



Northern Ireland  
Women's European Platform

TUESDAY  
13  
MARCH

## RURAL WOMEN, PEACE AND PROSPERITY IN A CHANGING EUROPE : PERSPECTIVES

**Fedcap  
Rehabilitation  
Services Inc, 210  
East 43rd Street  
3.00 - 4.30**

**Speakers include:**

Kate Clifford - Director, Rural  
Community Network Northern  
Ireland  
Joanna Maycock, Director General  
European Women's Lobby  
Zala Žbogar, Communications and  
Campaigns Officer, CAP International  
Mina Clarke NAWO YWA  
Charlotte Bullock NAWO YWA  
Will cover subjects including, STEM,  
young women, trafficking & prostitution,  
borders....

In a changing Europe the needs of women require careful focus. Austerity, migration and changing relationships, within and beyond, present challenges for all and are compounded for rural women. This interactive workshop will examine key issues that are also experienced around the world: economic independence, equal pay, decision making, ending gender based violence and promoting gender equality.

Experts from across Europe, young women, & activists from other regions share ideas on best practice. The event will allow plenty of discussion.

Refreshments are offered. All welcome.

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NORTHERN IRELAND WOMEN'S EUROPEAN



The event provided great insight from a number of perspectives across Europe, including from two NAWO YWA delegates, chaired by Jess Phillips MP. The members of the panel were Joanna Maycock, Mina Clarke, Kate Clifford, Charlotte Bullock and Zala Žbogar.

Joanna Maycock was the first to speak, she mentioned the lack of progression in women's rights in the past 10 years and that, rather than progressing, the UK has actually gone backwards in terms of women's rights. It was at this point that Jess Phillips gave us the shocking statistic that

A prominent issue discussed throughout the event was Brexit and the impact it could have upon equality in the UK, Joanna spoke about what we should be looking out for in terms of protecting our rights, that have so often been advanced and protected in EU law, we should be keeping a very close eye on changes in legislation post Brexit, specifically in areas where we may not initially think of. She also brought to attention the issue of care, for women with disabilities, elderly relatives and children, she points out that a large proportion of carers are from other EU countries and that those in need of care could be left high and dry after Brexit, potentially leading to more women being forced to take up caring roles in the place of careers.

Zala Žbogar, from CAP international spoke on the topic of borders and trafficking, she began by explaining a little of what CAP does, being an alliance of 23 states, providing exit help for prostituted people, and advocating for the 'Nordic model' as used in Sweden. She spoke about EU legislation put into place 15 years, the anti-trafficking directive, where all countries must decrease demand for trafficked people. However, the lack of harmonised legislative programme at supranational level has meant that some countries, notably Germany and The Netherlands have fully legalised prostitution. The result of this is that they do not see the need for any exit services at all. It also can be said that rather than decreasing demand for prostituted persons, this actually encourages it. The other end of the spectrum is that some countries are fully prohibitionist and criminalise both parties.

Kate Clifford spoke about the distinct difficulties faced by women in Northern Ireland. She began by highlighting the importance of the Good Friday Agreement to the peace and stability of Northern Ireland and Ireland. She brought to light the issues of continued paramilitary groups and actions, and the space the current political vacuum, with the Assembly being dissolved, has caused making it easier for paramilitary groups to take power. She highlighted the distinct lack of female involvement in the talks following The Troubles, with only one reference to gender in the entire document, and that in the Flags Identity and Cultural Commission, of 15 members, only 1 was a woman. In the last 20 years, sexual and domestic violence against girls in Northern Ireland has increased, PTSD, normalisation of violent behaviour and the fact that, during conflict, women could not report domestic violence because perpetrators were entirely institutionalised. During the conflict, women formed groups, however in rural areas they were marginalised and easily found and targeted in small populations, paramilitary threat to women's groups was and still is significant with a high fear of them still existent. A shocking statistic is that of all the funding that goes to women's groups in Northern Ireland, only 1.3% goes to groups for women living

in rural areas. This is despite more than 1/5 of Northern Ireland's women living in rurality. The issue of abortion was also brought up, with abortion being illegal in Northern Ireland, the compromise, in which Northern Irish women and girls may travel to the mainland in order to have an abortion is unsatisfactory, resulting in a traumatic experience and, in the case especially of young girls, their right to anonymity being waived.

Kate also spoke on the topic of Brexit, highlighting the role of the ECJ and relevant case law in furthering women's rights and helping to create gender equality. She also mentioned the EU's role as a broker for peace during and after The Troubles, and the worry about how the EU rights agenda may be picked apart and changed by the UK government. She also highlighted the importance of ensuring the outcome of Brexit is gendered.

Mina Clarke focused on women's involvement in STEM and the risks posed to it by Brexit. Britain is already one of the worst performing countries in Europe with relation to women in STEM and with the potential of women's working rights being out at risk this issue is more pressing than ever. She highlights how STEM is integral to a country's progression, and women playing an active and large role in this if extremely important. The current STEM skills shortage we face in the UK can only be resolved with female participation. There is also the risk of a reduction of funding for women's groups dramatically affecting and hindering their work, hampering the cause to encourage more women into STEM.

Finally, Charlotte Bullock spoke about Brexit and the potential effects it may have on young women and people. She points out that 80% of young women favoured 'Remain'. She too highlights the importance of close scrutiny of any legislative changes that come as a result of Brexit, speaking of the record the EU has had on equality legislation such as Article 141 of the Treaty of Rome, and the ECJ judgement that led to the amendment to the Equal Pay Act to include work of equal value. The EU also brought maternity rights, previously a woman had to be compared to a man when unfairly dismissed for pregnancy, now this is not the case, women also currently have the right to attend natal classes whilst still receiving full pay and are protected against pregnancy related dismissal. The importance of such legislation is brought fully into light when we hear that, according to a 2014 survey conducted by The Guardian and Slater and Gordon, that 1 in 3 managers would rather employ a man aged 20-30 than a woman, to avoid maternity issues. The fact that, in 2017 54 thousand women were sacked due to pregnancy related issues shows that, despite legislation currently in place, the UK still has a long way to go in order to reach equality.



Event Panelists and Chair:

*[Left to Right] Charlotte Bullock, Jess Phillips MP, Mina Clarke, Joanna Maycock, Kate Clifford and Zala Žbogar*

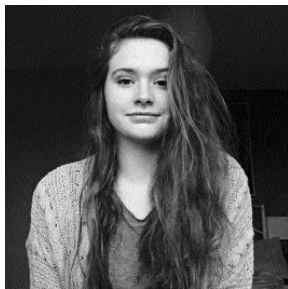
A short Q&A was conducted afterwards, questions were put to the members of the panel and to the chair, Jess Phillips. The question of how people who've been prostitutes enter other careers was asked, the example of the UK based charity 'Women at the Well' was given, who offer training, help women get paperwork to stay and work if needs be, and help with accommodation. They would also assess underlying issues that may lead to someone being vulnerable such as addressing trauma.

The Fiona Broadford case was brought up, mentioning that recently, she had her record struck of any offences due to the fact she was exploited.

The panel were then asked what, in their opinions, were three key actions for women's groups. There was a general consensus around the ideas of: sticking together, building alliances with people in other sectors such as social funding or research, ensuring that international alliances are gender conscious, and to pause, look, and think. Who is not at the table with me? Who is not represented?

A question posed directly to Kate Clifford was asking how we can ensure that money is being used correctly and efficiently in rural areas of Northern Ireland. She told us about kitchen groups and how currently, there is no shortage of groups in the region, and there are multiple small-scale initiatives happening, but that currently there is no collective voice of rural women.

## Panel Biographies



### **Charlotte Bullock**

Charlotte is a student at Sixth Form in Gloucestershire, she currently studies English Literature, Sociology, and Politics. She is a member of the NAWO YWA and an active member of FemSoc.

### **Mina Clarke**

Mina is also a Sixth Form student in Gloucestershire, she studies Chemistry, Biology and, English Literature. She has hopes of studying medicine and pursuing a career in the discipline afterwards. She has a particular interest in the problems that women encounter in STEM areas and focuses on ways we can make science more accessible to women and girls.



### **Joanna Maycock**



Joanna is the Secretary General of the EWL (European Women's League) since May 2014. She has worked in Brussels for ActionAid and has extensive experience working for migrant women's rights at the International Organization for Migration Coordination. She is also a member of the Civil Society Advisory Group to UN Women Executive Director Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka.

### **Kate Clifford**

Kate is the Director of the Rural Community Network Northern Ireland, a regional voluntary organisation established to articulate the voice of rural communities on issues relating to poverty, disadvantage and equality. She also has worked within the Rural Enabler Programme to address issues of sectarianism and racism.



### **Zala Žbogar**



Zala is the communication and campaigns officer at CAP International, CAP advocates for the adoption and implementation of progressive legislation and international standards to amplify efforts to eliminate sexual exploitation of women and girls and to deliver effective protection, support and exit options to prostituted peoples and victims of trafficking