

The European Women's' Café 2008; People, Plans and Projects

During the UWE conference in Cyprus we would like to take you to the European Women's' Café 2008 on Friday 12th September in the afternoon.

In the Café we will create an atmosphere of enhancement, friendliness, creativity and understanding. The interior of our café will be a creation of our organisation; peaceful, but also empowered by Europe and by ourselves. We will reflect, learn, innovate and..... It will be completely up to you what you will gain from the Café; maybe an ideal topic for your next association meeting, a new lifelong friend or getting involved in one of UWE's new workgroups, participation in UWE's roadmap for the future or in the European projects.

It is Your café, Your choice; People, Plans and Projects.

The Café will have an "open-space" approach combined with a "marketplace" environment. You can leave the Café whenever you want, but be aware that you might miss an exciting development, an innovative thought or just that one person you should have met to make your next careerstep. Moreover we will not benefit from your own vast experience. So please stay and feel comfortable to contribute but do not feel obliged. The session is based on the generative and self-organizing power of ourselves and is open, self-steering and informal. You come and go whenever it pleases you. There is no strict organized program with guest speakers. It is up to you to become "enchanted".

So let us get started:

The Café will start serving "drinks and biscuits" when you enter. There will be no bill afterwards so enjoy. Watch the flowers in the room; they are picked at some fields in Cyprus and just look at the tables in the corners; patterned paper table clothes and for the first time: our own UWE pencil and notepads; already one of the "house style" products of the UWE PR group.

Look; there are already 5 small market stalls in place; there we will discuss 5 European Projects with there own specific questions and topics. In the market stall you see the same tablecloths'; these, together with the notepads, are to write your idea's, themes, questions etc. which might pop up. We will later use them as "wallpaper" to decorate the walls of the Café for the plenary session to end the Open Space" session in the Cafe.

All the chairs are arranged in a large circle. Sit down wherever you like and let us start to generate the dialogue. Here we will encourage you to listen to your peers, share common themes and develop ideas for the "Open-space". The person who has the "talking stick" is the only one who "talks"; the others will be attentive listeners.

"Open Space" is a working method to generate new ideas and create latent (positive) energy and new initiatives are born. It creates a shared commitment, enthusiasm and involvement. It is a meeting place based on shared leadership, self organizing powers and commitment. In the "Open Space", the difference between introducer, attendee, expert and lay (wo) man disappears. The participants initiate at the spot workshops, theme's idea's/worries etc. Relevant self induced topics are discussed in continuous changing groups. The results of all these interactions will be published on the spot (see our tablecloths').

So after 10 to 15 minutes we will have several session leaders with their topics defined, we break up the circle and everybody plays its own role (see below).

In our Café we will also have the 5 market stalls where the topics to discuss are already formulated, but feel free to take some chairs and create your own "market stall or market corner". If you already want to reserve a "market stall" of your own beforehand please let us know; we will have it ready for you to use.

There are some rules for the "Open Space" meeting in our Café:

Rule 1: "from the heart"; in the plenary session you can volunteer as worksessionleader. Bring in the circle a theme that moves you, in which you will put effort and energy. You don't have to be an expert in the theme, but put forward the theme and elaborate and put some topics of the theme on the nearest Tablecloth to hang on the wall of the Café.

Rule 2: The "two feet" law; this law gives everybody the right to walk away without feeling uncomfortable. Start as participant by choosing the theme which attracts you most but don't hesitate to leave if you have the feeling you are not learning or contributing.

Rule 3: Don't worry, be relaxed. Your state of mind is crucial to what you bring or what you receive. Stop the session if it is ended and start the session when it needs to begin. Time is time; do not talk for just the conversation.

Rule 4: There are 4 ways to participate in the "Open Space" of our Café. Choose as participant the role which fits you most. Feel free to go and sit whenever and wherever you want. You can be the initiator of a topic session/workshop, you can choose to be a participant, or you might just be a tourist. There also will be the role of "decoration of the Café". The latter are there just to observe, enjoy and be happy. They are a part of the Wallpaper".

Since we only have a limited time, we regroup in the circle again after 2 hours. There we will close the "Open Space" by collecting, discussing and enjoying all the ideas which have been flowing and flowering around in the Café". The walls will all be decorated with "idea coloured" wallpaper; the product of our thoughts.

The session ends by wishing each other "well".

Soon thereafter we will be obliged to close the Café since dinner will start.