

European Women's Lobby General Assembly, 11 – 13 May 2012, Budapest

1.0 Background

The annual (at the time of writing) European Women's Lobby General Assembly brings together representatives of all of the EWL's national co-ordinations, and members that are international organisations.

The GA was preceded by a conference on intergenerational solidarity, which covered issues around the gender pay gap, pensions gap, and migration.

2.0 Conference on intergenerational solidarity

This conference took place before the general assembly, and consisted of inputs on care, by Diane Elson, which set out the UK context; equal pay and the gender pay gap, with a specific focus on the situation for women in Hungary and the operations of a grassroots Hungarian organisation that places women in work; pension gaps within Europe, with detail about an initiative that is attempting to develop indicators for gendered pension gaps.

There were no actions arising for Engender from this conference. Discussion did not cover any ground unfamiliar to Engender.

3.0 General Assembly

3.1 Café sessions

The general assembly began with café discussions of:

- Violence against women;
- Women's involvement in decision making; and
- Women and the economy, including economic development.

These sessions covered ground very familiar to Engender, and involved feeding in the situation in the UK (specifically Scotland, but the only other member of the café group from the UK was from Northern Ireland) on the issues above. These included a wide range of issues:

- The use of temporary special measures to redress women's lack of political representation, the pipeline of candidates for national elections from councils, and the different mechanisms that individual political parties have selected to provide redress;
- the work that Scottish feminists have done to campaign for the ringfencing of national violence against women funding, including gender budget analysis;
- challenges facing the sector, like the potential for the gendered underpinnings of violence against women to be undermined, and the delay in implementation of Carloway; and
- the invisibility of gender within economic development.

There were no issues raised that were unfamiliar to Engender. A process issue was highlighted in that the EWL staffer co-ordinating the group had circulated actions for UKJCW member organisations to take on the National Reform Programme, a key mechanism by

which the UK engages with the Europe 2020 economic development strategy, and which is supposed to involve consultation with civil society. Engender had become aware of a meeting that DWP had convened in this regard through an approach from Peter Kelly, Poverty Alliance, but had not received the substantial materials circulated by the EWL to national co-ordinations, which included draft letters to civil servants, and an exhaustive timeline of the process. Although this is an annual process, Engender has missed an opportunity to engage with this.

Recommendation: Engender board to receive a background paper on Europe 2020 and the National Reform Programme, and proposals for Engender's engagement.

3.2 General Assembly plenary sessions

The business of the General Assembly included:

- Elections of the board and executive;
- Discussions on the proposals for organisational change [PAPER: Proposal for new EWL governance structures GA 2012];
 - UKJCW could reach no consensus on the desirability of implementing the proposals outlined in the paper, or on the framework (or lack thereof) of the outcomes likely to be achieved by the governance changes.
 - It was agreed that the newly elected board would take forward the work of the governance reform.
 - **Recommendation: Engender to participate in UKJCW letter to request the board / executive of the lobby to begin a formal consultation process to explore options for changes to the governance structure.**
- Agreement of the workplan;
 - Contribute to / influence EU-level policies relating to equality between women and men;
 - Create a sustainable organisation;
 - Violence against women
 - Publish barometer on sexual violence, together with the Observatory;
 - Adopt a revised position paper on women's sexual health and rights, including rights for lesbian women;
 - Work at international level: UN Rapporteur, CAHVIO, UNSCR 1325, CSW (?); and
 - Support the work on the EWL Observatory.
 - Women in decision making
 - Monitor proposed European legislation on parity on boards;
 - Start activities within the EWL 50/50 campaign, situated within the framework of the European Year on Citizenship 2013;
 - Lead the EWL project on mentoring for minority women and the European elections (depending on funding);
 - Participate in the European Network of Women in Decision Making
 - Equality between women and men
 - Maternity directive;
 - EC proposals on carers leave and the pay gap;
 - EU budget post 2014;
 - Link with the Irish and Lithuanian EU Presidencies;

- Link with EIGE and the Fundamental Rights Agencies;
- EU 2020
 - National Reform Programmes
 - Annual growth survey
 - Employment package
 - Poverty target
- Board seminar on feminist economics, looking at measurements and indicators beyond GDP.
- Immigration and asylum
 - Project on women asylum seekers
- Alliances, network and outreach
 - Number of individual coalitions and networks.

3.3 Issue groups

Engender representatives participated in an issue group entitled *Green economy as a provision for gender equality and intergenerational solidarity*.

This session had inputs from Catrin Becher, Policy Officer on International Gender Equality, National Council of German Women's Organisations, who introduced the concept of the green economy.

Key points raised in the input were as follows.

- Green economics offers a critique to neoliberal constructions of market economics. It is explicitly about capturing value in a way that is not about growth, market, efficiency, competition, accumulation.
- Gender equality perspective is missing from most of the green economics critiques.
- It calls for a radical reworking of patterns of production and consumption, and posits that no one should be excluded from the use of essential resources on account of e.g. patenting of seeds, or privatisation of water.
- It avers that markets should not be responsible for allocating fundamental resources.
- However, there are critiques of green economy itself, in that it does not fundamentally challenge and transform the current economic paradigm. Critics claim that it is a new form of colonialism, and appropriates natural resources of the south.
- Inclusion, by feminists, of care within green economic discussions looks Gendered global care work chains: women in the North delegate care work to the market, which leads to a new global division of labour.
- Framing of the issues have also been critiqued, and there have been proposals not to use the term 'green economy' but rather 'sustainable equitable economy'.
- NGOs, in anticipation of Rio+20, are calling for a withdrawal from market environmentalism, and search for social transformation.
- There have been discourses in Germany on 'degrowth', and the commons.
- Lobbying has been around a green 'New Deal': regulation of financial markets, investments into public sectors, and participation of civil society.

3.4 Emergency motions

Emergency motions were passed on the detention of Russian feminists (UKJCW voted for the motion); a protest at the London Olympics against the Olympics Committee's failure to respect the principles of equality and neutrality (UKJCW voted against, based on the avowedly secularist perspective); and against a world conference (UKJCW abstained, based on the lack of nuance in the text of the motion. For example, UN Women do not have this position.)

4.0 **Papers**

The following papers, which were circulated to delegates and observers, are filed within the Engender office:

- Activities report
- Budget and current accounts 2012
- Draft minutes from the 2011 General Assembly
- Proposal for new EWL governance structures GA 2012
- EWL governance as doc (this is a copy of the EWL governance structures document with annotations by Annette Lawson, alternate from NAWO)
- Fundraising report 2012
- Membership review executive summary 2012
- Membership review paper 2012
- Standing orders
- Summarised balance sheet 2012

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