

UWE NEWSLETTER 2008 number 5

Dear UWE-members,

The year is ending. The UWE executive would like to wish you and your family a Merry Christmas and a happy and prosperous 2009!

In this newsletter, you will find information on the following topics:

1. UWE executive meeting
2. News from the Council of Europe
3. News from the EWL
4. Report on Conferences
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6. New UWE Project: "The Glass Ceiling"
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1. UWE executive meeting

The entire UWE executive had a meeting in Amsterdam on Saturday November 8.

Besides, getting to know each other as new team members, we agreed on the division of tasks for the coming year. We also planned to visit several of our members in 2009. Please let us know the date of your General Assembly or any other specific event, so we can combine our visit.

The Think Tank, reporting to Willemijn, started their plan of action.

The European Parliament Election 2009 Promo team, reporting to Marie-José, has sent all the CER's the information of the EWL 50/50 Campaign (www.5050democracy.eu).

The CEDAW group, reporting to Vera, has started with the questionnaire.

The UWE Constitution and By-laws group, reporting to Marie-José, has drafted an amended version of the constitution of UWE. Many of the amendments are to bring wording into line with IFUW constitution. The others are to clarify things that seemed to need explanation and to preserve the rights of member NFAs.

The minutes of the UWE General Assembly 2008 are ready. From January 9 onwards, you can download them via: <http://www.ifuw.org/uwe/reports.htm>

2. News from the Council of Europe

Vera John has attended the Autumn INGO Conference of the Council of Europe, together with Renée Gérard. After Renée introduced her, she immediately put herself forward as report for Gender equality transversal group.

The old structure with the Liaison Commission and ten thematic groupings was condensed in a new structure implying: six Committee and two transversal groups

- a. Standing Committee (the ex liaison commission)
- b. Human rights Committee
- c. Culture and education Committee
- d. Civil Society and democracy Committee
- e. Social Cohesion and eradication of poverty Committee
- f. Sustainable territorial development Committee

In addition, a Gender equality transversal group and a Global challenges transversal group.

Please find the entire report on <http://www.ifuw.org/uwe/reports.htm>

3. News from the European Womenslobby

Marie-José Jonczy attended the Annual EWL Conference and General Assembly together with Renée Gérard. In light of the French EU Presidency, this year's event was held in Lyon

(France) from 24 to 26 October. The three-day event started on Friday with a seminar on 'Local Authorities as Actors Promoting Equality between Women and Men in Europe: Realities and Perspectives'.

The EWL General Assembly itself took place on 25 and 26 October. Amongst the various discussions held by the delegates, five Issue Groups were organised by member organisations on a) Women's economic independence, b) European Security Policy: a non-militarist approach, c) Who's afraid of gender budgeting?, d) Sexist discrimination in the media and e) Reproductive Rights: Progress and Threats in Europe.

During the GA, a new Board of administration of forty members was elected, out of whom a new Executive Committee of seven members was elected in return. Marie-José is our new member of this EWL Board of administration.

4. Report on Conferences

Gerda Leushuis, Vera John and Willemijn van der Meer have attended the 2008 WIDE Annual Conference entitled: "Feminist Visions for a Just Europe", in The Hague, The Netherlands.

The Conference gathered 200 feminist activists, academics, experts and gender equality professionals providing a unique opportunity for alliance building, strategising and collective action between feminist advocates from different countries in the world.

The Conference reflected on the role of different feminisms in the struggle for an alternative Europe. Feminisms are diverse and feminists around the world face different challenges and realities. EU policy affects women both within and outside Europe. The Conference's aim was to strengthen synergies amongst feminist individuals and organisations struggling for gender equality and social justice for women in, within and outside Europe (www.wide-network.org). For a report see: <http://www.ifuw.org/uwe/reports.htm>

The UWE President attended the Swedish Dutch Conference on Gender Equality and Labour Participation in The Hague. The Swedish Embassy, the Swedish Institute and the Dutch Parliament ("Tweede Kamer") organised the conference which gathered more than 150 guests to listen to thirteen experts speaking on topics ranging from the evolution of gender equality policies during the 20th century to parents trying to combine work and family today. Other topics included men and parenthood, childcare and parental insurance, women's economic independence and gender discrimination on the labour market. For more information see: <http://www.ifuw.org/uwe/reports.htm>.

Elsbeth von Navarini, Vera John and Gerda Leushuis attended the annual DACH meeting, a friendship gathering of the three German speaking UWE members, Austria, Germany and Switzerland, in Solothurn.

Uschi Kozomara, the immediate past Swiss CER, reported that the Switzerland's Young Members had their first meeting during this event

15 Young members from German speaking sections of the Swiss Association of University Women came together. They also welcomed a young member from Slovenia, Andreja Jarc. Inspired by the presentation of two German Young Members, Regine Scheder und Angela Lohberg, and based on our own ideas and expectations (extracted from a questionnaire), we concluded amongst others that

- They shall in no way separate from the other members of the Swiss Association,
- They shall not limit the age of young members to precisely 40 years,
- They want to enhance the exchange of experiences among the younger members anyway, since their main interests definitely differ due to their stage of life.

5. New website IFUW and other IFUW news

Anamaria Vere and Réka Fogarasi Musso have remodelled the IFUW website (www.ifuw.org). On the website, you will find information on the structure of IFUW, its activities, the advocacy work and the activities of NFA's.

IFUW holds regular, thematic email discussions, each lasting for approximately one month. These **discussions** allow IFUW members from around the globe to share experiences and information on subjects of interest to university women. Recent discussion topics have included: Quality education, Developments in higher education and their implications for women graduates, Access to affordable universal primary education, and Women: Building Sustainable Futures, for ourselves and generations to come. To register, please send an email to discussions-sub@ifuw.org

The IFUW Board of Officers has proposed a project to **gather existing statistical data on women in higher education**, both as students and academic staff, to determine the level of equality that has been achieved, with a view to improving gender equality in higher education through highlighting areas of concern. The scope of the project will be to focus on the collation and analysis of the available data to produce a report on the status of gender equality in higher education. More information on: <http://www.ifuw.org/circulars/index.shtml>

From **18 until 23 February the Annual IFUW board and committee meeting** will take place in Geneva. Everyone is welcome. You can be observer during several committee meetings and a visit to the building of the United Nations will be organised.

The IFUW-President is pleased to announce to you all that **Women Graduates -USA Inc** are now officially members of IFUW. This is a real milestone for IFUW as Women Graduates USA Inc is the first virtual NFA we have in our midst.

6. New UWE Project:” The Glass Ceiling”

First of all, Elsbeth von Navarini, the new Treasurer of UWE, wants to thank you all for your confidence. She has healthy respect for the job and will do her best to keep the ship on course. Thank you.

In the first UWE Executive Meeting on November 8 in Amsterdam, Elsbeth von Navarini was asked to take on two additional tasks, next to the UWE finances: First, she will create a UWE leaflet as a new marketing tool to promote our organisation. Second, she is to develop UWE Projects. As a first project, she will propose, **“The Glass Ceiling”**, the topic that Professor Dr. Catherine Bandle, CER from Switzerland, presented in a workshop at the IFUW Conference 2007 in Manchester. The workshop was called “Empowering Women Academics in a Global Society: the Glass Ceiling” and was based on a survey of university women in Switzerland. The glass ceiling is a term coined in the 1980s to describe an unacknowledged barrier that prevents women and other minorities from achieving positions of power or responsibility in their professions. As the glass ceiling concerns university women in all Western societies, this is a project of European interest.

As an **UWE European Project**, this same survey would be conducted in all UWE member countries, where we can find 1 or 2 women willing to do a few interviews with women executives holding university degrees. The Swiss survey could be used as the feasibility study for the European Project. Up to now, Elsbeth von Navarini is looking into various funding possibilities. If someone of you, dear readers, has a special expertise in the fund-raising business in the European context, please contact our Treasurer on navarini@bluewin.ch. She is grateful for all information. As soon as we know how many countries would eventually be interested to participate, she will write the necessary proposal and apply for funds.

7. Participation in an EU proposal submitted under FP7-SCIENCE-IN-SOCIETY-2009-1 call for proposals

Hellenic Association of University Women (SEE) intends to submit, as a leader, a proposal under the call for proposals **FP7-SCIENCE-IN-SOCIETY-2009-1** (dead line 13-01-2009, Area 5.2.1.1. Strengthening the role of women in scientific research and scientific decision-making, Topic SiS-2009-2.1.1.1 Involving research bodies in the debate on gender and research).

The general idea is to organise a series of social cafes and debates all over Europe (but not exclusively, at the partners' countries) about the presence / under-representation of women in certain scientific fields and in research decision making positions.

We aim in involving forums of public and private higher education establishments, researchers, science academies, research organisations, politicians, etc in a Europe wide debate on the reasons that limit the participation of women in research and academia.

The purpose is to identify, discuss and implement best practices on gender balance in research and Higher Education institutions.

SEE, since its foundation in 1924 up to the present, offers substantial support to women scientists with regard to their professional advancement and development. During the ages, it demonstrated a dynamic presence in the effort for the sensitisation vis-à-vis women's problems which are related to the role and the place of the woman in the family, the economy, the professional sphere; it also promoted the visibility and participation of even more women in the social and public life of the country.

They have asked UWE if we are interested in joining them as partner. Please, tell me, as soon as possible, if your NFA is interested (uwepresident@ifuw.org).

8. Upcoming Events and Special Days

24 -25 January EWL board meeting in Brussels

26-30 January Winter INGO Conference 2009 Council of Europe in Strasbourg

18-23 February IFUW Board and Committee meeting in Geneva

2 – 13 March 53rd Session of the Commission on the Status of Women, New York

Theme: "The equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men, including care giving in the context of HIV/AIDS"

21 March General Assembly of the Swiss Association in Bern

Warm regards,

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