before: it is not marriage that counts, but love and responsibility. We also have to forget the schemes and systems that treat families as identical, for

there are those who need more, and there are others that need less help.

MEP Jutta Steinruck is member of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs.

Her website: <http://www.jutta-steinruck.de/>

The Hungarian Socialist Delegation in the European Parliament would like to express its gratitude to the S&D Group for organising its Group Meeting in Budapest.



THE BUDAPEST DECLARATION



During the Group Meeting in Budapest, the S&D group adopted a solemn statement – the Budapest Declaration – urging effective EU-level action against extremists and setting out its own vision of an open and inclusive society.



On the photo: leader of the Hungarian Socialist Delegation Csaba Tabajdi, S&D Group President Martin Schultz, and Vice-Presidents Monika Beňová and Hannes Swoboda.