

Abstract of the talk of Ulrike Hauffe, regional delegate for women's rights in Bremen, on the occasion of the District-Conference in Frankfurt, 11-13 September 2009.

## **Implementing Women's Rights**

In 2009 there are two important dates, celebrating milestones for the enforcement of women's rights in Germany: 90 years ago, on the 19th of January 1919, women were allowed for the first time to vote for the German Parliament. Two months before, on the 12th of November 1918, they had received the general active and passive right to vote. 60 years ago, on the 8th of May 1949, the Parliamentary Council drew up the German Constitution, in which there is mentioned that „men and women have the same rights“ (Art. 3, Abs. 2 GG) For both rights dedicated women have fought. Looking in detail at the prehistory of both events one can learn what is required for women to accomplish their rights.

Prior to both events courageous women encouraged their fellow women and occasionally also men to speak up and express their opinion. They used their contacts to set up a broad alliance beyond the boundaries of political parties, religious ideologies or social affiliations. One would say today, they had good networks.

We have achieved a lot in Germany on the way to the same rights for both sexes. „Violence at home“ is no longer a taboo. We have a violence protection law. Since July 1997 rape within a marriage is punishable. The female graduates from schools and universities are the best educated women we have ever had.

There are nevertheless many areas where we still need to be active as women still suffer from structural discrimination: Women suffer from poverty much more than men. At a conference held by our equal rights department last year we investigated at which biographical interface the poverty risks for women were the most significant, e.g. in the transition period between schooling and profession or the compatibility of children and profession.

In our country women still earn roughly one fourth less than men. Also the topic of top management still invariably shows that it is more difficult for women to reach board positions than for men. The same scenario applies for politics: In important positions there are less women. For these topics this presentation will provide arguments and suggestions how to be active and use your networks.