

UWE EUROPEAN PROJECTS REPORT 2008

In the spring of 2003 the European Project plan was conceived, with as aim: the empowerment of European women to enable them to take power and control of difficult situations in their own societies. The European Projects are a structured way of cooperation between the different UWE members and a good way to exchange best practices.

ON-GOING SUBPROJECTS: CONCERNS OF OLDER WOMEN

BACKGROUND

The British Federation of Women Graduates initiated this project in 2007 to provide the appropriate framework to remind women, governments, employers and other agencies and organisations that discrimination on the grounds of gender and age is not only now illegal in the European Union but also a huge waste of talents and skills. To achieve a fair and cohesive society the quality of life enjoyed by older people must enable them to continue to fulfill their potential.

AIMS

The aims of this project are:

- To conduct an audit of older women's concerns among the affiliates of UWE
- To evaluate and disseminate the information in order to influence public opinion and that of decision makers

METHOD

This is an e-project which is cheap to run and is easy for CERs or others to participate. Some funding may be required to publish the results.

TIMETABLE

A Questionnaire was mailed to all CERs prior to the UWE meeting in Manchester August 2007

- The Questionnaire was presented at the European Project Session
- A small working party was formed to collate, priorities and evaluate the responses
- Publish the findings and present them at the UWE meeting 2008
- Present findings to the EWL, the European Social Platform of NGOs, the Council of Europe, national governments and agencies etc.
- Start lobbying

HOW CAN WE KEEP OUR MEMBERSHIP VITAL AND GROWING

BACKGROUND

In Manchester 2007, the Dutch association - VVAO - proposed a new project: How can we keep our membership vital and growing? Currently the Dutch Association is investigating what the possibilities and ideas in this area are across Europe.

The steps taken last year:

- To free up time we closed our office and the secretarial work we outsourced. Now we are busy to make our member administration, finances and communication with the branches available on the website.

- By skipping one of our two General Assemblies we created the opportunity to organise a day with more content that suited all our members.
- Twice a year we have a board meeting with the boards of our branches. The last meeting we discussed how to get more women interested in the VVAO.
- Using statistical analysis, we found that many new members are joining us; they are younger than the average age of our members. However after a year most of them, specially the younger ones, leave us. The reason for this is yet unknown, but it is clear they did not find what they are looking for.
- A new process is created to ask members who are leaving us for their motivation for that action.

MENTOR ACTIVITIES IN FINLAND

BACKGROUND

The Finnish Federation of University Women – FFUW – started a committee on how to utilise mentoring activities within the organization in 1999. Since then some local associations have started a mentor program and an EU project been initiated.

AIMS

The aims of the local programs are:

- Senior professionals share their competence to the benefit of younger actors and get satisfaction by contributing to their profession. The actors/mentees get guidance for their career path and thereby increasing self-confidence and self-esteem.
- The other goal is to develop new, interesting and concrete activities for the members and to contact and attract new and young members to join the association.

METHODS

- Planning of how pairing of mentors and actors will occur
- Selecting and training of mentors
- To produce a brochure and this brochure will be distributed in universities, libraries and companies

It is important to observe the following:

- The responsibilities of both the mentor and mentee should be clearly outlined
- The length of the relationship, including guidelines for termination
- The potential problems involved
- The mentor program increases the networking between members and gives new experience also on personal base both for the actors and the mentors

TIMETABLE

In 2001 a local association i.e. Kvinnliga Akademiker I Vasa started the first mentor program and in 2006-2007 Tampereen Akateemiset Naiset arranged mentor training for the members. Two other local associations are planning to start a program.

The experience of working with mentorship has lead the mentoring group in Vasa to initiate an international project and funding has been applied from the Life Long Learning Programme, Grundtvig 2: An European Mentor Programme for University Women – An Intercultural Study. Partners in the applications are the Vereniging voor Vrouwen met

Academische Opleiding, VVAO the Netherlands. Türk Üniversitesi Kadınlar Derneği, TÜKD, Turkey and the co-ordinator Kvinnliga Akademiker i Vasa, Finland. Also the Baltic States and Slovenia have shown interest in this program.

During the years there have been many other interesting initiatives, where experience could be shared:

GIRL'S PUBLIC SPEAKING

In the Bergen meeting of 2004, the French and Irish NFA's each presented a paper about their way to enhance public speaking for girls as an empowering tool and the Bulgarian representative showed a great interest. This Swiss Geneva branch has reported in 2006 that they arranged lunches once per month where young women could present their research or thesis project and the Bikaya branch has followed the French Olympes de la Parole format.

WEBSITE

The website addresses the modern demands of communication and openness. It also can have a function in publishing academic highlights and conferences as well as other activities, meetings and news.