

# WINFO

Quarterly Newsletter of Women in Nuclear WIN

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## Paris Annual Meeting Combines Ideas with Action

### The Push-Button Mentality

We all see things in different ways. The key issue of just how professional women perceive nuclear and other high technologies was discussed at a seminar organised by WIN France and the French Nuclear Society held on July 7th, the day before the first WIN annual meeting in Paris.

The seminar, attended by over 100 women and several men, was moderated by Ann MacLachlan, European bureau chief for McGraw-Hill's nuclear publications. The first panel was entitled "Women and High Technology: from education to professional position". Why is it, the audience was asked, that women who in general have excellent perception over issues such as the environment and ecology are often ignorant about technology? This ignorance was deplored by WIN President, Irène Aegerter, who referred to it as the "push-button mentality." There is no desire to find out what happens behind the button.

### Women west and east

Martine Griffon-Fouco, deputy plant manager at EDF's Le Blayais nuclear plant, talked about the distinctions of women working in nuclear power. At her plant, women account for 12% of the workforce but they are a group

apart from the men. They are better educated, better represented in administration, poorly represented in technical jobs, hardly feature at all in top-line management and they rarely do shift work. This contrasted with the situation in Bulgaria, as presented by Radelina Tranteeva, unit supervisor at the Kozloduy nuclear plant. Here women account for around 30% of the workforce, and in some areas, up to 12% do shift work. There are economic reasons for this. Women's wages are needed to supplement the husband's earnings. In general, highly qualified women worked in the right sort of jobs.

Do these statistics mean that nuclear is better understood and supported in Bulgaria? A Gallup poll in May showed 53% of the population in favour.

### Fear of the unknown

"Women and Nuclear Technology: perception of current societal issues" was the subject of the second debate. Gail de Planque, Commissioner at the US NRC, spoke of the rising global demand for energy. She concluded that the way we meet that demand will be influenced by public opinion. It is therefore essential that we have a well informed public. Annick Carnino from the IAEA discussed the gap between human risk perception and per-



**Paris Seminar  
(Left-right):  
R. Tranteeva  
E. Lepoutre  
A. Carnino  
I. Aegerter  
C. Lewiner  
G. de Planque  
A. MacLachlan  
M. Griffon-Fouco**



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sonal decision making towards risk exposure. Decisions are based on emotion or media influence. Good public information is the way to improve that decision making.

"Each new form of energy mastered is another step in global scientific progress," according to Colette Lewiner, President ENS. She asserted that we must not allow fear of one technology to reduce its chance to be a part of tomorrow's energy solution.

Elisabeth Lepoutre of Aerospatiale spoke of the need in a high-tech society to provide rapid and accurate information. The role of the media is double-edged. It increases the public's awareness of new technologies but it is prone to make instant accusations when there is a catastrophe.

"Who better than women," said Irène Aegerter, "and women who know their subject, to reassure other women about technology? We speak the same language, we understand each other." With these remarks, Irène Aegerter summarised both the day's debate and the very essence of WIN itself.

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## What the Future Holds

A parallel session at ENC '94, a multi-cultural video and smiley pins were some of the subjects raised at the first annual WIN meeting in Paris, July 7th-9th. The groundbreaking meeting was an opportunity to discuss ways of making WIN members effective communicators and gadgets, such as pins, are an attempt to engender a sense of belonging within its diverse membership.

## Stay Tuned

One of WIN's most significant projects is to produce a video showing an ordinary day in the lives of two women working in nuclear. The routine of Martine Griffon-Fouco, the only woman in the world now managing a nuclear power station, will be contrasted with that of a female operator at a Swedish nuclear plant. The video will use a minimum of dialogue, so that it can be used widely and be meaningful to different cultures. Once complete, the video might be used as an opener to public meetings, for women's groups and for lectures at schools and colleges.

## WIN Within

WIN will have a special embedded meeting on October 4th during ENC '94, the international nuclear congress and exhibition to be held in Lyon, October 2nd-6th. During the morning of the special WIN meeting, opinion research on women's attitudes to nuclear will be discussed and case studies on nuclear women information activities in several countries will be presented. The afternoon session will look at Risk Communication.

## WIN Again

The WIN annual meeting for 1994 will be held in Bonn on May 16th together with the first WIN general assembly.

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## PIME Dining

A WIN dinner is being arranged on January 31st during the PIME '94 international workshop on nuclear information in practice which will be held in Lucerne, Switzerland. All WIN members attending PIME '94 will be invited.

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## More to Come

In the next issue of WINFO we will include details of the individual country reports presented at the July meeting and a round-up of national WIN groups around the world. We find out why 14% more women than men disagree with France's energy policy, we discover which UK utility is paying for editorial in women's magazines and we learn about the uphill public information struggle faced by the newly formed WIN branch in Hungary.

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## Taking the Lead

At the Paris meeting Elisabeth Morgan-Lewis, Public Affairs Manager of Nirex UK, was elected a new member of the WIN Leading Group, the association's working core. In Paris were Leading Group members, Irène Aegerter (Switzerland), France Brès-Tutino (France), Marke Heininen-Ojanperä (Finland), Agneta Rising (Sweden), Corinne Souwer (The Netherlands) and Roxanne Summers (Canada).

The other Leading Group members are Sabine Knapp (Germany) and Patricia Bryant (USA). WIN are seeking members from Eastern Europe and the Far East to join the Leading Group.

The Paris meeting also elected a man to membership of WIN. Juhani Santaholma, chairman of the ENS Information Committee, was declared an honorary member in recognition of his support that led to the founding of WIN.

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## A Sense of Belonging

Membership of WIN is open to all women working professionally in the fields of nuclear energy and radiation and who are willing to devote time to public information. New members are recommended by either one Leading Group member or two ordinary members. There is no membership fee. WIN was established in May 1992 and now has 145 members in 22 countries within the international organisation. Fax WIN secretary, Ursula Zingg, at the ENS Secretariat for an application form.

**WIN, c/o ENS, POB 5032  
CH-3001, Berne  
Switzerland  
Tel: +41 31 320 6111  
Fax: +41 31 382 4466**

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