

# Women's Rights



**Marina  
Yannakoudakis MEP**  
Women's Rights Spokesman

**Gender equality for gender equality's sake seems to be the motto of the European Parliament's Women's Rights Committee. From supporting higher car insurance costs in the name of political correctness to imposing unnecessary burdens on companies to ensure adequate gender balance, Marina is working to fight against EU rules which are unnecessarily intrusive, while ensuring that women who really need protection are sufficiently safeguarded.**

## **Car insurance fiasco**

In December 2012, EU gender-neutral pricing rules for insurance came into force. The new rules, which follow a ruling by the European Court of Justice, mean that gender can no longer be used as a basis for pricing car insurance and pensions. This will lead to women being burdened with higher insurance premiums and men receiving lower pension annuities.

Marina has fought against the ruling which flies in the face of the overwhelming evidence that women drivers represent a lower risk to insurers. When proposals were brought before the European Parliament, Marina submitted amendments to allow insurers to set premiums on the basis of risk.

## **Attacking quotas for women on boards**

EU plans for quotas for women on boards are both bad for business and bad for women. We need to be repatriating employment laws from Brussels not allowing the EU to take charge of more rules on how we run our companies. More regulation will make the EU less attractive for multinationals to set up business with EU quota plans having a negative effect on business.

Voluntary targets are working and a goal of 25% women on British boards by 2015 is likely to be exceeded. We need to give the voluntary approach a chance to work. Instead, the EU is using a

sledgehammer to crack a nut. Furthermore, quotas don't work anyway. In Norway, quotas led to women being put on the boards just to make up the numbers, with the director of a Norwegian football club Mimi Berdal once on the board of 90 different companies. And Norway's quotas did little to improve the numbers of women board members at the executive level. Quotas will be the main battle for Marina on the Women's Rights Committee this year. In September she organised a public hearing in Brussels where three high-profile British businesswomen – Heather McGregor, Amanda Mackenzie and Helena Morrissey – put forward the case for a voluntary approach.



*Saying no to EU board quotas with Heather McGregor*



## Keeping EU Maternity Rules off the agenda

Marina was successful in blocking EU plans to introduce EU maternity rules which included 20 weeks of fully-paid compulsory leave, 2 weeks fully-paid paternity leave and breastfeeding breaks of three hours a day. However, Labour and their Socialist allies have been trying to resurrect the plans which would cost the UK economy £2.5 billion a year. With the Women's Rights Minister in the Irish Presidency a member of Ireland's Labour Party, they tried to seize their chance, but Marina was able to stop these new plans from moving forward. Marina will continue to fight any further infringement by the EU in the UK's employment policy and will campaign for the repatriation of powers, especially those given away to Brussels by Labour such as the Working Time Directive and the Agency Workers' Directive.

## Protecting Women at Home

While many EU rules are mindless and meddling, Marina has supported measures which will genuinely protect women in need, such as supporting minimum standards for victims' rights across Europe, especially for women who have been the victims of violence. Marina also backed a new European Protection Order to safeguard victims of stalking and domestic violence. The order will support victims of violence, harassment and other crimes if they have obtained a protection order in one EU country but then move to another. It will be based on a system of mutual recognition and effectively make protection orders portable in Europe.

## Protecting Women Abroad

While Marina didn't vote for the setting up of the EU's External Action Service, she believes that if the EU is determined to play a role in the world that it must ensure that the situation of women is improved, especially in those countries where

culturally women have long been oppressed. Marina has specifically supported measures to prevent child marriage and forced marriage. She has also personally introduced proposals to tackle issues such as the infanticide of female children as well as supporting plans to protect women from sexual violence in conflict, especially the classification of rape as a war crime.

Marina has looked carefully at Turkey's record on women's rights and believes that issues such as honour killings, forced marriages and violence against women should be addressed before Turkey's EU membership application proceeds any further.

## Fighting Female Genital Mutilation

Marina has been appointed one of the lead negotiators on new EU guidelines on torture and degrading punishment in third countries. Marina believes that the barbaric practice of female genital mutilation (FGM) should be classified as torture and that developing countries should lose access to the EU's generous aid handouts unless they criminalise and actively prosecute the perpetrators of these



Working to protect British girls from FGM with chair of the APPG on FGM Jane Ellison MP and Efuia Dorkenoo OBE of Equality Now

violent crimes against women and children.

Marina is also working with African and Middle East diaspora groups in the UK to stamp out the practice on our own

shores and to ensure that those who allow their children to be mutilated or even send them abroad for "cutting" are brought to justice. Nearly 200,000 girls born in the UK are at risk of FGM.

## Closing down EU quangos

Marina is fighting EU waste and believes that inefficient EU quangos, which cost £2.8 billion a year, should be axed. Marina in particular believes that the EU's Institute for Gender Equality is an improvident luxury which, at a time of crisis, is neither essential nor economical. Marina has pushed for the agency to be abolished, submitting amendments for the agency's budget to be cut to zero. Her efforts have been thwarted by Labour MEPs who even voted for the agency's budget to be increased. ●●