

## Milestones in the history of women in Belgium.

The RoSa-factsheets aim to familiarise you with the scope of equal opportunities in Flanders. Each factsheet probes the situation in a specific area. Broad themes as well as specific ones are put into the spotlight, depending on the relevance and/or availability of information and numerical data. We do not intend to offer exhaustive information, our primary aim is to sketch the position of women in Flanders in a surveyable and accessible way.

Since its founding in 1978, RoSa is the place in Flanders to look for information and documentation about equal opportunities, emancipation policy and women's studies.

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- 1847 • Zoë Gatti de Gamond becomes the first inspector for nursery schools, primary schools and teachers' schools for girls.
- 1864 • Isabelle Gatti de Gamond - daughter of - creates the first girls college with a complete educational programme for middle schools in Brussels.
- 1880 • Brussels University allows women, followed by Liège in 1881, and by Ghent in 1882.
- 1884 • Isala Van Diest opens a medical office. To allow women to practice a medical occupation, a special decree has to be voted. Van Diest was refused in 1873 by the faculty of medicine in Louvain, but obtained her degree in 1877 in Bern.
- 1888 • Marie Popelin is expelled from Court as a lawyer.
- 1890 • Introduction of a law on April 10th, giving specific access to women to all academic occupations, as well as to the of medical and pharmaceutical practice.
- 1892 • Isabelle Gatti de Gamond creates a pre-university degree at her institute.  
Marie Popelin, Louis Frank en Isala Van Diest create the 'Ligue belge du Droit des Femmes'. Their objective is to obtain equality for men and women in Court rulings.
- 1893 • For the first time, a woman is given an official public function: Alice Bron becomes a member of the public social works in Monceau-Sur-Sambre.
- 1897 • The 'Ligue belge du Droit des Femmes' organises an interantio-nal feminist congress in Brussels.
- 1900 • Introduction of a law allowing women to hold an account, to sign an employment ocnvention, as well as to earn a salary (with a maximum of 3 000 francs per year).
- 1907 • Foundation of the first girls college in Ghent. Since higher se-condary education is being offered as well, girls can access uni-versity more easily.
- 1914-1918 • First World War.
- 1919 • A small number of women obtains voting rights: mothers and widows of military personnel and of civillieans killed by the ene-my, as well as women emprisoned or condemned by the ene-

my during the war.

- 1920** • Introduction of a law on April 15th, giving voting rights to women (except prostitutes and adultary women). Moreover, women can be elected for the House and Senate, even though they are not allowed to vote themselves at this level.
- 1921** • Foundation by the 'Ligue belge du Droit des Femmes' of a women's party: 'Parti général des femmes belges'. The initiative is without succes.  
181 women get elected at the local elections.  
Equal salaries for male and female teachers. This is the first step towards equal pay for equal work.  
Women obtain the right to become mayor, representative, secretary or financial administrator at local level. Married women still need the approval of their husband for this purpose.  
Marie Spaak-Janson becomes the first Belgian female senator, through co-optation.
- 1922** • Women are accepted as lawyers.
- 1929** • Lucie Dejardin becomes the first woman to be directly elected as a representative to the House of representatives.
- 1934** • Women are excluded from all functions at state level.
- 1940-1945** • Second World War.
- 1948** • Voting rights for women at parliamentary and provincial elections are decreed by law.
- 1952** • Signing of the ILO-Convention 100 on equal pay for equal work.
- 1957** • Ratification of the Treaty of Rome, founding the European Economic Community. Article 119 of the treaty adopts equal pay for equal work.
- 1965** • The first woman to become minister: Marguerite de Riemaecker-Legot becomes minister for Family and Housing.
- 1966** • About 3.000 women workers of the 'Fabrique nationale' at Herstal go on a strike to obtain 'equal pay for equal work'. Their movement lasts for almost three months.
- 1968** • Air-stewardess Gabrielle Defrenne sues the Belgian airline company Sabena on the basis of gender discrimination. The company made women retire at fourty, whereas men were allowed to pursue their job until their legal term of retirement has been reached.
- 1969** • Introduction of a law on employment conventions, protecting women from losing their jobs when getting married or when getting pregnant.
- 1970** • The first 'Vote Women' movement, at local elections in Bruges, is a success: the number of elected women raises from two to seven.
- 1971** • Introduction of the equality principle regarding unemployment compensations.
- 1973** • Abolition of the legal prohibition to distribute and advertise preservatives.
- 1974** • In the framework of the UN Year of the Woman, a commission for women's work is being created as an advisory committee within the ministry of employment, to propose measures regarding women's labour. This committee would be abolished in 1985.  
Creation of a feminist party for the general elections: the 'Verenigde Feministische Partij' (VFP). It does not get a single seat.  
Introduction of a law on parenthood equality, which gives equal rights to the mother and the father for raising and fostering children.
- 1975** • Signing of a collective agreement on equal pay.
- 1976** • Introduction of a law on equality of rights regarding the common goods for married couples.
- 1984** • Introduction of a law protects the succession rights of surviving partners.
- 1985** • Creation of a state-secretary for social emancipation at federal level, thus ma-

king the equal opportunities issue an official federal policy.

- 1986** • Creation of a commission for women's labour at the level of the state-secretary for equal opportunities.
- 1989** • Equal opportunities are put under the responsibility of the minister for Employment.
- 1990** • Abortion no longer falls under criminal law.
- 1993** • Creation of a Council for equal opportunities at federal level, pursuing the work of the Committee on women's labour, created in 1986.
- 1994** • The law 'Smet-Tobback' introduces a rule saying that at least one-third of all people to be elected at all levels should be women.
- 1995** • Nomination of the first Flemish minister for Equal opportunities.

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