

An Initiative of Sandra Frauenberger, Executive City Councillor for Women's Issues

[ **Fem** *Cities* ]

FemCities Conference 2012

# ENDING GENDER STEREOTYPING AND SEXIST PORTRAYALS IN ADVERTISING

Theoretical Concepts of Sexism, Legal Frameworks,  
Practical Approaches at the Local and the European Level



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# ENDING GENDER STEREOTYPING AND SEXIST PORTRAYALS IN ADVERTISING

Theoretical Concepts of Sexism, Legal Frameworks,  
Practical Approaches at the Local and the European Level

A cooperation between the Brussels Liaison Office of the City of Vienna and the Women's Department of the City of Vienna.



## WEDNESDAY, 28 NOVEMBER 2012

- 9.00 Registration, Coffee & Tea**
- 10.00 Welcome**  
 Michaela Kauer, Brussels Liaison Office of the City of Vienna  
 Marion Gebhart, FemCities Network and Women's Department of the City of Vienna
- 10.15 Concepts of Sexism**  
 Isabella Meier, European Training and Research Centre for Human Rights and Democracy Graz (ETC)
- 10.55 International Legal Framework and Current Developments**  
 Leanda E. Barrington-Leach, European Women's Lobby (EWL)
- 11.30 Break**
- 11.45** Panel discussion facilitated by Michaela Kauer  
**Fighting Sexism in Advertising – a Balancing Act between Safeguarding Human Rights and Anti-pleasure Activism**  
 Marion Gebhart, FemCities Network and Vienna Women's Department  
 Isabella Meier, ETC Graz  
 Leanda E. Barrington-Leach, EWL
- 12.30 Networking Lunch**
- 13.30 Best Practice: Croatia**  
 Višnja Ljubičić, Ombudswoman for Gender Equality of the Republic of Croatia
- 14.00 Best Practice: Vienna/Austria**  
 Marion Gebhart, FemCities Network and Women's Department of the City of Vienna
- 14.30 Best Practice: Luxembourg**  
 Isabelle Wickler, Ministère de l'Égalité des Chances, Luxembourg
- 15.00 Break**
- 15.15** Panel discussion facilitated by FemCities – Melita Mulić  
**Is There a Panacea to Fight Sexist Advertising? – Building Strategies**  
 Višnja Ljubičić, Ombudswoman for Gender Equality of the Republic of Croatia  
 Marion Gebhart, FemCities Network and Women's Department of the City of Vienna  
 Isabelle Wickler, Ministère de l'Égalité des Chances, Luxembourg
- Conference Language:** English  
**Concept by FemCities Network:** Martina K. Sommer and Alina Zachar  
**Chair:** Michaela Kauer, Head of the Brussels Liaison Office of the City of Vienna ("Wien-Haus")  
 Chair of the afternoon session: Melita Mulić, City of Zagreb



## WELCOME/OPENING SPEECH BY MARION GEBHART

Ladies and gentlemen,

Dear FemCities partners and potential future FemCities partners,

I would like to wish you all a very good morning – to those who had a very early morning catching a flight to Brussels in order to be part of this year's FemCities conference as well as to those who were attracted by the topic of the event at the Brussels Liaison Office of the City of Vienna of the City of Vienna, the Wien-Haus, and arrived within walking distance. It is certainly not distance which matters, but dedication and prioritising in times of financial and economic crisis, taking your time and devoting your attention to an issue currently not at the top of the list of international or national media coverage. Today, we have chosen one such issue, clearly a human rights issue, namely the topic of gender stereotyping and sexist portrayals in advertising. I will come back to this later.

First of all, let me express my pleasure to see that this year in Brussels we are convening for the third FemCities conference not held in Vienna. The conference was organised in cooperation with our Vienna partners here at the Wien-Haus and I would like to use this opportunity to thank my friend Michi Kauer and her team for hosting this FemCities event and for sharing our commitment to promote and strengthen international cooperation on gender equality issues. In 2008 I became head of the Vienna Women's Department which founded the FemCities network in 1997 for the very purpose of promoting communication among city administrations, experts from universities, NGOs and beyond with regard to gender equality – or rather inequality – issues and also to share best practices on reducing inequality and discrimination.

It is undisputed and common sense to reject outright sexism and racism and we all know

discrimination on any grounds whatsoever, be they sex, race, colour or sexuality, is against the law. Yet every day we observe in the media and in advertising the “practice of implicitly (dis) qualifying groups of society by, perhaps unwittingly, stereotyping them in gendered ways.”<sup>1</sup> Several European Union directives, Council of Europe recommendations, UN conventions, as well as national laws condemn discrimination on the grounds of sex. Gender stereotyping, however, happens – admittedly often without the intention of discriminating others – but worse still: most of the time it goes unchallenged, even unnoticed. Gender stereotyping is a discriminatory practice, sexist portrayals even more so. Sexist and gender stereotyped portrayals in advertising clearly are human rights violations. It is imperative that we raise awareness, that we openly discuss the issue and challenge companies and the media. Fighting gender stereotypes and sexist advertising concerns more than just (a small group of) women<sup>2</sup>, it

is about upholding human rights and democratic values in society. Let this conference be a signal to those who are unaware and to those who think these are minor issues - because they are not! Discriminatory practices must not be accepted any longer. As we will hear today, there are quite a few examples already in Europe that we can applaud and share as best practices.

I very much look forward to the presentations and discussions!

I wish you all a vibrant exchange of information and that you may take many new ideas home with you to tackle the challenges in your own “city”. ■

<sup>1</sup> Women and journalists first. Steering Committee for Equality Between Women and Men (CDEG), Council of Europe, CDEG (2011)15rev., p 2

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. p 4



ISABELLA MEIER is a sociologist, lecturer and researcher at the University of Graz and at the European Training and Research Centre for Human Rights and Democracy.

## CONCEPTS OF SEXISM

### 1. Conceptualities

*Sexism*: is a political term developed and introduced by the US-American women's movement in the 1970s. It refers to the discrimination and suppression of women in all fields of society and is therefore a feminist combat term. It was developed as an analogy to the term racism, which was already established at that time.

However, the term implicitly refers to women as a homogenous group and their position in society as assumed to be due to their sex and gender. The feminist movement was seen as a universal fight of women against sexism, from which women universally suffer. In general terms sexism means the systematic individual and collective disadvantage of women based on their sex. Thus, sexism includes all ideologies underlying this kind of discrimination, suppression and disadvantage. Similar to racism, sexism includes the idea that one gender is inferior to the other and that this inferiority is due to biological and physical characteristics. One consequence of sexist ideology is a limited gender role model which affects both men and women.

However, there are different concepts and perceptions of sexism: while some concepts bear

a stronger reference to patriarchy and the discrimination of women in society as a whole and therefore vindicate a more holistic point of view, others tend to refer to gender stereotypes shared by individuals and therefore also include men as possible victims of sexism. Furthermore, concepts of sexism differ based on the professional background and the disciplines they are investigated in: concepts of sexism in linguistics are different from those of sexism in advertising or sexism in warfare. Additionally, concepts of sexism have changed over time. While traditional concepts generally rely on gender stereotypes and gender roles and assume a general inferiority of women, modern concepts of sexism put an emphasis on the denial of discrimination of women. So-called "neo-sexism" assumes that men and women are treated equally in society. However, it is impossible to draw strict boundaries between the different concepts of sexism coming from different subjects and different fields of interest. As the lowest common factor of all concepts of sexism one can define sexism as suppression, discrimination and disadvantage related to biological sex.

Whenever talking about sexism one has to keep in



mind its precondition. It is the system of heteronormativity that includes the perception of the existence of only two biologically determined sexes (male and female), which are distinguishable through genitals and which are sexually orientated towards each other. These categorisations enable a systematic suppression and disadvantage of one of these categories and consequently the supremacy of the other. The bipolar and opposite construction of two biological sexes is a precondition for ascribing respective features, characteristics, roles and all societal attributions implied by the term gender. And these attributions finally form the precondition for the systematic hierarchisation of masculinity in this system of duality. Sexism and sexist structures derive from these preconditions.

*Gender stereotypes:* The general acceptance of certain features and characteristics that are attributed to a group of persons are summarized as the term "stereotype". Stereotypes are derived from a socially shared knowledge; they can be seen as cognitive structures. Stereotypes are acquired as a body of knowledge during the socialisation process in the broadest manner, which includes the individuals' own observations, statements of significant others and peers, as well as the media. Therefore the character of stereotypes is twofold and encompasses the individualist knowledge of persons, as well as a culturally shared understanding. Gender Stereotypes include and cover knowledge about the characteristic features of men and women.

*Gender roles:* Closely connected to gender stereotypes is the concept of gender roles, which mainly

encompasses different expectations concerning the behaviour of women and men. Traditional gender roles locate men and women in opposite areas of society: men in the public sphere and in the area of paid work and women predominantly in the private sphere and in the area of unpaid family work. Female dominated occupational fields are close to domestic work not only in content (e. g. cleaning staff, nurses, teachers, etc.) but also in their form, they are undervalued. Theories of social roles point out that people are generally prone to ascribing characteristics to women and men based on their family or occupation role. Therefore women as care givers are assumed to be more expressive, warm and emotional while men as breadwinners are assumed to be more rational, competent and instrumental. Thus, gender stereotypes and gender roles not only reinforce the existing dichotomy of women and men but also strengthen the hierarchy between the two genders. The male-dominated area is of higher value in society than the female-dominated area.

## **2. Advertising as a Research Issue in Gender Studies and Social Sciences**

The main precondition for successful advertising is that it gains the recipient's attraction which itself is the precondition for creating his or her desire for the product. Therefore the main function of advertising is to present and commend products rather than combating sexism. In order to fulfil its task, advertising often operates with images and ideals possessing positive connotations. When it comes to gender images, advertising often refers to stereotypes and traditional gender roles.

## [ CONCEPTS OF SEXISM

There is a body of literature in social sciences, which analyses gender representations in advertising. One of the first studies in this regard was “Gender Advertisements” conducted by the sociologist Erving Goffman in 1979. Among others, he analysed advertisement pictures of women and men with a specific interest in body language and in his conclusion stated a “hyper-ritualisation” of gender rituals in advertising. This means that, in contrast to “real life”, gender rituals in advertising are overstated, simplified and normalised. Nevertheless they maintain traditional gender roles and the hierarchy between women and men.

In the course of the establishment of gender and

women’s studies in academia in the 1970s and 1980s, a research interest in gender roles in advertising emerged. The images of women and men were analysed with a specific interest in body language, stereotypes and sexism in magazines, newspapers and TV. Through advertising gender images and gender-role stereotypes are transported and reproduced and the existing gender hierarchy is not only maintained but also idealized. The gender-specific body language is an important dimension for analysing gender rituals in general. The way a gender specific body language is used in advertising in particular conveys and idealises the idea that women and men have different features and characteristics.



III. 1-3 Office clothing for women, found in a mail-order-catalogue (autumn/winter 08/09)

Specifically male body language in advertisements uses pictures of men standing comfortably with legs apart, looking squarely to the camera or using a space-consuming gesture. In this way a concept of masculinity is conveyed, which refers to rationality, self-confidence and dominance.

Female-specific body language in advertisements, on the other hand, shows women standing insecure or sitting with crossed legs, with their hands on their bodies; women are considered to be more emotional, lacking in confidence and subordinated. Compared to male postures those of women are less relaxed, their gestures are less space-consuming and their facial expressions are more emotional. Therefore the signs of femininity in advertisements rely on a concept of femininity connected to weakness, dependency, emotionality, lack of self-consciousness and servility. To illustrate these findings, I would like to show you some examples chosen from a mail-order catalogue. For better comparability both male and female pictures were chosen from the section “office clothing”.



III. 4-6 Office clothing for men, found in a mail-order-catalogue (autumn/winter 08/09)

While the pictures of men seem to be consistent with the reliability and competence one might associate with office clothing, those of women seem to contradict any associations with a business person. This is expressed not merely through the clothing but rather the instable postures and the body language in general.

### 3. Sexism in Advertising

Research in social sciences focuses on gender rituals and the dimension of body language when analysing gender representations in media and advertising, while the feminist perspective in this regard puts greater emphasis on the dimension of gender roles. In the course of this feminists critically discussed the sexualisation of women in advertising in particular. This means the usage of erotic images of women and their “sex appeal” as an eye catcher for attracting attention to the product. Although sex appeal in advertising and its impacts on young women and men is a frequently discussed and delicate topic, there is almost no empirical research concerning this issue. On the other hand, “sexism in advertising” is often reduced to the sexualisation of women. However, the concept of sexism in advertising covers a broader perspective of advertising.

In highlighting this again one has to say that advertising has to be differentiated from the media in general. While media in general have the function to at least produce and distribute popular knowledge and information, the function of advertising is to promote the sale of unneeded products and to create desire. Therefore it has to work with wishes and idealistic images. Unlike journalistic photographs, for example, advertising not only displays gender rituals, but conveys them in an exaggerated, parodist and idealistic mode. While advertising specialists assume that advertising reflects society and its norms and values, feminists hold the view that society and its members are influenced by advertising. Feminists therefore consider advertising to be sexist, particularly where it relies on gender stereotypes and conveys gender imaginations showing women in a disadvantaged way. Building on the findings of their analysis feminists developed definitions and criteria of sexist advertising. There are many collections of criteria for sexist advertising.

I will only name a choice of them in reference to criteria developed by feminist organisations and initiatives in Austria and Switzerland:

- The representation of women and men in pictures or texts builds on traditional gender stereotypes and gender roles. Examples are: presenting women as caring mothers, housewives or objects of sexual desire. Both roles connect beauty, youth, emotionality or fragility to the female gender. Beyond that women are often reduced to objects of decoration for products in advertising.
- Heterosexuality seems to be the only kind of sexuality in advertising. Homosexual or queer persons are non-existing or devaluated. Couples are always heterosexual couples.
- Concerning private life women are often presented within the context of a family or friendship while men are often presented engaging in sports or other activities.
- Women are depicted as sexual objects; the female body is a universally usable marketing instrument. Presentation of female bodies is similar to the presentation of products. Female sexuality is used to promote products which suggests that women, similar to products, are for sale.
- Advertising promotes beauty ideals for women characterized by less weight and large height, long legs, long hair while those for men feature large height and a thoroughly fit body.
- The proportions between women and men express a dependency of women.
- Pictures and texts allow the recipients to associate with violence against women.
- Women and men are presented in such a way that a reversal of the image (where women take over the role of men and vice versa) would immediately cause irritation, amusement or dislike.

I am sure that you as experts know of many examples of sexist advertising yourselves. Therefore I would only like to briefly show some examples. These examples were collected by the initiative

## [ PRESENTATIONS

### [ CONCEPTS OF SEXISM



“Watchgroup Sexist Advertising” under the direction of Maggie Jansenberger who is the Independent Women’s Representative at the Municipality of Graz, Austria.

#### Conclusions

In recent research the issue of sexism in advertising plays a minor role compared to the 1970s and 1990s. One reason for that is the tendency of a pluralisation of gender roles in advertising, conveying images of men and women in different, also non-traditional roles. Criticising the reproduction of gender stereotypes via advertising is therefore no longer appropriate. Traditional gender stereotypes are losing importance for the benefit of more pluralistic gender images. If advertising continues to exclusively rely on traditional gender stereotypes it will no longer attract attention. However, this does not mean that traditional gender roles are now defunct in advertising.

On the other hand, researchers have become interested particularly in the effects of advertising on recipients, especially young female ones. In this connection since the 1990ies the skinny body ideal has been exposed as a major problem not only in advertising but in the media in general. The body ideal is strongly connected to the rise of anorexia and eating disorders among young women in western countries. Particularly social psychology research criticises the boom of normalised body images in the media and its consequences for young women’s self-esteem.

In conclusion we can state that although advertising does not invent gender stereotypes, it uses them in order to reproduce traditional gender roles in an exaggerated and idealistic way. Therefore advertising contributes to the maintenance of gender stereotypes. Concerning the development of gender images in advertising in the last decades one has to state that traditional gender stereotypes are losing importance for the benefit of more pluralistic gender images. However, the depiction of normalised and very skinny bodies may cause a new challenge for the self-esteem of young women in particular. However, finally it has to be stated that not only women are affected by discriminating or devaluing images in advertising. Elderly persons, migrants, sick persons and others are also depicted in devaluing ways, often in intersection with sexism.

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#### Internet resources:

<http://www.watchgroup-sexismus.at/>

<http://www.terre-des-femmes.ch/de/thema-sexismus>





LEANDA BARRINGTON-LEACH, Communications and Media Officer,  
European Women's Lobby

## INTERNATIONAL LEGAL FRAMEWORK AND CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS

Ending gender stereotyping and sexist portrayals in advertising and media has long been understood to be key to the realisation of equality between women and men. Governments and international organisations regularly recognize the need to address stereotypes as key to anti-discrimination efforts. But concrete actions in this field are rare. Where legislation exists, it is often hampered by concerns for freedom of speech which are seen as taking precedence. Also, legislation too often reflects inequalities.

### 1. Stereotypes in Law

#### a. Stereotypes enshrined in law<sup>1</sup>

**Rebecca J. Cook and Simone Cusack** in 2010 published a study demonstrating how legal codes, rather than combating gender stereotypes, in many instances enshrine them. The authors of

*Gender Stereotyping: Transnational legal perspectives*, define "stereotype" as "a generalised view or preconception of attributes or characteristics possessed by, or the roles that are or should be performed by, members of a particular group (e.g., women, lesbians, adolescents)."

**Stereotypes frequently –and persistently- acquire legal status**, also in Europe. Laws, judgments and presidential decrees that uphold gender stereotypes have the effect of stamping authority on them. The effect is that women who do not conform to the stereotypes face discrimination and violation of their legal rights.

One persistent stereotype about women is that they are or should be caregivers. In many cases laws and policies prescribe motherhood, care

giving and nurturing roles to women, even for seemingly benevolent reasons.

**The Constitution of Ireland** for example “recognises that by her life within the home, woman gives to the State a support without which the common good cannot be achieved” and provides that “the State shall...endeavour to ensure that mothers are not obliged by economic necessity to engage in labour to the neglect of their duties in the home.”

In 2011 the **Hungarian government** considered whether to give mothers with young children an extra vote.<sup>2</sup>

The **German tax system offers** strong financial incentives for women to stay home with the children.

The balance accorded to periods of **maternity, paternity and parental leave** in almost all countries is based on a stereotyped understanding of women and men’s roles as carers.

Often, sex stereotypes require women to be “**chaste and feminine.**” Social, cultural and religious norms prescribe “modesty” for women in dress, conversation and other social relations. There was for example the case of a female employee in a prominent U.S. firm who was passed over for promotion to a partner because she did not dress stereotypically “feminine,” or wear makeup, and sometimes used profanity in her language – as many men do. She successfully sued her employer for discrimination.

Stereotypes about modesty, femininity and women’s sexual roles (including their unreliability as complainants) pervade police and societal attitudes, laws and court **decisions about rape.**

The recent SlutWalk demonstrations across Europe and North America started in response to a Canadian police officer’s advice to women to avoid dressing “provocatively” as a measure to avoid rape. Police also regularly advise women not to walk alone at night.

Gender stereotypes **often intersect with racial, ethnic, religious or other stereotypes.** In a case from the Netherlands, a female employee of Turkish origin lodged a successful complaint to the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination against her employer for termination of her employment. She had lost her job on the basis of stereotypical assumptions about foreign women workers’ “frequent absenteeism” from work.

#### **b. The effects of “official” stereotypes**

**Gender stereotypes translate into practical policies, laws and practices that cause harm** to women on the ground. According to the UN’s CEDAW Committee, the effect of “this on the mental and physical integrity of women is to deprive them of equal knowledge, exercise and enjoyment of rights and fundamental freedoms”.<sup>3</sup>

Examples include:

- gender pay gap
- gender pensions gap
- occupational segregation
- exclusion from decision-making
- precarity of work
- feminisation of poverty
- trafficking
- sexual exploitation
- violence against women

Stereotypes justify gender discrimination more broadly and reinforce and perpetuate historical and structural patterns of discrimination.

<sup>1</sup> This section draws heavily on the review of By KathambiKinoti of Awid, “Dismantling Gender Stereotypes: the Role of Laws” (13 January 2012), <http://www.awid.org/News-Analysis/Friday-Files/Dismantling-Gender-Stereotypes-The-role-of-laws>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/apr/17/hungary-mothers-get-extra-votes>

<sup>3</sup> CEDAW Committee recommendation

## INTERNATIONAL LEGAL FRAMEWORK AND CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS

### 2. International Legal Framework

**The international legal framework to combat gender stereotyping is limited. Moreover, it is rarely used by states to promote equality between women and men.** There is one legally binding convention: CEDAW, and one political document: the Beijing Platform for Action.

#### a. CEDAW

The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) was agreed in 1979 and has been ratified by all the countries of the EU.

**Article 5** of the CEDAW Convention concerns stereotypes. The first paragraph of the article reads:

“States Parties shall take all appropriate measures: (a) To modify the social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women, with a view to achieving the elimination of prejudices and customary and all other practices which are based on the idea of the inferiority or the superiority of either of the sexes or on stereotyped roles for men and women.”

This article has been used successfully by women's organisations to challenge sexist advertising, for example by DEMUS in Peru as early as the 80s.

In December 2000, an **Optional Protocol** to CEDAW entered into force. The Protocol submits signatories to the judicial oversight of the CEDAW Committee. All EU Member States with the exception of Estonia, Latvia and Malta are signatories.

The Protocol contains two procedures:

(1) A communications procedure allows individual women, or groups of women, to submit claims of violations of rights protected under the Convention to the Committee. The Protocol establishes that in order for individual communications to be admitted for consideration by the Committee, a number of criteria must be met, including that domestic remedies must have been exhausted.

(2) The Protocol also creates an inquiry procedure enabling the Committee to initiate inquiries into

situations of grave or systematic violations of women's rights. In either case, States must be party to the Convention and the Protocol. The Protocol includes an “opt-out clause”, allowing States upon ratification or accession to declare that they do not accept the inquiry procedure. Article 17 of the Protocol explicitly provides that no reservations may be entered to its terms.

CEDAW has been successfully cited to combat stereotyping of women in **rape trials**:

On 16 July 2010, the CEDAW Committee held in *Karen TayagVertido v. The Philippines* that evidence of wrongful gender stereotyping in a Filipino rape trial amounted to a violation of articles 2(f) and 5(a) of CEDAW.

The case of Vertido was the first communication before the CEDAW Committee to principally focus on wrongful gender stereotyping. Before then, the precise scope of state obligations stemming from article 5(a) of CEDAW had been left unexplained.

#### b. Beijing Platform for Action

In 1995 the Fourth World Conference on Women adopted the Beijing Platform for Action. This document, although not a legal text, provides a strong political commitment of signatory states and is very progressive in its content. The EWL was present at the conference, advocating for the EU also to be implicated. The call for action is addressed to government and international organisations and the EU submits its review every 5 years alongside the Member States.

The 1995 Beijing Platform for Action calls on governments and other relevant stakeholders to tackle gender stereotypes in public and private life.

**Objective J2** of the Platform for Action is to ‘promote a non-biased and non-stereotyped portrayal of women in the media’. The Platform calls on governments and international organisations to take action “to the extent consistent with freedom of expression”



Governments are committed to:

(d) Encourage the media to refrain from presenting women as inferior beings and exploiting them as sexual objects and commodities, rather than presenting them as creative human beings, key actors and contributors to and beneficiaries of the process of development;

(e) Promote the concept that the sexist stereotypes displayed in the media are gender discriminatory, degrading in nature and offensive;

(f) Take effective measures or institute such measures, including appropriate legislation against pornography and the projection of violence against women and children in the media.

The **UN General Assembly** has consistently stressed that persisting gender stereotypes constrain progress in implementing the Beijing Platform for Action, and called for actions to eliminate gender-based stereotypes.

Last year, **UNESCO** developed a set of indicators to assess and monitor the implementation of these commitments. The EWL was part of this process.

### c. Council of Europe

The Council of Europe is a 47 member international organisation based in Strasbourg, best known for its **1950 European Convention on Human Rights** and the **European Court of Human Rights** set up to enforce the Convention. **Article 14** of the Convention prohibits discrimination based on sex (and other grounds).

The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe has issued some resolutions touching upon gender stereotypes. These have political weight but are not legally binding and there are no monitoring or enforcement mechanisms.

In **2002**, the Assembly called on member governments to, among others, adopt binding legislation to end stereotypical portrayals of women in the media.<sup>4</sup>

In **2007**, the Assembly addressed the image of women in advertising and called for a mixture of regulation, self-regulation and education. Governments were called upon to sign the Optional Protocol to CEDAW and implement the Beijing Platform for Action recommendations.<sup>5</sup>

### 3. EU Policies and Legislation

Since 1997, the EU is **Treaty-bound** to protect and promote equality between women and men in all its work (article 3.3 TEU ) (gender mainstreaming). However, the EU has made slow progress in ensuring that the principle of gender equality is applied and implemented in the media. This is partly due to the so-called “**cultural exception**”, which excludes education and media from the remit of EU legislation.

Thus, the very important December **2004 EU Directive implementing the principle of equal treatment between men and women in the access to and supply of goods and services**<sup>6</sup> contains a provision specifically excluding its application to the “content of media or advertising”.

The one binding text the EU has which touches upon this issue is the “**Television without Frontiers**” Directive of 1989,<sup>7</sup> which in 2007 was revised to cover a broader range of media services and renamed the “Audiovisual Services Directive”. This legislation applies to the content of broadcasting and advertising and says that these “should not jeopardise respect for human dignity or include any discrimination on grounds of sex”. As a Directive, it is legally binding but leaves the means of implementation up to individual Member States which makes monitoring compliance more difficult.

<sup>4</sup> 2002: Resolution 1555 on the image of women in the media: <http://assembly.coe.int/Mainf.asp?link=/Documents/AdoptedText/ta02/EREC1555.htm>

<sup>5</sup> 2007: Resolution 1557 on the image of women in advertising: <http://assembly.coe.int/Mainf.asp?link=/Documents/AdoptedText/ta07/ERES1557.htm>

<sup>6</sup> Council Directive 2004/113/EC

<sup>7</sup> Council Directive 89/552/EEC of 3 October 1989

### INTERNATIONAL LEGAL FRAMEWORK AND CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS

**There are more general and stronger-worded legislative texts covering stereotypes and the media but they are non-binding**, i.e. they carry political weight but are not binding for Member States:

**In 1995, the Council of Ministers representing the national governments adopted a Resolution** on the image of women and men portrayed in advertising and the media.<sup>8</sup> In this Resolution the Council called on its members to take action to “provide for appropriate measures” to end discrimination in the media.

**In 2006, the European Parliament and the Council amended the 1998 Recommendation on the Protection of Minors and Human Dignity in Audio-visual and Information Services** in the framework of the *Community Programme for a Safer Internet 2005-2008*.<sup>9</sup> It calls on the Member States to “act with greater determination in this area” and to develop for industry “effective measures to avoid discrimination based on sex”. However, other changes in the text weaken the protection that the Recommendation affords: two additions in para. 17 and recommendation I-3(a) insist on the need to consider the protection against discrimination only ‘without infringing freedom of expression or of the press’. Also, while a 2004 amendment reinforced the gender aspect of the text by recommending that Member States and the industries concerned ‘develop effective measures to avoid discrimination based on sex’, the 2006 Recommendation replaced this by a call to simply ‘consider’ such means.

**The European Parliament has recently grown increasingly vocal on this issue, putting its political weight behind further EU action to eliminate gender stereotypes in the media.**

**In September 2008, the EP passed a strong Resolution on how marketing and advertising affect equality between women and men.** The Resolution argues for ‘the need to eliminate from textbooks, toys, video and computer games, the internet and new information and communications technologies

(ICTs), and from advertising through different types of media, messages which are contrary to human dignity and which convey gender stereotypes’. The Parliament called on the Commission to intensify its efforts against discrimination in the media and for further research on this topic.<sup>10</sup>

On 13 November, the European Parliament’s Women’s Rights and Gender Equality Committee adopted a **Resolution on “Eliminating Gender Stereotypes in the EU”**.<sup>11</sup> The draft resolution points out that advertising can challenge stereotypes and racism, sexism and discrimination. MEPs call on Member States to establish independent regulation bodies to monitor the media and advertising industry and impose sanctions on companies and individuals that promote sexualisation of girls. The resolution is scheduled for a plenary vote in March 2013.

The Parliament is also currently working on a **Report on the Sexualisation of Girls.**

#### **a. Other documents/ initiatives**

Finally, the EU institutions regularly set eliminating gender stereotypes as a priority, for example in the Commission’s Roadmap for equality between women and men (2006)<sup>12</sup> or in the programme of the 2007 onwards Trio presidency of Germany-Portugal-Slovenia. In the case of the Roadmap no significant progress has been reported. In the case of the presidency priority, no specific action was taken by the Commission during the period.

#### **4. Self-regulation**

While advocating for legislation and, in particular, the implementation of existing legal frameworks, women’s organisations can also effectively harness self-regulation organisations and commitments to further their demands.

Industry is keen on self-regulation in particular when it becomes the only **alternative to regulation**. The interest the European Parliament has recently been showing to stereotypes in adverti-

sing has energised certain industries to pre-empt further action from the EU level. Women's associations can make use of this momentum.

While not all EU countries have even a general legal framework at the national level concerning the prevention of stereotypes, almost all have national advertising codes, based on the International Chamber of Commerce's Consolidated Code of Advertising and Marketing Communication Practice (2006), first issued in 1937. The exceptions are Latvia, Malta and Denmark.

This Code is designed primarily as an instrument for self-discipline but it is also intended for use by the courts as a reference document within the framework of applicable laws. According to EASA (European Advertising Standards Alliance), the codes are normally interpreted to mean that no advertisement should cause either grave offence to a minority or lesser offence to a much wider audience. It contains articles on sincerity (photoshopping) as well as on social responsibility. Article 4 says that "marketing communication should respect human dignity and should not incite or condone any form of discrimination, including that based upon race, national origin, religion, gender, age, disability or sexual orientation. [.....]".

At the EU level, the EWL has been working with certain industries, in particular the **cosmetics industry**, to implement tailor-made effective self-regulation procedures. The EWL contributed

to the drafting of guidelines and is working with industry to explain the importance of action and develop implementation procedures. We are seeking creative ways to engage advertisers, for example with an award for best practices. At the same time, we are stressing the need for effective, independent, monitoring and sanctioning bodies to ensure the credibility of self-regulation. As the draft EP Resolution on stereotypes also notes, it is essential that self-regulatory authorities also receive gender training and have a remit judge with wider discretion on the balance between gender equality and freedom of expression. At present, the response to complaints is too often that advertisements "**reflect current societal norms**". Indeed, the low number of complaints on the grounds of gender received by these authorities where they exist shows how engrained stereotypes are, as well as how little SROs (self-regulatory professional organizations) are seen to have power.

**In conclusion, there is still a way to go in ensuring an effective international legal framework for combating gender stereotypes. However, there is a growing understanding at the EU level for the need to tackle the issue in order to move beyond the deadlock which hampers other efforts to promote equality between women and men. Working on self-regulation offers one avenue for action. However, this should not prevent further, stronger action to ensure the fundamental value of equality between women and men is respected and promoted.**



<sup>8</sup> Resolution 41995X1110(01)

<sup>9</sup> Recommendation 2006/952/EC

<sup>10</sup> European Parliament Resolution of 3 September 2008 on how marketing and advertising affect equality between women and men (2008/2038(INI)), available at:

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=TA&reference=P6-TA-2008-0401&language=EN&ring=A6-2008-0199>

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.womenlobby.org/spip.php?article3775>

<sup>12</sup> 2006-2010COM(2006)92

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE PANEL DISCUSSION ON  
**FIGHTING SEXISM IN  
ADVERTISING – A BALANCING ACT  
BETWEEN SAFEGUARDING  
HUMAN RIGHTS AND  
ANTI-PLEASURE ACTIVISM**

Marion Gebhart, Isabella Meier, Leanda E. Barrington-Leach

**SOME PEOPLE SAY THAT WOMEN WHO ARE MODELS IN SEXIST ADVERTISEMENTS CHOOSE TO DO SO THEMSELVES AND ARE SELF-DETERMINED. AND THEY ARE PAID FOR IT.**

**Gebhart:** Women and men are often under pressure to fulfil concepts formed by society and not by themselves. So-called traditional gender roles are not “laws defined by nature“ but were formed by society. This means that we can change them too. This is our intention.

**WHAT IS YOUR EXPERIENCE? HOW WOULD YOU DISTINGUISH ANTI-PLEASURE ACTIVISM FROM FIGHTING SEXIST ADVERTISING?**

**Meier:** As a social scientist I am currently not involved in any activities to combat or fight sexist advertising. However, I worked in a feminist NGO, which was a member of the Watchgroup Sexist Advertising in Graz. During the process of establishing it, of course, we received feedback from citizens containing the usual comments, such as: “Are you frustrated?“ “Don’t you have more urgent worries?“ and things like that. However, we also received a lot of positive feedback not only from citizens but also from advertising experts.

**Barrington-Leach:** Many people mistakenly believe that organisations fighting stereotypes and sexism

in the media are anti-pleasure. This could not be further from the truth. What we are seeking is simply pleasure also for women. Often, advertisements portray women as sexual objects for men’s pleasure, without considering their own. Sometimes, they glamorise violence against women. It is standard to promote a standardised image of women’s bodies that is dangerously thin and links to widespread eating disorders among young women.

**WHAT DO YOU THINK: ADVERTISING FOR PRODUCTS THAT ARE DIRECTLY CONNECTED TO SEXUALITY, SUCH AS SEX TOYS, ARTICLES FOR ROLE-PLAYING OR LINGERIE. SHOULD THERE BE ADVERTISING FOR THOSE? IF SO, IN WHICH FORM?**

**Meier:** In my opinion it is very important to differentiate between sexuality and sexism. Advertisements for products directly connected to sexuality can also be sexism-free, for example if advertisements for lingerie work with product aesthetics only. Therefore I think awareness-raising among advertising specialists is a better strategy than a general (or legal) prohibition.



WHAT OTHER SUBJECTS HAVE BEEN CHALLENGING? WHAT WOULD YOU NEED TO WORK ON THESE?

**Gebhart:** Sexist advertisements from global players are always challenging. In these cases we would need at least Europe wide action, regulations and implementation. I believe watch groups are a great instrument for reacting locally and for confronting local actors, such as small businesses using sexist advertising. Small businesses often use the excuse of not having been aware of the sexist concept.

HAVE YOU, IN YOUR WORK/ THE WATCH GROUP EVER BEEN ACCUSED OF BEING AN ANTI-PLEASURE ACTIVIST?

**Barrington-Leach:** The EWL is often accused of being anti-pleasure in its work to reform the porn industry and with regards to prostitution. (Straight) pornography is rarely made for women, and promotes an image of sex as a violent act, in which women are generally seen as little more than an object for male pleasure and control. Here again, the EWL seeks to reclaim sex as an act which should be between equal partners and bring pleasure to both. ■

VIŠNJA LJUBIČIĆ, Ombudsperson for Gender Equality

## SEXIST ADVERTISING AND BEST PRACTICE, CROATIA

### Introductory Note

Advertising is a multi – billion business. It “produces” images we are exposed to everywhere on a daily basis and from the earliest age on. Ads wouldn’t be as harmful if they only promoted characteristics of the advertised products and the advantages these have compared to other products, but they sell much more – values and concepts of self-worth, ideas of what success is, and above all, they sell ideas of what is considered normal.

Ads portray an ideal image of love, friendship and relationships and tell us who we are, what we lack to be happy and healthy and popular, and, of course, give us a cure for everything we are supposed to buy. They tell us who we should be, what we should look like, how we should love and whom, what is acceptable and rewarded and what is shameful and despised.

Images, pictures and photographs are more powerful than words, and, yet, most of us believe that we are not influenced by advertising.

Let us make no mistake - sexist advertisements do not cause sexism and gender inequality, but they certainly create a climate in which sexism is acceptable and “normal” and thus they confirm and propagate sexism. At the same time, all those who oppose sexism, criticize it, giving arguments why it is harmful to society as a whole are portrayed as lacking a sense of humor, as being jealous, exaggerating or conservative.

Therefore, if you belong to those who publicly claim that sexism and gender stereotypes are harmful to society and that they are an obstacle for achieving full gender equality, which is pro-

claimed as a social value and even included as such in the Croatian Constitution and many other laws and documents, in most cases you will hear the following remarks:

*What is the problem? What sexism are you talking about?*

*Everybody does it!*

*It’s just a joke!*

*You don’t have a sense of humor!*

*You are narrow-minded and conservative!*

*You are jealous!*

*Ads must provoke!*

and of course the most popular one:

*It’s freedom of speech.*

And so in ads, and in the media in general, we meet “jokes“, “provocations“, “open-minded progressive images“, “things we can be jealous about” and “freedom of speech“ which sell almost every imaginable product or service using women’s bodies, most frequently women’s breasts, but other body parts as well.

Ms. Jean Kilbourne, one of the best known experts in the field of how media and advertising change the way we see ourselves and others, and how they affect self-esteem and self-worth of those who are seen as objects, as women most often are, writes and speaks about sexist ads as crucial elements of a “**toxic cultural environment**”. Of course, ads or commercials do not cause sexism, but they most certainly contribute to and perpetuate gender inequality portraying women in various ways which are derogatory, humiliating, dehumanizing and insulting.



The Office of the Ombudsperson for Gender Equality, my office, among other fields, monitors media and reacts giving public statements about sexism in ads, as well as in other media contents, it conducts analyses of the media content and publishes results in annual reports to the Croatian Parliament, it issues warnings and recommendations to advertising agencies, to public bodies, units of local or regional self-government or other bodies with public authority, employees of such bodies or other legal or natural persons, and promotes gender equality in various public forums emphasizing sexism as an obstacle to achieving gender equality. (All of our activities are available on our web pages.)

It is impossible to talk about sexist advertisements as an isolated social phenomenon, because sexism is so overwhelmingly present in various media contents and in all of the media.

But, let us look at the kind of advertisements we are surrounded by in our everyday life, the kind of images considered “normal”, “humorous” and “harmless”.

Slide 1:



We all know that the advertising industry increasingly relies on the notion that sex sells. Sex sells everything is a slogan that everybody accepts and repeats. But, it is not sex that sells, it is women’s bodies that are being used as objects to draw attention to another - the product that is being sold. In this objectified “relationship” many ideas, values, concepts of who women are, how they should see themselves, and how men should see women and value them, are being sold too!!!

Let us look at a few examples of what women’s bodies (naked or not naked) sell:  
car tires

Slide 2:



Slide 3:



## [ PRACTICE EXAMPLE

### SEXIST ADVERTISING AND BEST PRACTICE, CROATIA

Slide 4:



And of course, cars!

Observing these ads, one has to wonder if there is some secret connection between cars and women. But advertisers do not sell cars to women, they use women to sell cars to men.

Even where the article is about the performances of a new car, as in this example, women who are always young, pretty, in short skirts or in erotic, sexualized poses, are only decorations, ornaments. The question is: FOR WHOSE EYES? I think I don't need to answer that question because it is obvious.

Slide 5:



Who is to be conquered here? The car? The woman? Both? It is obvious that the car company and the advertising agency do not perceive women as buyers but as one of the gadgets that the male owner will enjoy if he buys a car.

(Explanation: You will never drive alone again – in Croatian is not gender neutral – in this case it is written in masculine gender leaving no doubt that the advertisers are addressing a man. The woman again is a supplement, an additional car equipment like GPS).

Slide 6:



Portrayal of men in car advertisements is considerably different. Photos show this difference better than words.

Slide 7:



Even where the ad shows a product intended for women only, like women's bathing suits or underwear, the focus is not on whether women will see or like the ad, and consequently buy the product, but how much men will like this ad and whether men are attracted to a girl in a bathing suit. That way women learn to see themselves through men's



eyes. Not what they themselves would like to wear, but what is attractive to men when they wear it.

Slogans for ads like these are:

*Beautiful women can be dangerous for traffic.  
Drivers, pay attention: Beautiful women in  
bathing suits are all over town.  
New danger for drivers*

I think we have all heard about one of the most famous models in the world, Cindy Crawford, who said she wished she looked like Cindy Crawford. Madonna and many other virtual women from the media probably think that too. Today, modern technology and Photoshop push the limits even further in making models without lines, without wrinkles, scars, with no pores and of course, very thin.

Slide 8:



Advertisements suggest that what matters most for a woman is what she looks like. They impose the image of ideal female beauty based on absolute flawlessness. Regardless of how much time, energy and money women spend trying to look like women in ads, they are doomed to fail, which means that they will feel guilty and ashamed because of that failure and spend, of course, more and more money on new “miraculous” products. **Nobody looks like this. Not even the models themselves.**

Slide 9:



Slide 10:



Old(er) women, women with wrinkles, women with disabilities, women of other ethnical groups, heavy women do not exist in ads ....They are obviously not considered consumers of much importance.

Slide 11:



Let us just look at some images of real women vs. images of women in the media. Real women come in all sizes, colours, shapes, they are of various professions, they are young and mature, they have

## [ PRACTICE EXAMPLE

### SEXIST ADVERTISING AND BEST PRACTICE, CROATIA

profiles, heads and attitudes. Women in the media are all the same size, they are young, sexualized, and look alike. Images in ads are artificial and constructed, BUT real women, especially girls and young women, measure themselves with these ideal images every single day and it inevitably affects women's self-esteem. (Today there are 90,000 young girls in Croatia suffering from eating disorders and every second teenager is willing to undergo cosmetic surgery just to "look prettier".) These images also affect how men feel about real women in their lives.

The problem is that, as I said before, sexism in advertisements is not isolated. If it were, it wouldn't be such a problem. Sexism in ads is one way of expressing sexist and gender stereotyped attitudes that are still deeply rooted in our patriarchal society. Sexism can be found everywhere.

#### For Example:

#### Slide 12:



Newspaper and magazine covers. On the left you see the photo of a woman in a bikini and covered in foam, while other photos show riots in an European country, and, bottom right, a male writer (fully dressed and serious and looking important).

What is worrying is the fact that on the right side of the woman's half-naked body the text reads: Good job on Adriatic Coast and how much money the famous beach makes over the summer. In combi-

nation with a half-naked woman these words gain a totally different meaning, one which viewers adopt at a subconscious level. On the one hand, there are men participating in political events, professional men giving statements on political issues, active men all of them. On the other hand, there is a half-naked, passive woman, included on a cover only to be looked at, and in combination with the above text this woman's body is actually "being sold" to a viewer. Since this woman does not have a name, she is "a women", "any woman", and that is why this is seriously harmful. And, unfortunately, this kind of presentation of women on covers of newspapers is the rule, not the exception.

The photo on the right is from a magazine for builders/constructors with the topic of floor heating systems. A naked woman's body on the floor illustrates the floor heating.

#### Slide 13:



We saw ads linking women with cars. But here we see a newspaper report on a car race. The title reads: "High-performance engines, pretty hostesses and lots of decibels..." Such articles are usually accompanied with lots of photographs showing body car wash and only a few of the actual race. Again, my question is: FOR WHOSE EYES?

#### Slide 14:

Women are underrepresented in political life and as entrepreneurs. However, when a round table dedicated to this topic was organized, the media were not



interested in discussing the causes of this problem and the experiences that women entrepreneurs talked about, but featured an article reading:

*„Décolletage of the president Ankica and breasts of the entrepreneur Ružica proclaimed the most beautiful”*

This was published in one of the local newspapers in Croatia. The topic of the round table was mentioned offhandedly, while the entire article was about the looks, the breasts, the cleavage of two women speakers and how men who were present were "blessed" in their company, noticing their breasts and even making bets which one had the most beautiful pair.

I must say here, that with many of the examples I have shown you here, as well as with many others, I reacted as an Ombudsperson for Gender Equality within my authority. In my Annual Reports to the Croatian Parliament I gave examples of sexism in advertisements and the media and pointed out that media are obligated by international documents to promote gender equality and eliminate stereotypes and sexism (for example Beijing Platform for Action from 1995. which in Section J. points out that sexist stereotypes in the media are gender discriminatory, insulting and degrading and that governments should encourage the media to refrain from presenting women as inferior beings and exploiting them as sexual objects and commodities).

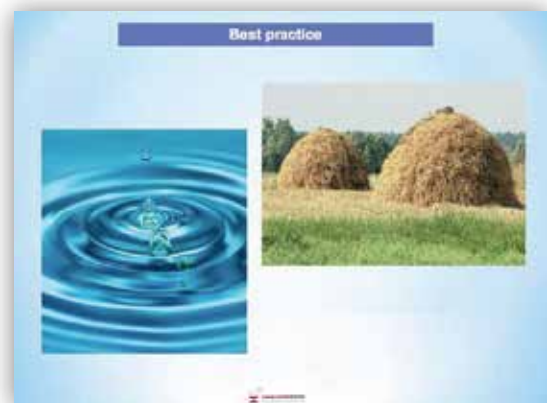
However, whenever media are warned about the way they portray women in degrading and humiliating ways they claim their right to the freedom of expression as if the freedom of expression were in collision with gender equality. Media and advertising agencies should follow the international documents and national laws regulating the portrayal of women and men in the media contents and should be participants and creators in promoting gender equality, not just reporters about outside events.

And certainly not the kind that perpetuates sexism at its worst, as this example showed.

### Best Practice Examples

Now, the title of my speech was Best Practices and all this time I have been speaking about the worst practice. The reason is that, as I mentioned in my Annual Report for 2011, good examples, examples which promote those values we as a society are trying to maintain, one of them being gender equality, are very hard to find.

### Slide 15:



They are like "drops in the ocean" or "needles in a haystack".

There have been cases where certain sexist ads were removed from the television or public space following warnings from my Office or due to the activism of organizations of civil society.

## [ PRACTICE EXAMPLE

### SEXIST ADVERTISING AND BEST PRACTICE, CROATIA

Slide 16:



One example dates from several years ago and it shows an ad for a car. The text suggests that new cars are better than old ones and that this car can be bought by people (men) who have special benefits.

However, since women are portrayed in this context and in this manner, the messages are: "young women are better than old ones", and older women should be replaced by younger ones, and pretty young women are for those who have benefits (ad on the left is a conversation between a son and a father).

A woman's human rights group sent a protest note to the car manufacturer in Germany and this ad was soon removed from the media due to the fact that the German manufacturer was socially sensitive.

Slide 17:



This example shows an ad and a TV commercial for a brand of beer titled: Men's rule no 11. The message was that man notices only important things, and among them is not a woman, his partner, or the fact that she brought a bag full of groceries for him, or had her hair done, but a bottle of beer. My Office considered that the way in which a relationship is portrayed in this ad is humiliating - women are directly discredited in connection with all the work they do in a house, men are insulted because they are reduced to an inconsiderate beer drinker with a limited field of interest.

My office issued a public statement and we sent warnings to the manufacturer of this beer brand and to the media which showed this commercial and pointed out the stipulations of the Gender Equality Act. My Office also issued a recommendation to withdraw this commercial and to bear in mind the law stipulations in other cases as well. The manufacturer replied with the usual sentences about how the ad was funny and not insulting, but the media stopped showing it.

The consequences of my reaction, as well as the reaction of some of the organizations of civil society, was that people started to complain about other ads and commercials and my Office began receiving more and more complaints, which I think is good because one of the justifications of the media and advertisers for this kind of portrayal of men and women is that "the audience likes it!".

Slide 18:



The last example I will show you is an ad for a pate. The text says:

I  
Football  
Wife

Without the unnecessary,  
pleasure is perfect!

The reaction of the public was so quick that the manufacturer of the pate (from Bosnia and Herzegovina) immediately withdrew the ad and apologized publicly to all women.

At the end I want to say that all of us, all the mechanisms established for the promotion of gender equality in Croatia: the Committee for the Gender Equality of the Croatian Parliament, the Ombuds-person for Gender Equality, the Governmental Office for Gender Equality, as well as committees for gender equality at the local level and many organizations of civil society, are trying to educate the public and to raise awareness for the harm sexism causes.

Step by step we notice changes. Some of the companies advertising their products show sensitivity and social responsibility. But these are still just a few. Encouraging those who are responsible and sensitive and criticising those who use sexism to promote their products or services should be among our many activities, together with education, introduction of media literacy to schools, sanctioning of those who breach stipulations of the law.

And at the end a message to all advertisers:

Slide 19:



If your product was any good, you wouldn't need sexism to sell it!

Thank you! ■

MARION GEBHART, Women's Department of the City of Vienna

# VIENNA WATCH GROUP AGAINST SEXIST ADVERTISING

## Brief Overview

First I want to give you a brief overview of the presentation. I will talk about the three watch groups in Austria, and explain why watch groups against sexist advertising at local level are important. I will also give you a brief overview of the legal framework in Austria. Then I will address the structure of the Vienna Watch Group against Sexist Advertising, the Catalogue of Criteria for the Classification of Sexist Advertising, and further local options against sexist advertising.

## Three Watch Groups in Austria

Austria currently has three operating watch groups. The Graz watch group was set up first and took up work in April 2009. It was established by the independent women's representative of the City of Graz and by members of the Graz women's committee. Dr. Meier, who gave the keynote address, was also actively involved in the process. The Salzburg and Vienna watch groups both started work in February 2012. All watch groups in Austria cooperate.

Sexist advertising is an issue in other Austrian cities as well, which is obvious from their interest in setting up their own watch groups against sexist advertising. They are asking us for workshops and an exchange of experience. This shows sexist advertising is an issue in cities. The reason for setting up watch groups and their specific goals will be discussed in the following slides.

## Why are Watch Groups Set Up?

One reason is the legal basis in Austria.

## Legal Basis

- With a few exceptions, Austria has no legal regulations at national (i.e. federal) level concerning sexist advertising (exceptions: public media

legislation, legislation on prostitution, federal law on audio-visual media).

As we heard in the morning, there are elements of the Austrian Federal Constitution, international and EU law regulations that provide a basis for federal legislation in this field:

- Art. 7 (2) of the Austrian Federal Constitution --> on de facto gender equality
- UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)
- Treaty on European Union (Articles 2 and 3, paragraph 3, as well as Article 10 of the Consolidated Version of the Treaty on European Union).
- Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union
- various EU directives

Still, there are no specific legal regulations in this field.

In Austria, as in most European countries, there is a self-regulating body on advertising, the "Austrian Advertising Council". It consists of about 100 experts from advertising and public media, plus a few human rights and health experts. It doesn't look at advertising by NGOs or in politics, culture and art. From the watch groups' perspective, self-regulation alone is not sufficient.

*Most complaints to the "Austrian Advertising Council" concern sexist advertising, and a lot has been improved within the Council regarding the classification of advertisements as discriminating (e.g. reviewing/rewriting their criteria). However, the "Austrian Advertising Council" is a big body that acts quite slowly, and transparency still needs to be improved. Watch groups have therefore been set up*



*in cities to provide quicker and more widespread reactions at local level.*

The watch groups also call for regulations at federal level, which should comprise the following points:

- a federal ban on sexist advertising
- comprising all advertising types and media
- with significant sanctions in case of violations
- implementation of the regulations by a committee composed of women and men in equal numbers – with expertise in women's and gender studies
- efforts by the federal government to identify EU-wide and international regulations (to tackle sexist advertising by multinational companies)

Local initiatives have limited effects, since only billboard advertising can be regulated by the municipality. Still, initiatives like the Vienna Watch Group Against Sexist Advertising tackle controversial, sexist advertisements in the geographical area of the city itself.

#### Tasks of the Vienna Watch Group:

1. Monitoring of advertising in Vienna. Citizens may report advertisements to the watch group via the website.

2. Qualified classification of advertisements in Vienna according to a Catalogue of Criteria for the Classification of Sexist Advertising. All watch groups in Austria analyse advertisements according to the same catalogue of criteria (which was first written by the Graz watch group; Dr Meier played a leading role in writing it. In 2011 it was adapted jointly by the watch groups in Vienna and Graz; the Salzburg watch group summarised the detailed list of criteria.) The catalogue of criteria is available in German

and English here <http://www.werbewatchgroup-wien.at/was-ist-sexistische-werbung/kriterien>

3. Development of prevention measures, including measures for institutions and enterprises.

4. Contacting enterprises if an advertisement has been classified as sexist.

5. Cooperation with other watch groups.

#### Structure of the Vienna Watch Group against Sexist Advertising

- Started work in February 2012 (after an eight-month preparation phase)
- Consists of six experts: 2 women and 1 man employed by the City of Vienna, plus 2 women and 1 man from NGOs and university. Involving feminist men in the watch group is unique in Austria, but has proven really valuable for us. NGOs, city departments and university representatives are involved in all watch groups in Austria.
- Images and videos of advertisements can be uploaded in a complaint form on the website
- Watch Group members take a decision within three/four days; if the advertisement is classified as sexist, the Watch Group's conclusion is published on the website
- Positive examples are also shown on the website
- The Watch Group strives to establish a cooperation network for preventive work (contact to local advertising academy, GEWISTA ,...)

#### Slide 1:

In the following I would like to show some examples from our **catalogue of criteria**. The first focus in the catalogue is on gender clichés and prejudices about gender roles.



# [ PRACTICE EXAMPLE

## VIENNA WATCH GROUP AGAINST SEXIST ADVERTISING

Slide 2:

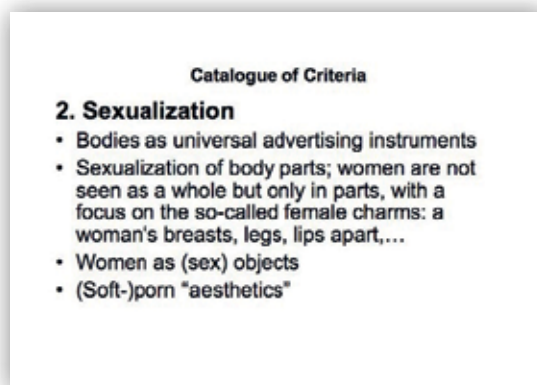


Here you see men and women in their traditional roles, which are reproduced by advertisements.

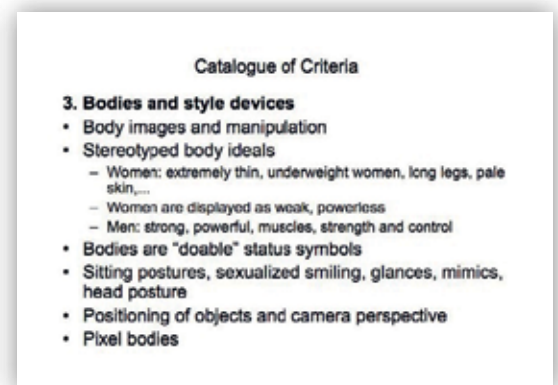
you see one example of many - showing a woman with her legs apart, with the product (deodorant) placed in a way that suggests penetration, especially in combination with the plane. Interestingly, AXE is owned by Unilever – just like “Dove”, a brand known for its focus on “well-being“, sometimes even trying hard to be non-discriminating. But we have to admit: so far AXE-Austria has not been very impressed by the reactions of the Austrian watch groups.

On the other hand, there are many local ads that work with sexualization. In October I couldn't stand all the advertisements for beer where, instead of beer, you see a woman's cleavage. The complaints were numerous.

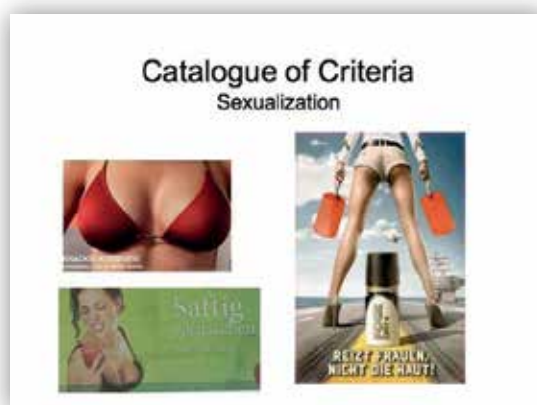
Slide 3:



Slide 5:



Slide 4:



Most complaints to the Vienna Watch Group concern the issue of sexualization. AXE is probably one of the best-known “global players“ (multinational enterprises) whose ads are absolutely sexist. Here

Slide 6:



These examples show the stereotyped ideals of what bodies of men and women should look like – according to advertisers.



Slide 7:

**Catalogue of Criteria**

**4. Trivializing violence, especially violence against women**

- VAW is presented as aesthetically appealing, cool and powerful.
- Women are presented as victims, obedient and passive.
- Violent behaviour is presented as a role model for men.

Slide 8:

**Catalogue of Criteria**  
**Trivializing violence**

Examples:

- Well-known example of a scene that indicates gang rape
- Example showing a “golf week business challenge” – the slogan “meet female colleagues” is supposed to be a pun, since the German word for “to meet” also means “to hit (a target)“. But in fact, I miss the joke in this advertisement.
- Example of an advertisement by Diesel (in a gay magazine). A young guy hitting the head of an older man.

Slide 9:

**Catalogue of Criteria**

**5. Sexism and multiple discrimination**

- Further characteristics of constructed inequalities such as age, migration background, economic situation (poverty), disability, etc.

Examples: very often, even young women or girls are presented in a sexualized way. Who is the target group? Paedophiles?

Slide 10:

**Catalogue of Criteria**  
**Sexism and multiple discrimination**

These examples show

- an advertisement for underwear, showing a blind woman. The advertiser wanted to say: this underwear is so great that even blind women wear it.
- an advertisement discriminating older women.
- and a racist ad (discriminating pun on “foreigners come in”), actually quite difficult to explain and the joke definitely is missing.

**Further Local Options against Sexist Advertising**

- Setting up watch groups  
Watch groups in Austria hold workshops on setting up structures for new watch groups, etc.
- Commitment to gender sensitive images and language in the city’s own local media e.g. handbook in Vienna : [www.wien.gv.at/medien/PID/inland/sprache/gender](http://www.wien.gv.at/medien/PID/inland/sprache/gender)
- Absence of sexist advertising in local media and on billboards owned/regulated by the community /city itself.

Thank you for your attention! ■

ISABELLE WICKLER, Ministère de l'Égalité des Chances, Luxembourg

# ENDING GENDER STEREOTYPING AND SEXIST PORTRAYALS IN ADVERTISING, LUXEMBOURG

## Context of Luxembourg<sup>1</sup>

Encompassing an area of 2,586 square km (999 square miles), Luxembourg has borders with Germany, Belgium and France. It enjoys the highest per capita income worldwide, with an economy based mainly on services, financial and B2B services. Luxembourg has about 550,000 inhabitants about 100,000 of whom live in the capital also named Luxembourg.

Luxembourg is a parliamentary democracy within a constitutional monarchy with at its head HRH Grand Duke Henri. The monarchy was established in 1815 following the Treaty of Vienna. Luxembourg is a founding member of the European Community and hosts important EU institutions, such as the European Court of Justice, the European Court of Auditors, and the European Investment Bank. After Malta, Luxembourg is the smallest Member State of the European Union.

Nearly half of the country's population currently consists of non-Luxembourg citizens. There are now 216,000 foreign residents, 43.2% of the total population, approximately 86% of foreign residents being EU nationals. The biggest foreign communities are the Portuguese (37%) and French (14%), followed by Italians and Belgians. With a total of 150 nationalities represented, Luxembourg is a truly plural society and enjoys a unique polyglot situation: the national language is Lëtzebuergesch (Luxembourgish) but administrative languages are: French, German and Luxembourgish.

## Media Environment

Within this confined area, the media environment

of Luxembourg is necessarily rather limited. But because of the multilingual skills of its residents and the coexistence of so many different nationalities, Luxembourg's media landscape is also characterized by its linguistic diversity. The market for print and audiovisual media in Luxembourg is open to many foreign publications and channels, given the country's multilingual population. A person may listen to the morning news on the radio in Luxembourgish, and then go on to read a French daily newspaper, browse English news sites and watch a German movie in the evening.

Compared to the national area, print media are large in numbers and have a great diversity. Most of them have close links to political parties or trade unions and, what is very important, benefit from generous public subsidies. Audiovisual media used to be dominated by the local radio and TV programs produced by RTL which began its success story in Luxembourg in the fifties.

## Advertising Market and Organizations

The Luxembourgish advertising market is rather tiny with a population of 550,000 inhabitants. On the other hand, as stated before, the average income is high and people mostly have a high purchasing power. This makes the advertising market interesting. In the field of advertising, about 20-25 advertising agencies offer all-round services in communication and advertising in Luxembourg (even if, statistically, the country has a lot more societies listed under the corresponding NACE code). A majority (19) of them is grouped in the Luxembourg Federation of Marketing and Communication Consultants called "MarkCom"<sup>2</sup> founded in 1995. The members of MarkCom stick

<sup>1</sup> See enclosure for references for the text information about Luxembourg

<sup>2</sup> Association des agences conseils en marketing et communication <http://www.markcom.lu/home.html>

<sup>3</sup> see Deontology Code:



to the self-imposed code of conduct which also addresses matters concerning gender and discrimination.<sup>3</sup>

The National Advertising Council (CNP) and Ethic Commission called CLEP4 reorganized themselves and launched their new organizational platform in May 2009 during a press conference. The Council's objective is also to guarantee compliance with the aforementioned code of conduct and to assure the efficient functioning of the Ethic Commission. The Ethic Commission consists of six members, three men and three women, who work in the wide field of media (advertising or press). They come together several times a year but only in their free time. They may either react through their own initiative against sexist advertising or on behalf of a complaint addressed to them by mail.

#### Legal framework (not exhaustive)

##### 1) Constitution

The principle of equal treatment can be found in the general legal principle found in article 10 bis of the Constitution, according to which "all Luxembourgers are equal before the Law".

In 2006, equal treatment of men and women was specifically inscribed in the Constitution in article 11/2 according to which "Women and men are equal in rights and duties. The State actively promotes the elimination of barriers that might exist to achieve equality between women and men." Equal treatment thus becomes not only a value guaranteed by national law, but also foresees proactive ways the government has to adopt in order to implement equal treatment:

*«Les femmes et les hommes sont égaux en droits et en devoirs. L'État veille à promouvoir activement l'élimination des entraves pouvant exister en matière d'égalité entre femmes et hommes.»*

##### 2) Penal Code

In the Luxembourg Penal Code, penal provisions against discrimination, including sex, religion, race and ethnic origin, disability, sexual orientation and age are found in articles 454 to 457. Individual and collective discrimination - against a person, a community of persons or a company - are thus prohibited and can lead to a fine or imprisonment.

##### 3) National anti-discrimination law

In the last six years, Luxembourg transposed three anti-discrimination EU directives in the field of employment and in the field of access to goods and services. The two laws of 28 November 2006 (general law) and 29 November 2006 (public service) have strengthened the existing legislation against direct discrimination and have introduced new tools in civil law to fight discrimination, such as indirect discrimination, harassment or instruction to discrimination.

In 2007, Directive 2004/113/EC implementing the principle of equal treatment between men and women in the access to and supply of goods and services was transposed into national law with the exceptions provided for education and the media.

These exceptions<sup>5</sup> were considered as being in contradiction with the existing national legislation providing overall protection against discrimination based on age, disability, race, etc. without any exception. In order to prevent a hierarchy of inequality regarding equal treatment, these exceptions were abolished by law in 2012. If we consider that discrimination based on sex, including harassment and sexual harassment, also takes place in areas outside the labour market, as in the domain of goods and services, we cannot consequently allow protection to be limited to certain fields only and not to others in these areas.

<sup>4</sup> Commission pour l'éthique en publicité: see references

<sup>5</sup> See Newsletter: [http://www.mega.public.lu/actions\\_projets/campagnes/newsletter\\_juin\\_2012.pdf](http://www.mega.public.lu/actions_projets/campagnes/newsletter_juin_2012.pdf)

## ENDING GENDER STEREOTYPING AND SEXIST PORTRAYALS IN ADVERTISING, LUXEMBOURG

In transposing Directives 76/207/CEE and 2002/73/CE, the law of 13 May 2008 regarding equality of treatment between men and women defines the concept of direct discrimination, indirect discrimination and harassment and provides instructions concerning discrimination based on sex.

### 4) Specific media legislation

Regarding the ethic principles and equality values, the modified law of 27 July 1991 on electronic media fosters, through various articles, respect and human dignity, as well as formal prohibition of pornographic and violent messages. Specifically, according to article 27bis, human dignity has to be guaranteed and no discrimination based on sex, racial origin, nationality, religion or conviction, handicap, etc. shall be accepted:

« c) elles ne portent pas atteinte à la dignité humaine; d) elles ne comportent pas de discrimination fondée sur le sexe, l'origine raciale ou ethnique, la nationalité, la religion ou les convictions, un handicap, l'âge ou l'orientation sexuelle, ni ne promeuvent une telle discrimination »

### Political Strategy for Gender in the Media<sup>6</sup>

The National Action Plan (PAN ) was prepared in 2006 in collaboration with representatives from all ministries, as well as civil society, establishing measures for each of the 12 topics fixed in the Beijing Platform for Action in 1995 during the Fourth World Conference on Women.

Chapter 10 of the Action Plan presents orientations for the political strategy on gender in and through media:

#### “10. Médias

10.1. *Elaboration d'un programme d'action médias et publicité concernant l'égalité des femmes et des hommes, en collaboration avec le Conseil d'Ethique en Publicité et les organismes des médias ;*

10.2. *Suivi du guide de la communication publique ;*

10.3. *Mise en place d'actions de sensibilisa-*

*tion en faveur d'un changement de mentalités et de comportements..”:*

According to point 10.1, the political strategy gives special attention to a partnership with media professionals on the one side and NGOs working in gender issues on the other side. Regarding media professionals, advertising companies have been especially in the focus of the Ministry for Equal Opportunities at different levels.

### Analysis and Studies<sup>7</sup>

Since 2006, the Ministry for Equal Opportunities has been conducting a biennial public telephone survey with the professional help of TNS IIRES, asking the residents of Luxembourg questions about their view of gender equality, about their knowledge of the political measures taken in this context, as well as the visibility of the minister's actions and appearances. One set of questions addresses the factors considered essential for a change of mentality regarding gender equality.

Which environments do you think have an impact on social development?



Source: MEGA / TNS ILRES 2010

The majority of people believed that media and advertising in particular were reinforcing our traditional way of thinking and our stereotypical behaviour.

The National Council for advertising (Conseil de la Publicité) wondered whether advertisement in Luxembourg was really as stereotypical as considered by the audience of the inquiry. In partnership with the ministry for Equal opportunities, the CPL launched a study in 2010 to find out if

<sup>6</sup> Plan d'action national d'égalité des femmes et des hommes (PAN )  
[http://www.mega.public.lu/actualites/actu\\_min/2010/02/pan\\_egalite/plan\\_definitif.pdf](http://www.mega.public.lu/actualites/actu_min/2010/02/pan_egalite/plan_definitif.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> Study for download:

[http://www.mega.public.lu/publications/1\\_brochures/2012/les\\_femmes\\_et\\_les\\_hommes\\_dans\\_la\\_publicite/Rapport\\_Megapub\\_web.pdf](http://www.mega.public.lu/publications/1_brochures/2012/les_femmes_et_les_hommes_dans_la_publicite/Rapport_Megapub_web.pdf)

advertising shown or created in Luxembourg was permeated by traditional schemes or stereotypical mind settings.

The CPL analyzed the advertisement in six different press supports as being in majority not sexist. Stereotypes are predictable and rather limited in use. There was a public presentation of the results promoting the discussion about this issue, also among professionals in the communication field.

### Positive Actions

Change of mentality starts with the staff of an advertising agency, the same as in other companies of the private sector. To promote sensitization for a creative gender approach, a pilot project was conducted as part of a positive action program with one advertising agency. Following internal analysis, gender training was organized for the creative staff. The agency managed to promote feminization of functions in radio spots with certain customers. The project can now be developed for other agencies.

### Public Conference

A public conference about the image of men and women in the media was organized around the international women's day in March 2012 in partnership with press and media agencies.<sup>8</sup> Scientists, lawyers and communication experts discussed the way men and women are presented and/or distorted by media. The experts went beyond the classical media fields to also look at other domains, such as video games and the presentation of female or male heroes in these games. The conference was also the kick off of a university research project about stereotypes in video games and song texts that will run from 2012 to 2014.

### Exhibition "Act Responsibly"

Act Responsibly was a public exhibition showing international and national products of advertising agencies in the large field of social responsibility regarding sex, but also disabilities, age or minorities. The exhibition was attended by a large number of people (in the hall of a large shopping

mall in Luxemburg city) and gave the National Council of Advertisement an excellent platform to present themselves as well as all their ethical principles and values. The project was financed by the Ministry of Equal Opportunities.

### Complaints

In the course of a year, several complaints are sent to the CLEP association related to sexist advertising or advertising promoting violence. In September and October, we had two good examples of how agencies act against their own values of social responsibility as set out in the code of conduct. The first was a TV spot for the furniture festival in Luxembourg. The second was a print campaign for a company working in the field of sanitary installations.

Article 4 of this Code refers to social responsibility, dignity and equal treatment of men and women in advertising. This article also says that one should consider the diversity of roles and social evolution towards respectful treatment of the sexes.

Both media campaigns were made by agencies which had signed the code of conduct (one of them was even involved in the first elaborated code!). And both of them recently participated in an exhibition on social responsibility in advertising.

These examples again give rise to the question whether auto-regulation is really efficient when dealing with sexism in advertising and which strategy a ministry, for instance, should adopt to achieve major changes in people's mentality.

Complaints regarding a broadcasted TV or radio program can be introduced online to the CNP (Conseil national des programmes) who is the independent national regulator for the Luxembourg audiovisual media since 1991. Since 2002, the National Council of women of Luxembourg (CNFL) is represented inside this organization holding a special look on sexism in media

<sup>8</sup> Details of the conference:  
[http://www.mega.public.lu/actualites/actu\\_min/2012/03/table\\_ronde\\_7\\_mars/index.html](http://www.mega.public.lu/actualites/actu_min/2012/03/table_ronde_7_mars/index.html)

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broadcasting. The ministry of Equal opportunities also works closely together with NGO's in the field of media. A project in the field of press creating a female expert data base is under way with CNFL and Cid-femmes. There are also regular partnerships in the field of advertising issues.

### Deontology Code for Public Campaigns<sup>9</sup>

According to point 10.2, a group of civil servants working on communication issues in their respective ministries or administrations worked out guidelines for internal use and for advertising agencies working with the public services. These guidelines have also been translated into English to give civil servants and agencies a framework for effective implementation of dignity and respect of people.

These guidelines were a joint project of the Ministry of State, the Ministry of Equal Opportunities, the Luxembourg Reception and Integration Office of the Ministry of Family Affairs and Integration and the government's Information and Press Services. Private partner in the project was the Luxembourg Federation of Marketing and Communication Consultants, MarkCom.

### References:

*Luxemburg and media landscape*  
[www.luxemburg.lu](http://www.luxemburg.lu)

[http://www.gouvernement.lu/publications/luxembourg/ap\\_medias\\_2007/index.html](http://www.gouvernement.lu/publications/luxembourg/ap_medias_2007/index.html)

[http://www.ejc.net/media\\_landscape/article/luxembourg/](http://www.ejc.net/media_landscape/article/luxembourg/)

### Legislation

*Constitution:* [http://www.legilux.public.lu/leg/textescoordonnes/recueils/Constitution/Page\\_de\\_garde.pdf](http://www.legilux.public.lu/leg/textescoordonnes/recueils/Constitution/Page_de_garde.pdf)

*Code pénal:* [http://www.legilux.public.lu/leg/textescoordonnes/codes/code\\_penal/index.html](http://www.legilux.public.lu/leg/textescoordonnes/codes/code_penal/index.html)

*Anti-discrimination laws transposing EU directives in the employment field:*

<http://www.legilux.public.lu/leg/a/archives/2006/0207/a207.pdf>

<http://www.legilux.public.lu/leg/a/archives/2008/0070/a070.pdf>

*Revised law on access to goods and services:*  
<http://www.legilux.public.lu/rgl/2012/A/1738/A.pdf>

### Code du travail:

[http://www.legilux.public.lu/leg/textescoordonnes/codes/code\\_travail/Code\\_du\\_Travail.pdf](http://www.legilux.public.lu/leg/textescoordonnes/codes/code_travail/Code_du_Travail.pdf)

### National legislation on media:

[http://www.mediacom.public.lu/legislation/textes\\_nat\\_vig/index.html](http://www.mediacom.public.lu/legislation/textes_nat_vig/index.html)

### NGOs and centres working for gender equality

*Conseil national des femmes du Luxembourg:*  
[www.cnfl.lu](http://www.cnfl.lu)

*Centre d'information et de documentation des femmes:* [www.cid-femmes.lu](http://www.cid-femmes.lu)

*Centre pour l'égalité de traitement:* [www.cet.lu](http://www.cet.lu)

### Organizations:

#### Regulation

*National Regulator for Audiovisual Media:*  
<http://cnpl.lu/en/>

#### Professional groups

*National Council for Advertising:* [www.cnp.lu](http://www.cnp.lu)

*Ethical Commission:* <http://www.clep.lu/>

*Federation of Advertising Agencies:*  
[www.Markcom.lu](http://www.Markcom.lu)



<sup>9</sup> [http://www.mega.public.lu/pictures/layout/mep\\_egalit\\_delacom\\_EN\\_1.pdf](http://www.mega.public.lu/pictures/layout/mep_egalit_delacom_EN_1.pdf)

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE PANEL DISCUSSION ON

# IS THERE A PANACEA TO FIGHT SEXIST ADVERTISING? – BUILDING STRATEGIES

Višnja Ljubičić, Marion Gebhart, Isabelle Wickler

WHAT ARE THE MAIN OBSTACLES ON THE WAY TO NON-SEXIST ADVERTISING?

**Gebhart:** One major problem is that too many people still think speaking in a sexist way or showing sexist pictures, also in advertising, is a sign of being relaxed and casual. There is little awareness of the discriminatory character. Hardly anyone really knows that gender stereotyping and sexist advertising are against several EU directives Member States have to have implemented.

**Ljubičić:** I would say that the main obstacle is a culture in which sexism and gender stereotypes are not considered serious, despite international documents or national legislation which point out how much influence they have on all the efforts in trying to attain gender equality.

When we consider all the sexist advertisements and recall how omnipresent they are, how children, young people and adults are surrounded by them every day of their lives, everywhere, in their homes, in their schools, in the work place, we, who feel that something has to be done about sexism as such, might easily feel hopeless and inclined to surrender to the notion that "nothing can be done about it".

WHICH STRATEGIES DO YOU SEE TO EFFECTIVELY ABOLISH SEXIST ADVERTISING?

**Ljubičić:** To effectively abolish sexist advertising we need the simultaneous effort of various social factors in spreading gender sensitive ideas and values.

First, it is important to ensure that our children grow up in a world with gender role models different from those they see today. Gender equality is a value we are all looking forward to achieve, but sexism, which is a very visible part of patriarchal gender roles, is a very persistent obstacle in achieving that goal. And it will continue to be an obstacle as long as we do not do something decisively, systematically and simultaneously at various levels, in the educational system, in the media, in the judiciary, etc.



### WHICH COOPERATION IS NEEDED AT THE REGIONAL AND THE NATIONAL LEVEL TO FIGHT SEXIST ADVERTISING? WHICH STAKEHOLDERS NEED TO BE INVOLVED?

**Ljubičić:** I think that what we need is an exchange of good practice, continuously not just occasionally, sharing of information about strategies that worked, sharing of information about the legislature concerning media in general with regard to content. As far as sexism in advertising is concerned there are differences between countries. It would be useful if all of us could have access to information on how those who succeeded in abolishing sexist ads did it, what steps they undertook, what they learned through practice.

### WHAT CAN WE EXPECT FROM EU INSTITUTIONS AND FROM INDIVIDUAL MEPS?

**Gebhart:** Information and sensitisation for the issue seems to me of great importance: Individual Members of the European Parliament could be contacted and informed about national and regional initiatives. Lobbying efforts might also be useful.

**Wickler:** EU institutions have the financial and organizational strength to connect people through sustainable networking, for example when organizing conferences or workshops at EU level. This makes it possible to exchange best practices among EU Members and to enable even small national, regional or local structures to improve their own projects and connect with others.

Also, the EU is best suited to promote media campaigns at EU Level and thus help all Member States to speed up mentality change according to the fundamental EU values on equality of men and women.

People also need personal references. So individ-

ual MEPs should give testimonials of best practices that can be shown as video clips or press interviews. These testimonials may also stimulate new and creative perspectives. We definitely need to go new ways for role models to promote gender equality.

### WHAT ABOUT NGOS AND SCIENTIFIC EXPERTS IN YOUR COUNTRY OR NETWORK: ARE THEY RELEVANT PARTNERS IN YOUR EFFORTS TO FIGHT SEXIST ADVERTISING?:

**Ljubičić:** Yes. I must point out that women's NGOs in Croatia were the first who started to campaign against sexism and who held workshops and seminars on this topic for women in politics, for media employees and for the general public. Today they still speak up against sexism, and they are even contacted by the media to give statements. However, they have not been alone in that fight ever since national mechanisms for gender equality were established. But, what we need is the public to refuse to accept sexism as a "normal" way of treating women in advertisements or in any other field of public life.

**Wickler:** Absolutely! NGOs are very relevant partners for us. In Luxemburg we work closely together with the National Council of Women (CNFL) on a wide range of themes and every year the CNFL chooses a topic to promote. In 2013, for example, it will probably be "gender medicine". In the field of media, the member organization Cid-femmes is now working on an expert database for journalists to identify female experts they can contact. Women organizations in our country are very well documented and highly motivated to work on gender issues.

On the other hand, scientific experts are involved in university research financed by the Ministry for Equal Opportunities, such as: "stereotyping in video games" or "gender eye tracking for internet



sites". These research projects are starting right now and we are looking forward to having new results to communicate in the coming years. In 2013, conferences or workshops will be organized to communicate these findings.

**THE FEMCITIES NETWORK: WHAT DO YOU EXPECT FROM A CITY NETWORK LIKE FEMCITIES? WHICH JOINT ACTIONS COULD BE CARRIED OUT IN ORDER TO RAISE AWARENESS, FIND SUPPORTERS AND COMBAT SEXIST ADVERTISING?**

**Gebhart:** Whenever an advertisement shown in many countries at the same time is classified as sexist FemCities could, for instance, launch protest letter campaigns or FemCities network members could carry out a concerted action by contacting media in their countries and confront them with their negative choice of content and pictures. These are just a few examples of joint actions.

**Wickler:** For me networking among stakeholders who do local/regional fieldwork is one of the main activities to be promoted at EU level. The FemCities network may help to bring local and regional organizations together and carry out common projects and also create a pool of experts on specific topics, such as media. FemCities may help to make members' projects more visible.

**AS FOR GLOBAL PLAYERS LIKE MULTINATIONAL COMPANIES - HOW CAN THEY BE APPROACHED AND INVOLVED IN A PRODUCTIVE DISCUSSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS, SUCH AS DEGRADING PORTRAYALS OF WOMEN AND MEN IN ADVERTISING?**

**Gebhart:** It would be positive to invite them to panel discussions and confront them with the

harmful consequences of sexist advertising (for instance: depression, anorexia) and the human rights violations they are causing.

**Wickler:** We need to approach directors or boards of directors, as well as professional chambers to get them to put the issue of degrading portrayals of women and men in the context of economic growth. It is important to be in contact with those who have the decision power and the money, but not as moral regulators or even legal regulators but with the prospect of creating a joint win-win situation. We need their attention if we want to convince them to change their attitude. So, how can we attract their attention and maintain their interest in this issue? This is what it is about. The network of FemCities may help us find answers together.

**Ljubičić:** I think they can be approached the same way fighters for animal rights or LGBT rights are approaching them; making them aware that women make up the majority of the population and consequently are also consumers of their products and that to treat them in a sexist way will have a counter-effect on their business.

It might sound as if I am advocating more profit for those companies, but in the long run they can do more good than harm if they change the way they portray women in the advertisements. Even today, when a company advertises that it is socially responsible, it does not suffer any loss. On the contrary, it gains new customers who are becoming more and more sensitive about to the way they are treated. ■

# BIOGRAPHIES OF CHAIRS, SPEAKERS AND AND PARTICIPANTS IN THE PANEL DISCUSSIONS FEMCITIES CONFERENCE 2012

**Leanda Barrington-Leach** holds an M.A. in History from the University of Edinburgh (UK) and an M.A. in EU International Relations and Diplomacy from the College of Europe, Bruges (Belgium). Leanda worked as a Communications Instructor in Hiroshima (Japan) before entering the European policy arena in 2005. Since then, she has held policy, communications and project management posts in the European Commission and at the Mission of Japan to the EU. Leanda joined the EWL team in 2009 as the organisation's first dedicated Communications and Media Officer. Her work covers the coordination of all EWL internal and external communications, including contacts with the press. Leanda is also responsible for the EWL website and all publications and informational materials. Furthermore, Leanda deals with the policy area of Women and the Media.

**Marion Gebhart** studied law in Graz (Austria) and has been working for the City of Vienna since 1986. From 1994 to 1999 she worked as a Vienna Children's and Youth Ombuds-Officer; since 2008 she has been Head of the Department for the Promotion and Coordination of Women's Issues at the

City of Vienna (Municipal Department 57). She also works as a mediator and lecturer.

**Michaela Kauer**, born 1966 in Vienna, has a 20 years work experience with the City of Vienna, where she occupied different posts and managed some major organisational change processes. In 2009, she was appointed Director of the Liaison Office of the City of Vienna in Brussels. The focus of "Wien Haus" in Brussels is on public services and urban issues, monitoring current developments in the EU agenda and assisting the services of the city administration in their advocacy work with EU institutions. Her academic background is in international public management, she regularly publishes, gives lectures, and teaches European Public Management at Fachhochschule Burgenland.

**Višnja Ljubičić**, Ombudswoman for Gender Equality of the Republic of Croatia. On October 28th 2011, the Croatian Parliament appointed Ms. Višnja Ljubičić, as the new Ombudswoman for Gender Equality, the Head of the Office of the Ombudsperson for Gender Equality, an independent body for combating discrimination in the area of gender





equality. Ms. Ljubičić, has a degree in Law from the Faculty of Law, University of Zagreb. Her work experience is extensive and includes ten years in the Governmental Office for Human Rights as an advisor and the Head of the Department and eight years in the Ministry of Defense as an advisor/ Chief of the Department and Head of the Secretarial Office. Education and vocational trainings include various international trainings concerning human rights and her professional experience includes different fields in the protection and promotion of human rights, as well as cooperation with EU bodies. She was a member of working groups for drafting many important laws and programmes in the field of gender equality. She also worked as coordinator, lecturer and trainer. She is a recipient of a letter of honor for her support of the Brave Phone and contribution to the area of protection of abused and neglected children. In 1996 she was assigned the rank of Lieutenant, in 1998 the rank of Captain and she was honored three times by the President of the Republic of Croatia.

**Isabella Meier** is a sociologist and holds a lecturing and research post at the University of Graz and at the European Training and Research Centre for Human Rights and Democracy. Her research interests are: gender studies, social inequality and care for the elderly.

**Melita Mulić** is a member of the Croatian Parliament, Social Democratic Party. Since 2009 she is

also a member of the City Assembly of the City of Zagreb. In this capacity she is chairwoman of the Committee for Gender Equality. Before being elected MP (2012) she worked as Head of the Section for Communication Support for EU Accession Negotiations at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration (2005-2012). She graduated from the University of Zadar, Department for Information and Communication Sciences with a Major in Tourism Communication (2003). Upon completion of a postgraduate study at the University of Sussex (United Kingdom), she acquired the degree of Master of Contemporary European Studies (2005).

**Isabelle Wickler** has two university degrees in Communication. She received her first degree at the Free University of Brussels in 1985 and in 2010 completed a trinational masters degree at the University of Saarbrücken, Metz and Luxemburg. Having worked in the private sector in marketing communication for some years, she became a civil servant and since 1999 has been working with the Ministry of Equal Opportunities in Luxemburg. She is currently engaged in elaborating media campaigns and since 2011 also in compulsory gender training for civil servants. Isabelle Wickler is fluent in the three national languages, as well as English and Dutch and recently began to study Croatian (very difficult, but very nice!). In her free time she also loves to ride motorcycles. ■

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# [ **Fem** *Cities* ]

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