



## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT: *We must be the change we wish to see!*

A draft resolution on the financial crisis – calling for support of social rights did not pass EWLA's General Assembly in November. There was not much time for debate on this issue – but that may not be the only reason the resolution was not adopted. Those who had supported the draft resolution were maintaining that there was no way out of the financial crisis without strengthening social rights and that the neglect of social objectives would primarily affect women and young people, and furthermore threaten the very roots of democracy in the crisis-ridden member states of the EU. On the other hand, there were those members in the General Assembly who held that the draft was far too political in its wording and should be anchored more in legal rhetoric – these voices were sceptical of resolutions that might be too broad in wording – not least given the political climate at present.

So for the time being the draft

resolution has been left with the EWLA working group on fundamental rights awaiting further elaboration. While a prominent and well known attorney at law questioned what was wrong being an activist in matters of human rights: „Human rights are a way of life, not just legal literature,“ she said, pointing to the fact human rights have always been promoted by people who have been ready to suffer hardships, prison, torture and even death for their cause. „Human rights are not promoted by discussing legal theory and drinking coffee“. Rights are political in nature, said another voice. Yes, but they may not be couched in too broad, political terms, said the third. Scepticism grows when the seas get rough.

Yet, amidst the worst economic crisis in recent history – EWLA is the voice of women lawyers' across Europe and has been from its founding in the year 2000. We may disagree on words in a text or the tone of the voice; but not

on the content of the message: to constantly and consistently promote human rights – a central issue during these difficult times. We need to be a fearless challenger of the status quo and remind those in power of their human rights obligations towards all not least in times when the welfare of the general public all over Europe is at stake.

Europe today needs the critical voice of women lawyers that question without fear and seek out different solutions to preserve the social contract. We must not forget that widespread corruption in many countries and on many levels erodes the social contract entrenched in human rights treaties and constitutions.

Women, albeit more than half of the population, have had limited opportunities to make their voices heard – their participation in politics or on corporate boards is often token representation which they have achieved in exchange for tacitly supporting



*Prof. Dr. Herdís Thorgeirsdóttir*  
EWLA President

conventional “wisdoms” instead of speaking in their own voice. It is for this reason that an association of women lawyers is crucial – not least in difficult times when there is need for women to take much more initiative and lead. We must be the change we wish to see!

I take this opportunity to say “Thank You” for being with EWLA and to wish you a Happy Holiday Season and a New Year of health and happiness in a World of Peace!



Please note that the next annual EWLA Congress is scheduled to take place in Prague in May 2012 under the auspices of the Czech Women Lawyers Association (CWLA) – the exact date to be confirmed - more information will be on [www.ewla.org](http://www.ewla.org). (Contact Iva Jermanová: [iva.jermanova@akjermanova.com](mailto:iva.jermanova@akjermanova.com))



### From Christa Tobler:

## *EWLA – a way to be European as female law professional*

When, in the year of its being founded, I joined the European Women Lawyers Association, and when I attended the founding Congress in Berlin, I realised at once that something very special was happening: the founding of a high-level professional networking organisation across the borders of the European countries. It is well known that much of the professional success of men is due to the diligent use they make of professional networks. In fact, it has been shown in studies that men are much better than women in using such networks. Against this background,

EWLA provides an excellent platform for women. Further, one of EWLA's goals is to improve the understanding of European legislation in relation to equality, with particular reference to women, and its effects. EU non-discrimination law is one of my academic specialities. I am deeply convinced of the importance of this particular field of law for the quality of the life of women, and I am therefore pleased to know that there is an international association that pays particular attention on this important area of law, and I am proud to be a member of EWLA.



*Prof. Dr. Christa Tobler, LLM*  
Professor of European law at the Universities of Leiden (Netherlands) and Basel (Switzerland)

**EWLA membership fees** are of great importance to our organisation as it helps us in taking our work forward. We would be grateful if your dues are paid. Please fill in the form with the newsletter.

# HIGHLIGHTS EWLA 2011

BY JACKIE JONES EWLA GENERAL SECRETARY



REGULA KÄGI-DIENER, EWLA Vice-President was involved in successfully resolving a long dispute with the Swiss governments over equal pay.

A Commentary on CEDAW edited by Marsha A. Freeman, Christine Chinkin and BEATE RUDOLF, is being published in November 2011.



EUGENIJA SUTKIENE is in the process of setting up the Women Lawyers Association in Lithuania and in 2010 her law firm was involved in the five top M&A transactions in the country.



working from home and going to the office for some hours per day to attend meetings with colleagues and clients. I am always bringing Giorgia with me as I am still feeding her upon request. I have to say that even if it is not easy to find the right balance between private life and work, this is the best period of my life! By the way, after having worked as a lawyer for almost fifteen years, I learned to react quickly in any circumstances of my life. This is now helping me a lot.

## JUNE 2011

Herdís Thorgeirsdóttir

EWLA's President gave a presentation at the International Conference "The Past and the Future of the Constitutional Review in New Democracies"

at the 15th Anniversary of the Constitutional Court of Georgia in Batumi, Georgia.



## MARCH 2011

Jackie Jones attended the launch of the Handbook of Anti-Discrimination Law by the Council of Europe and EU FRA, Strasbourg.

Jackie Jones represented EWLA as a speaker at a Roundtable on EU equality in Europe, Brussels.

## APRIL 2011

Jackie Jones represented EWLA at the EU FRA Platform of NGOs, Vienna, and spoke on Access to Justice.

## MAY 2011

Herdís Thorgeirsdóttir EWLA's President was a speaker at the 8th European Conference on Electoral Management Bodies, "Elections in a Changing World" in Vienna, Austria.

In the private sphere the Italian board member of EWLA, Antonia Verna, had a daughter, Giorgia Iaboni on May 16th. „For the first three months of her life, I have been on maternity leave (always checking my outlook account on my Blackberry and answering to some urgent client's requests after having fed my baby!). Since September, I started



## JULY 2011

Dace Lutere-Thümmel, member of the EWLA board, represented EWLA at a meeting with the EU Commission, Brussels and prepared the EWLA statement on Consultation on Green Paper on EU Corporate Governance Framework.

Regula Kägi-Diener spoke at a conference in Germany about CEDAW and its influence on the interpretation of national law.



## SEPTEMBER 2011

The Swiss Lawyers Association celebrated 10 years with its only present, our Vice-President, Regula Kägi-Diener, chairing the conference 'Time Power Money'.

Beate Rudolf represented EWLA at the bi-annual congress of the German Women Lawyers Association, Potsdam.

## OCTOBER 2011

Jackie Jones as EU FRA representative attended a workshop for potential trainers of FRONTEX staff on fundamental rights, Vienna. (Photo of Jackie Jones)

Regula Kägi-Diener was speaker at an International Congress 'The ways of Federalism', Bilbao.

Jackie Jones attended the EU Commission day workshop on 'The Future of Families in the EU', Brussels.

## NOVEMBER 2011

(See coverage of EWLA Congress in Berlin next page)

## SPECIAL THANKS TO GERMAN WOMEN LAWYERS' ASSOCIATION (djb)

The EWLA Congress on 4 November 2011 was made possible through the generous sponsorship of the German Women Lawyers' Association (djb). In 2000 the djb initiated the foundation of the European Women Lawyers Association in co-operation with colleagues from Austria and the United Kingdom. The djb works

in co-operation with EWLA at the European level <http://www.djb.de/german-women-lawyers-association/>. It was a great honour to have djb's President, Dr. Ramona Pisal, participating in our Berlin Congress in November 2011 (pictured here with EWLA's President, Dr. Herdís Thorgeirsdóttir) to confirm the

strong ties between the two associations and our common objective to bring about equality and equal opportunities for women, be it in society, professional life or the family. Both EWLA and the djb strive for participation of women in politics and society in keeping with their share of the population.



# Human Rights Law in Practice – EWLA Congress in Berlin



Yet another congress? Not this year's EWLA Congress! Improving participants' practical skills while keeping EWLA's trademark focus on human rights and on making gender equality a reality was the focus of this year's 11th Congress. The tone was set by the keynote speech delivered by EWLA President *Prof. Dr. Herdis Thorgeirsdóttir*, who shared her experience as a member of the Venice Commission, the Council of Europe's think tank on constitutional law and human rights. One should never underestimate the potential of human rights law to bring about fundamental changes in law and society.

*Nathalie Leroy* of the French Women Lawyers' Association (Association française des femmes juristes) and EWLA Secretary-General *Jackie Jones* presented the significant progress made through the European Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence. Lobbying for the ratification of the Convention as well as for its implementation by all European states will be on EWLA's agenda for the immediate future.

The larger part of the day-long Congress was devoted to four workshops – two of a general practical nature and two concerning specific legal instruments. In a workshop held by *Dr. Nina Althoff* of the German Institute for Human Rights, participants not only learned about taking a case to the European Court of Human Rights, but they also discussed the pros

and cons of choosing this avenue as opposed to bringing an individual complaint to another international human rights body, such as the CEDAW Committee. Many other aspects of strategic litigation were also debated, including the need for, and difficulties of a concomitant media strategy. Another workshop dealt with the Court of Justice of the EU and its practice. *Thomas Henze*, German Agent before the CJEU and former member of the cabinet of Advocate-General *Juliane Kokott*, gave an insight into the Court's inner structure and functioning. The workshop provided ample room for an exchange between the moderator and participants of their respective practical experience in the strategic use of the CJEU.

One of the more general workshops aimed at familiarizing participants with social media as a means for promoting their competences and/or law offices. It was held by EWLA Board member and practicing solicitor, *Roselyn Knight*, and *Kevin Doherty* director of Surf Marketing. *Roselyn Knight* spoke about her experience in setting up her law firm, Borg Knight Solicitors, and she also dealt with using social media as a tool to promote her practice. Her talk was followed by a presentation delivered by *Kevin Doherty*, who dealt with the various aspects of social media, including various tips on how to use social media in an effective way for a business.

*Judith Willis* (past General Secretary of EWLA) ran a session on presentation skills.

This skill, increasingly required in the modern legal and business world, can be overlooked in the training of lawyers, where the emphasis is often on court appearances. To gain a flavour of the session, the slides *Judith* used are on the EWLA website.

The turnout for all workshops and enthusiastic responses proved that the organizers had met participants' expectations. The whole Congress was marked by a vibrant atmosphere. Maybe the spirit of the venue contributed to this ambience – the Congress was held in the premises of the German Institute for Human Rights, Germany's independent National Human Rights Institution, upon invitation of the Institute's director, EWLA Vice-President *Prof. Dr. Beate Rudolf*.

The welcome reception in a cosy underground restaurant right in the heart of Berlin and the networking dinner after the Congress in a market hall bistro in Kreuzberg provided an opportunity for informal exchange among participants, speakers and local members of the German Women Lawyers Association (DJB). The Congress was made possible through the generous sponsorship of djb members and of Borg Knight Solicitors. There was general agreement: A "hands-on Congress" like this one is a perfect way to gather women lawyers from all over Europe – a benefit both professionally and personally, new ideas for EWLA, and all this at an affordable price! See you in May 2012 in Prague!

## New Board Members

**Dr. Charlotte Phillips,**  
*Children's Rights Specialist and Lecturer in Law, NETHERLANDS*



A board member of both EWLA and the Dutch Women Lawyers Association I shall work on strengthening the ties between these two organisations. At the recent Berlin congress, while brainstorming with fellow-members on issues which touch us all, EWLA's role as a European network and a platform for creating and maintaining equal opportunities for women, became very "real" to me. I look forward to playing an active role in contributing to the realisation of EWLA's objectives.

**Katharina Erdmenger,**  
*lawyer, GERMANY*



I ran for EWLA board because I find it very important that well-trained women, who are all doing great jobs in their country, join up on European level and join their mutual efforts towards gender equality. There is still so much to do in the field of equal opportunities. And women still have to learn that a lot can be achieved through efficient networks.

**Dr. Katalin Prandler,**  
*attorney at law, HUNGARY*



A senior partner with Prandler & Petroczy Law Office in Budapest, she is also Doctor of Laws and has a postgraduate degree in international trade law. A member of the Budapest Bar Association and Vice President of the Hungarian Association of Women Advocates, Katalin Prandler looks forward to work with EWLA.

**Kristel Degener,**  
*lawyer, ESTONIA*



I am responsible for European and International Social Policy at the Employers' and Business Association of North-Rhine-Westphalia in Düsseldorf/Germany. Moreover, I am the head of European office of this Association in Brussels/Belgium. As a board member I will foster the objectives of EWLA and so the idea of European Union. In the current board work I will have my main focus in European labour law.

**Nathalie Leroy,**  
*Employment Barrister, FRANCE*



EWLA represents an opportunity for the women. It is the proof that the union of the Nordic, Germanic, Mediterranean, Saxons, and Slavic women's

cultures of all Europe can make progress in human rights and women's rights. I have been a member of EWLA and the French women lawyers association (AFFJ) for a few years and have seen the determination and the success of EWLA in the European institutions. That's why I joined EWLA.

EWLA is also a place of exchanges between jurists who can work together, beyond the differences of language and legal systems. To collect all these talents and to create networks between legal women is a wonderful possibility and affords us the opportunity to share experience and information. That's why I joined EWLA.

**Veronica Williams,**  
*lawyer European Research Council, ROMANIA*



I am a lawyer of Romanian origin, starting my career in the Bucharest Bar Association. Later on, I specialised in human rights, European law and intellectual property.

I have worked successively in the Council of Europe, European Parliament and the European Commission and also worked extensively for and with civil society organisations. Presently, I am a lawyer in the European Research Council. I have been a member of EWLA for several years and my immediate interests within EWLA are to help with promoting equal economic independence for women, equality in decision making and in work conditions for women.

**Sile Larkin,**  
*Legal Advisor Equality Tribunal, IRELAND*



I am a Solicitor and have been the Legal Advisor to the Director of the Equality Tribunal since 2006 and represent the Tribunal in all civil proceedings to which it is a party. I am on the Steering Committee of the Irish Women Lawyers Association and also a member of the Employment Law Association of Ireland, the Irish Centre for European Law and the Dublin Solicitors Bar Association.

**Genoveva Tisheva,**  
*Managing Director and legal expert, BULGARIA*



As a new member of the Board of EWLA, I would like to work, together with my colleagues, for promoting gender equality and the human rights of women in Europe and for making the contribution of women lawyers around Europe in all areas of law more visible. In addition to that, I hope to be able, together with my colleagues, to actively promote education of young women lawyers in view of better protection of human rights and women's rights in Europe.

## JOIN EWLA WORKING GROUPS

**Violence against women – chair:**

*Eithne O'Doherty and Irma Ertman.*



The Working Group will co-ordinate with and work to the ethos of the EWLA Fundamental Rights and Gender Equality working group to collate best legislative practice and decision making in the EU and globally. The Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, May 11th 2011 is timely and the working group will liaise with EWLA members and national lawyer organisations in securing its ratification. EWLA expertise will be used to issue statements. Please contact Eithne O'Doherty at [codoherty@lawlibrary.ie](mailto:codoherty@lawlibrary.ie) and Irma Ertman at [Irma.Ertman@formin.fi](mailto:Irma.Ertman@formin.fi)

**Fundamental Rights and Gender Equality – chair:**

*Beate Rudolf and Jackie Jones*

The Working Group will focus on strengthening fundamental rights and gender equality through statements on relevant political and legal developments on the European level and through participation in EU consultations. It will also coordinate EWLA's cooperation with the EU Fundamental Rights Agency. The Working Group will be co-chaired by EWLA Secretary-General Jackie Jones and Prof. Dr. Beate Rudolf, past EWLA Vice-President. EWLA members interested in joining the Working Group are kindly requested to contact the co-chairs at: [Jackie.Jones@uwe.ac.uk](mailto:Jackie.Jones@uwe.ac.uk) or [Beate.Rudolf@ewla.org](mailto:Beate.Rudolf@ewla.org).

**Corporate and Business Matters – chair:**

*Dace Luters-Thümmel Vice-President EWLA*

The Working Group is comprised of partners of law firms or representatives of national business associations. New active EWLA members are most welcome to join us. We will continue efforts to lobby the balanced representation of women and men in private and public companies at the European institutions. We are also planning to establish a European-wide consultancy network of EWLA members for the establishment of private companies in other EU Member States. For more information, please contact [Dace L. Luters-Thümmel](mailto:Dace.L.Luters-Thuettel@law-dlt.com), [luters-thuettel@law-dlt.com](mailto:luters-thuettel@law-dlt.com), see also [www.ewla.org](http://www.ewla.org)

**Labour law – chair:**

*Nathalie Leroy and Marianne Eisma*



The working group's objective is to determine the specific domestic labour legislation applicable to women in each member state. We thus wish to list, theme by theme, the domestic measures which exist. That will allow us to establish a comparison between member states' laws with regard to collective agreements, discrimination, maternity leave, moral /sexual harassment, paid leave, vocational training. Every member is asked to provide information on the legislation in her country. Our work will begin in December and you can contact Nathalie Leroy (FR) [nle@25ruegounod.fr](mailto:nle@25ruegounod.fr) or Marianne Eisma (NL) [marianne.eisma@mlegalprojects.nl](mailto:marianne.eisma@mlegalprojects.nl) in order to participate.

**Family Law – chair:**

*María del Rosario García Marisca and Dögg Pálsdóttir*

The focus is on promoting co-operation among family lawyers and judges in Europe and to establish communication with national law makers. The work is also concerned with legal obstacles in the European Court of Justice. We call on lawyers, judges, politicians and academics to join us in this mission. Please contact: Charo Garcia Mariscal [[garciamariscal@me.com](mailto:garciamariscal@me.com)] and [dogg@dp.is](mailto:dogg@dp.is)