

Report on the selection process by the Luxembourgish FRAGEN team

In autumn 2009 we contacted about 25 experts including MLF-founding members and activists (MLF = Mouvement de Libération des Femmes – the Women's Liberation Movement in Luxembourg), women from counselling and anti-violence groups, trade unions and women with a background in literature, music, art and education.

Some of them agreed to get involved in the Fragen project. But at first we only received a few text suggestions. Therefore we decided to organise a text discussion meeting with our experts. For this occasion we prepared an inspirational pre-selection of texts from our in-house MLF archive, which contains several hundreds of original documents from Luxembourg's women's liberation movement. We grouped the approximately 30 texts according to themes (abortion, reform of the matrimonial law, work, violence, etc.) and provided several texts per theme. Some experts brought their own text suggestions to the meeting and/or handed in texts afterwards. Nine women came to our meeting, three experts could not attend, but visited us at different times to suggest and discuss texts. We asked every one of them to fill in the selection and ranking forms. Some did that more thoroughly than others. Similarly some women became more involved in the discussions than others and consequently a kind of "inner circle" of experts evolved (4-6 women). These experts also took into consideration all texts submitted after our meeting. By comparing all twelve selection and ranking forms eight texts clearly emerged as having received the majority of the votes.

For the remaining two positions on the short list we decided to include the text "Petition – Namensrecht" (Petition in support of married women using their own name) because the name campaign was suggested by three experts independently. In 10th place we listed the text "Rechent mat de Fraen! Neen zur Austeritéit!" (Flyer for the first large common demonstration against the discrimination of women in the workplace and against violence towards women on 5 March 1983) because of the text's historical relevance: it marks the first time of bringing together various women's organisations in Luxembourg to formulate common feminist aims and demonstrate for them (500 people came to the demonstration). This text also addresses multiple inequalities: It contains demands for equal rights for foreign workers, in particular for the women.

Some additional notes on the selection process in Luxembourg:

Experts:

Gender studies is a relatively young subject at the University of Luxembourg, which is itself also just a few years old. Some of our experts have a classical gender research background. Other experts have held important positions in women's organisations, and again others have been active members of the women's liberation movement.

Texts:

Most of the available texts in Luxembourg emerge directly from activities of the women's liberation movement, demanding necessary changes, presenting achievements or documenting self-reflection and self-representation within the movement. The texts show that the authors had read feminist theory, but the texts themselves are not classical academic writing.

In the discussion with the experts it became clear that the result of selecting ten texts for the shortlist could only be a beginning for further discussion, because it is very difficult to determine a hierarchy of importance across so many different themes within the women's liberation movement.