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Women

Success for March of Women in Marseille

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On May 28-29, 2005 the European initiative for the World March of Women took place in Marseille. Despite the date (chosen by the European coordination of the World March in September 2004), which coincided with the referendum on the European constitutional treaty in France, this weekend of debate and mobilization was a success.

[<https://internationalviewpoint.org/IMG/jpg/wmfw1.jpg>]

More than 1,500 women from a numbers of European countries participated in five forums and three spaces organized around five themes:

- ▶ work/employment/actualisation,
- ▶ violence against women, peace and conflict,
- ▶ sexuality/abortion/contraception/health,
- ▶ women and men in Europe

and around three spaces:

- ▶ for youth, migrant women and lesbians.

Because of lack of space several hundred women were unable to participate in the morning debates, which was frustrating for some who had made long journeys.

In the afternoon a demonstration against neoliberalism and patriarchy attracted around 10,000 people from Belgium (a particularly big delegation), Spain, the Basque country, Italy, Greece, Portugal and Cyprus, as well as around 50 women who had come especially from Algeria.

The meeting resumed on Sunday morning in Chénot park, and proposals for action and campaigning were made. The construction of European networks appears more than ever necessary in order to build a more equitable relationship of forces.

It was reaffirmed loudly and clearly that abortion should be a fundamental right for women in the European institutions. Six countries do not recognize this right: Cyprus, Poland, Malta, Portugal, Ireland and Andorra.

A European petition was proposed in solidarity with Portuguese women for a change in legislation. In Italy the key issue was the referendum to allow medically assisted procreation, which was defeated with the Vatican and Berlusconi throwing all their weight against the proposal.

On employment and casualization, several campaigning themes were defined:

- ▶ for real jobs, an end to imposed part-time working, establishment of a European minimum wage; an immediate wage increase to close the gap in wages between men and women.
- ▶ to fight against dismantling of all the public services and for the development of childcare and care for the old and handicapped.

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In the violence forum a campaign for an outline law against violence at the European level was decided on, with demonstrations across Europe on November 25, 2005, international day against violence against women.

In the forum on democracy, power and secularism it was pointed out on the eve of the referendum that the equality of the sexes did not figure as one of the founding values of the Union, that the right to abortion was absent as was any reference to secularism; the place given to religious institutions was denounced.

The peace and conflict forum noted that women were the first victims of conflicts and that there was urgency to mobilize for disarmament. The lesbian and youth spaces worked rather for the creation of broad European networks.

From the migrant women's space several demands were raised: respect for the application of economic and social rights, access to social services and struggle against discrimination, regularization of all illegal and undocumented workers, campaigns against forced marriages and crimes of honour.

The Women's Charter for Humanity was brought on Saturday from the Basque country to France and on Sunday from France to Belgium. In conclusion, Nadia De Mond, European coordinator of the march, reaffirmed the determination of women to fight neoliberal exploitation and the organization on October 17, 2005 of 24 hours of solidarity against neoliberalism and patriarchal oppression which 'mutually reinforce each other, lay the ground for religious fundamentalism and generate poverty, exclusion and violence'. She reminded us of the next event for the "woman of the entire world" at the same time as the arrival of the Women's Charter for Humanity in Burkina Faso.