Title of proposed workshop: The Future of Gender Equality in the European Union
Workshop directors: Mercedes Mateo Diaz & Susan Milns

Outline of the topic
There is no better moment than the present to address the state of gender relations within the Union and to propose ways in which they may be improved. The process of the Constitutional Convention, in contrast to the EU’s more habitual way of doing constitutional business (through negotiated Treaty amendments agreed at inter-governmental conferences (IGCs)) was advertised as a widely consultative and participatory exercise aimed at inclusion and dialogue. Yet, the input of women into the Constitutional Convention was hampered by their small and low level participation which contrasts sharply with the laudable commitments to gender equality and parity democracy set out in the two key documents – the Laeken Declaration and the EU’s Charter of Fundamental Rights - that acted as building-blocks in the dialogic process which the Convention generated.

Reflecting back upon this process and projecting forwards to the creeping constitutionalisation of European politics, law and policy, the aim of the workshop is to examine present and future strategies for the implementation of the principle of gender equality in the EU. This is with special regard to contemporary constitutional developments, the impact of the Charter of Fundamental Rights, the principle of gender mainstreaming and the gender implications of specific policy developments (in areas such as migration, employment, healthcare, provision of services, trafficking of women).

The workshop will be interdisciplinary drawing together a range of contributors with backgrounds in the political and social sciences, economics and law.

Relation to existing research
The workshop will build upon an existing body of literature which has demonstrated that while sex equality has long been an item on the agenda of the European Community (with advances having been made notably in the area of equal treatment for women and men in employment) the introduction of initial measures such as the requirement to reward equal work by men and women with equal pay were designed to enhance the functioning of the internal market and so were motivated by considerations of economy and competition rather than gender justice.\(^1\) Times change, however, and more recent research has demonstrated how these important beginnings have been consolidated by the pursuit of equal treatment between men and women as a social policy objective in its own right\(^2\) and gender mainstreaming initiatives which aim to evaluate the gender implications of policy-making at all stages and in all areas.\(^3\) Despite these important steps, however, gender equality in Europe is not complete

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and it is evident that further improvements are necessary to tackle female poverty, persisting inequalities in employment, gender pay gaps and the horizontal and vertical sectorisation of the labour market, together with the difficulties experienced by both men and women in balancing work and family life.

Thus, while the EU has nailed its colours firmly to the mast of achieving equality between women and men and promoting democratic participation in decision-making, there is a distinct gap between this rhetoric and the reality of EU decision-making processes. For example, the proposed workshop convenors have recently observed that the involvement of women participants in the constitutional Convention has been minimal and marginal. This denotes a democratic deficit in the debate on EU constitutional reform which paradoxically coincides with the well documented increasing visibility on national political agendas of initiatives regarding parity, quotas and gender mainstreaming.

Taking these debates forward, the objective of the workshop is to evaluate the future prospects for the pursuit of gender equality in the European Union. Building on the successes and failures of past experience, the workshop will offer an opportunity to discuss and reflect upon how best to secure equality between men and women in Europe. In particular, the workshop is historically situated at the present ‘constitutional moment’ as the old and new member states debate the adoption of a Constitution for Europe with its highly visible commitments to the value of equality (Article 2, Draft Constitutional Treaty) and the objective of promoting equal relations between women and men (Article 3, DCT). Thus, the workshop presents an ideal occasion to further debate on the implications of constitutional change for women in the Union and to stress the important contribution women can, and should, make to the discussion over its political, institutional and legal evolution. A gendered reading of the present constitutional debates is highly necessary in order that important questions about participation, representation, transparency, solidarity, citizenship, equality and the protection of fundamental rights – all of which harbour a gender dimension – do not go unexplored and unchallenged from a gender perspective.

**Participants & Type of paper**

The workshop is open to all scholars, both young and well established – who are researching in areas of EU law, politics and policy-making, together with those working on present constitutional developments. Contributors need not necessarily be experts in gender or feminist theory but should instead endeavour to consider their specific fields of interest from a gender perspective.

Papers for the workshop may be theoretical, empirical or present a particular case study. Given that the workshop is premised upon the rationale that the enhancement of gender equality in Europe has a

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significant future, papers should stress the developmental nature of present initiatives and should seek to tease out their implications for women's greater participation and representation in decision-making.

Papers are sought too which address a number of important policy areas in which gender equality measures are under deliberation or in which gender concerns are particularly acute. Most obviously, contributions may explore the implications of the EU’s new Equal Treatment Directive and plans to recalibrate the entire set of sex equality directives in one single piece of legislation exploring the possibilities this offers for ameliorating the position of women notably in employment. On similar lines, contributions may examine the on-going attempt to introduce a gender equality directive under Article 13 EC which has been used with relative success in the context of race discrimination but has proven so problematic in the area of sex equality. Other areas for consideration might include the Union’s policies on free movement, migration, access to services, economic and monetary policy and the role of the social partners in the employment sector. Last but not least, contributions which assess the implications of EU gender equality measures on the new member states of central and Eastern Europe are most welcome.

**Funding**

Funding has been sought independently by both Susan Millns and Mercedes Mateo Diaz through applications to the European Commission under the Framework 6 Programme (Marie Curie Actions, European Re-integration Grants). In addition Mercedes Mateo Diaz will submit a request for funding to the Belgian *Fonds National de la Recherche Scientifique* (FNRS).

Individual participants will be encouraged to look for assistance from national funding bodies and from their home institutions.

**Biographical note**

**Mercedes Mateo Diaz** holds a PhD in Political Science from the University of Louvain (UCL-Belgium). Presently, she is carrying out postdoctoral research as a Marie Curie Fellow at the Robert Schuman Centre (European University Institute - Florence), where she previously held a Jean Monnet Fellowship. She has been research fellow at the *Inter-University Centre for Electoral and for Political Opinion Research* (Belgium) and a member of the TMR network ‘Representation in Europe’, financed by the European Commission, and a visiting researcher at the University of Göteborg. She has published widely and made a number of significant contributions to edited works and to peer-reviewed journals (eg contribution to “Verfassungsexperiment” - *Europa auf dem Weg zu einer postnationalen Demokratie*, ed. by Liebert, U., Falke, J., Packham, K. & Allnoch, D., LIT-Verlag, and co-authored contribution to *Le parachutage politique*, ed. by Dolez, B. & Hastings, M, L'Harmattan and contributions to *Revue Française de Science Politique, South European Society and Politics, Res Publica*, and the *Revue Internationale de Politique Comparée*). Her doctoral thesis entitled *Are Women in Parliament Representing Women?* will be published shortly in the ECPR’s monograph series.

Current research topics include: core identities and their impact on subjective evaluations of
governance; and an exploration of how the degrees of legitimacy allocated to supra-national, national and regional levels of governance relate to each other. Research Interests include: Comparative Politics. Political Representation. Electoral studies and Public Opinion. Gender and Politics. Identities. Legitimacy.

Susan Millns is a Senior Lecturer in Law at the University of Kent, UK. Previously a lecturer at the University of Liverpool (1991-97) she is a specialist in European and comparative public law and has taught and researched widely in the areas of European law, constitutional law and feminist legal studies. She holds a DEA in comparative public law from the University of Paris I (Panthéon-Sorbonne), an LLM from the European University Institute (Florence) and a BA in English and French Law from the University of Kent. She is the co-author (with Jo Bridgeman) of Feminist Perspectives on Law – Law’s Engagement with the Female Body (London: Sweet and Maxwell, 1998) and has co-edited three collections of essays: Values in the Constitution of Europe (with Miriam Aziz) (Aldershot: Dartmouth, 2004, forthcoming); Feminist Perspectives on Public Law (with Noel Whitty) (London: Cavendish Publishing, 1999) and Law and Body Politics: Regulating the Female Body (with Jo Bridgeman) (Aldershot: Dartmouth, 1995). She is on the editorial board of Feminist Legal Studies (Kluwer).