



European Women Lawyers Association

The Voice of Women Lawyers Across Europe

Brussels, 9 May 2019

PRESS RELEASE

EWLA remembers origins of European Union

On 9th May, EWLA remembers the origins of European Union. The Schuman Declaration was a milestone in European history. For us women, European Union has been a crucial partner for reaching and implementing our equal opportunities and equal rights, and maybe not always deliberately. For example in 1957, Article 119 of the Treaty of Rome about equal pay had been included in the European Economic Community Treaty (EECT) because France wanted to prevent distortions in competition between companies established in different Member States not required to pay women equally, which could have put France at a competitive disadvantage.

However, a combination of intrepid plaintiffs such as Ms Gabrielle Defrenne and greater legislative activity fleshing out the sparse wording of Article 119 EECT (as well as growing familiarity with, and willingness to refer cases to the European Court of Justice), contributed to the development of the EU Gender Equality Acquis. In 1976 the Court of Justice of European Union (CJEU) ruled that Article 119 EECT not only had an economic, but also a social aim. As such, it contributed to social progress and the improvement of living and working conditions. Later on, the CJEU even ruled that the economic aim is secondary to the social aim. It also held that the principle of equal pay is an expression of a fundamental human right.

EWLA's President, Katharina Miller states: "EWLA is convinced that European Union is of utmost importance for the maintenance of equal rights und therefore fundamental rights for women and men and our democracies and peace within European Union. There will never be a democracy and peace without equal rights. EWLA understands itself as an important change agent within the development of the EU Gender Equality Acquis. We contribute to it as observers, guardians and activists. And we want to reach out, once again to all the other intrepid stakeholders within European Union in order to unite synergies for a better European Union."

The European Women Lawyers Association (EWLA) is registered in Belgium as an international non-governmental, non-profit, association (Association Internationale Sans But Lucratif). It is a federation of national women lawyers associations from amongst the European Union countries and those of EFTA countries. Members of EWLA are also individual women lawyers and academics from these countries. EWLA pursues the co-operation of European women lawyers, in order to combine their specific expertise in monitoring law and politics seen from the angle of fundamental rights, and in particular gender equality.

The European Women Lawyers Association (**EWLA**) is registered in Belgium as an International Non-profit Association (**AISBL**)

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